

# CHRISTIAN TRUTH VOLUME 11

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*A collection of articles and writings by P. Wilson, R.G. Rule, C. Buchanan from Christian Truth Volume 11, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.*

81 Chapters

## Table of Contents

0. Christian Truth Volume 11
1. 1 John 1:7
2. Baptized for the Dead
3. Bethel and Peniel: Jacob in Different Circumstances
4. Blessings in Afflictions: Extract From a Letter
5. Brought to God: a Blessed Place
6. The Canaanite Woman
7. A Child of the Bridechamber
8. Death of Pope Pius - Apostolic Succession: the Editor's Column
9. Did Christ Build His Church Upon Peter?
10. Dispensational Truth: Apostasy
11. In this period in which we live, God has been dealing in great grace and beseech...
12. Dr. Ladd's Errors: the Editor's Column
13. Effects of the Word
14. Egypt and Syria - Middle East: the Editor's Column
15. Ephesians 1:4-10
16. Eshcol
17. The Failure of the Flesh: Numbers 11
18. Faith and Fidelity
19. Falling Away: True Meaning Troubling Many Souls
20. Fellowship
21. A Few Scriptures Connected
22. Four Points of Knowledge
23. Gehazi
24. Giving Thanks in and for All Things
25. God's Love Set Free
26. Grace
27. Has Fallen Man a Free Will?
28. A Heart for Christ
29. Heavenly Truth and Practice
30. Himself
31. "I Shall Not Want": the 23rd Psalm
32. Iraq - Lebanon - Egypt - Dispensations: the Editor's Column
33. Is God Sovereign?
34. Israel and Man-Made Progress: the Editor's Column
35. Jesus - Salvation Army Rejects Adventism: the Editor's Column
36. A Few Thoughts From John 13
37. A Profitable Servant John Mark
38. Joyful in Tribulation

39. King Uzziah Strengthened and Strong: Word of Admonition
40. Labor and Conflict: Exposition on Nehemiah
41. Led Captivity Captive
42. Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled
43. Light Shining Forth
44. Real, Living Christianity
45. The Lord's Coming and the Revived Roman Empire: the Editor's Column
46. A Man of God
47. A Man of the Pharisees: John 3:1
48. The Meal Offering
49. The Meaning of Being Crafty
50. Naaman the Syrian: a Mighty Man of Valor and a Leper
51. The Nature and Pathway of the Lord Jesus
52. No Confidence in the Flesh
53. Our Nothingness
54. The Path of Faith
55. The Path of Faith: Hebrews 11
56. Patient Waiting on God
57. Paul As a Pattern
58. The Philippian Jailer's Salvation: Abridged
59. Pius XII Will - Apostolic Succession: the Editor's Column
60. Power of Faith: Hannah's Song
61. A Prerequisite for Spiritual Perception
62. A Present Hope
63. Proper Service
64. Resurrection Power
65. Russia's Sputnik: the Editor's Column
66. Self-Occupation and Self-Judgment
67. Simeon's Faith Rewarded
68. Sin in the Flesh
69. The Spirit and the Word
70. Spiritual Understanding
71. The Transfiguration
72. Transformed - Transfigured - Changed
73. Trial Proved to Be a Blessing: Jacob and Joseph
74. Trusting God for Tomorrow
75. United Nations - Balance of Power: the Editor's Column
76. Walking in the Truth
77. Warnings and Instructions in 1 Timothy
78. We Would See Jesus and We See Jesus
79. Who Strengtheneth Me
80. Words Written to Christians

## Christian Truth Volume 11

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## 1 John 1:7

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"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John 1:7. The Apostle is speaking of what that blood is in its own intrinsic nature before God; and what is that? That it cleanses; that is to say, that is what it effects, that is its abstract nature. As poison kills and food nourishes, so that blood cleanses. It is not the continual application, as some would in their mistaken zeal assert. The perpetual application of the blood would be the destruction of its efficacy; no surer way to cast a slight, even though unwittingly, upon the efficacy of the blood of Christ, than to speak of it as continually applied; hence to say here, "is cleansing," meaning thereby as continually applied, is to reduce it to the level of the blood of bulls and goats. But when you speak of it in its own blessed nature as God does, and say that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Sort cleanseth us from all sin," it is simply unfolding it as God does there. And so blessed and so full is it, that the believer stands before God in the acceptability and nearness and dearness to God of Him whose blood it was, and in all the value of that blood as God measures it.

Now what a blessed, living reality that is! Here then is a basis that never changes; here is a relationship that can never be broken; here is a place in Christ before God, that knows no variation nor shadow of turning. The precious blood of the Christ of God in its efficacy is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever"; that is, to the ages of ages. What He has accomplished in His grace by the shedding of His blood puts us, in all the unchangeableness of its own blessedness, before God, according to God's measure of it. And it is an immense thing for our souls to know the ground upon which we are, and our God has set us on no less a footing than this. And I am assured nothing could be more important •for every one of us than to be established in all the truth and reality of it by Himself. And bear in mind it is not our taking a place. We have no right to take a place; but if God puts us in such a place before Him, can we exaggerate its blessedness or make too much of the grace that bestows it upon us? Or would it be possible to exalt too highly the changeless efficacy of Christ's blood, and thus the glory of the One whose blood was shed?

How much the truth of God has suffered from and been lowered by such thoughts! What a really blessed thing it is to look at that precious blood as the blood of Him who upheld and vindicated all the glory of God. And who will limit the issues and consequences of all this work? Christ glorified God down to the very dust of death, where His precious blood was poured forth and shed, for, remember, the blood came from the side of the One who had been crucified - it came from the side of a dead Christ, not of a living Christ. If, let me say, Christ glorified God down to the very dust of death, down to where we lay in our moral ruin and distance from God, who will deny that we must be blessed up to the very heights of where that Christ is? If you lower the blessing, you must somehow reflect upon the Blessor. And that is the very reality which we should strive to impress upon one another's hearts more and more every day.

If you omit or lower the blessing, you correspondingly take away from the glory of the One who secured it. But the more your heart has been impressed with the sense of the glory and perfections of Him who has made all this good for His Father's glory, and for us, the higher your

conceptions must be of the blessing. I repeat it, if Christ has given to God a glory that He went down into the dust of death to secure and make good, if the blessed God has been glorified down to the lowest depth where He went and lay in death, then I say, the believer must be blessed up to the very heights of where that precious One is, whom God has raised up from among the dead and claimed as His own. And therefore, Christ's acceptance, blessed be His name, is the measure of ours. His acceptance as man, the glorified Man in heaven, is the acceptance of His saints who through grace believe in Him. Then see, beloved friends, what a wonderful comfort that is, because it settles and establishes everything as certain. It does not leave things uncertain or undecided; it settles everything, and forever; it puts everything into a fixed, settled position before God; and that is outside all the fittings and all the ebbings and all the flowings of our poor life down here.

## Baptized for the Dead

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Cor. 15:29

It should be carefully noted that this verse is connected with verse 19, the verses between (20-28) being a parenthesis. "If in this life only," says the Apostle, "we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable"; that is, if there be no resurrection of the dead. He further goes on to say, "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all?" It would be folly to take the place of danger and liability to death through persecution (see vv. 30-32) if there be no prospect of resurrection. It is this which gives the key to the difficult expression, "baptized for the dead." Through the perils incident to the confession of Christ in those early days, martyrdom was of frequent occurrence. The ranks of Christians were thus continually thinned; but through the grace of God converts were constantly added, and in this scripture they are regarded as filling up the vacant places of those who had departed to be with Christ; and thus, when they were baptized unto Christ, as being baptized for, or over (see note to J.N.D. Trans.) the dead. Such a step, the Apostle argues, as led of the Spirit, would be without reason "if the dead rise not at all"; for why should they be baptized for the dead - come into a place where death was a daily possibility - if they had not an assured hope beyond the grave? But, blessed be God, they had this hope; for Christ was risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept.

## Bethel and Peniel: Jacob in Different Circumstances

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There are arresting thoughts on "Bethel" and "Peniel." or the empty and the full Jacob - the Jacob of Gen. 28 and the Jacob of Gen. 32 The principles illustrated there and lessons taught there are equally divine, I need not say; but they are strikingly different. Jacob has grieved the Spirit, he has offended the Lord, having taken the way of nature, listened to the counsels of unbelief, and separated from his call and his path as an elect one of God. He is therefore under discipline and he must know the bitterness of his departure from the ways of life. His place that night on which he left his father's house was therefore the place of the people of God. It was the witness of his shame and evil, I know, but it was the witness that God, as his God, had known him among the children of men, and would therefore visit him for his transgression. The place, therefore, is such a place as may count upon God's presence. It was not the place of sin, but of discipline. Had it been the tent where, in subtlety, he and his mother were preparing the calf for Isaac's feast, God could not have been there; but at Luz, the place of desert and stones, when Jacob is under discipline, there the Lord can be.

And then the Lord comes to make glory a great reality to this poor, solitary, disciplined saint. He does not come to change his present circumstances, to soften his pillow, or to turn him back to his father's house. He leaves the present fruit of Jacob's departure from the way of God just as bitter in itself as it was before. Exile and bondage were before him then, and they are before him still. But God comes to make glory a great reality to him! He comes to assure his heart afresh in the nearness and sufficiency of His own favor and strength, and to show him how the resources of heaven waited on him, though in circumstances so bitter and grievous, to which his own way had reduced him. Onward, accordingly, he goes, and for twenty years he proves the taskmaster in the land of

Padan-aram. But, his servitude over, he returns full of the blessing of the Lord, and He who had met the empty Jacob on his way from Canaan to Aram, now meets the full Jacob on his way back from Aram to Canaan.

It is, however, a different Jacob as well as a different journey. Jacob has now become two bands. Flocks and herds, servants and wives and children surround and accompany him who of old lay unfriended and alone amid the stones in the wilderness.

Then it was only discipline, but now it is unbelief which gives character to the scene under the eye of the Lord. Jacob trembles; he hears of Esau and his four hundred men. He fears for his cattle, for his children, and for his life. He has something to lose now. He has become a rich man. He has a stake in the world, and may well be an object for others, and easily, as he fears, a prey to them. He trembles; he manages as well as he can and religiously commits himself further to God. And the Lord came to him, came to him as surely as He had come to him at Bethel. But it is not to comfort, but to rebuke him. It is not to break open the heavens over his head and to speak in promises to him, but to rebuke him. "There wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." This was the Lord in controversy with Jacob; his unbelief and slowness of heart had provoked the

Lord to jealousy, and the Lord withstands him.

But what is the issue of it all? Grace is made a great reality to him here, as glory had been made a great reality to him at Bethel. The wrestling Stranger allows Himself to be prevailed over by Jacob. Faith revives in Jacob's soul. "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." The decision of faith which will get a blessing quickens him; he comes "boldly to the throne of grace," his soul is restored, and the fears of unbelief touching Esau yield to the confidence and joy of faith in God. It is now the unbelieving Jacob restored, as at Bethel it had been the disciplined and chastened Jacob comforted. He had then walked close to the gate of heaven; now he walks under the sunshine of God's favor. The house of God was then his; the face of God is now his. Such was Bethel on his way out; such is Peniel on his way home. All is of God. Grace and glory are great realities - heaven and Christ are both ours. Heaven in its enriching glories is shown to us if in the sorrow of discipline. Christ in His restoring grace is given to us, if in the power of unbelief or the fears of nature.... To have glory made real to us in the day of

trouble and grace made real to us in the day of failure, we need to walk along by Bethels and Peniels; they sweetly vary the journey, but it is a journey with God still.

"Then gladly sing and sound abroad The great Redeemer's praise, The glories of the living God, The riches of His grace!"

## Blessings in Afflictions: Extract From a Letter

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There is a mass of things in the sincerest of us of which we are not aware, which are not brought into subjection to God, which work and show themselves unsuspected. God breaks in upon us; how many things He shows - how many cords He cuts at one blow! A whole system of affections is touched; we feel that death has its place and part in them. I never saw a family the same after the first death that it was before. There was a breach in the circle. What belonged to the whole body of affections and life of this world was touched, was found to be - mortal. It was struck in its very nature. The course of life went on; the wave had closed over that which had been cast into it; but death, and the affections which belong to this world, had been found to meet. But all this is well, for death is come in. Besides, we live in these things; our will lives in them; and when the will is broken, so far as it is so, it is broken for everything. We learn more to lean on what never breaks - not to lose our affections, but to have them more in connection with Christ, less with this will of our own nature, for nature must now die as well as sin. But then Christ never makes a breach, except to come in and connect the soul and heart more with Himself; and it is worth all the sorrow that ever was, and more, to learn the least atom more of His love and of Himself; and there is nothing like that, nothing like Him; and it lasts.

But, besides, there is a useful work by it in our own hearts, and so more capacity to know, and enjoy, and learn communion with Him; more capacity to delight in and understand God; to know the value of what He delights in; more moral capacity to delight in what is excellent. We little know what high and blessed things we are called to. Oh, that the saints knew it better! to be with, and have common joy and communion with God!

Some have much of it down here. It is opened out to them. But all that is of nature and will can have no part in this; and often the saints, though not directly dishonoring the Lord, are living in nature. Then the Lord deals with them, "turns man from his purpose, and hides pride from man."

Oh what a profitable thing it is to have that hidden from us! And how completely it is, when God deals with us, and brings us into His presence, whatever means He may employ, for He knows the springs of our hearts and how to touch them. But oh what grace is this daily, constant care! - "He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous." What a God we have to do with! and all in love!

## Brought to God: a Blessed Place

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"Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation." Exod. 15:13. The children of Israel were brought to God as to the new standing they occupied. In the desert, just indeed entering upon it - this marked their character as pilgrims - they were yet brought into God's holy habitation. This corresponds with our position as believers in the Lord Jesus. He once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. This is our place as His redeemed. That is, we are brought to God according to all that He is; His whole moral nature, having been completely satisfied in the death of Christ, can now rest in us in perfect complacency. The hymn therefore does but express a scriptural thought, which says -

"So near, so very near to God,

I cannot nearer be,

For in the Person of His Son I am as near as He."

The place indeed is accorded to us in grace, but none the less in righteousness; so that not only are all the attributes of God's character concerned in bringing us there, but He Himself is also glorified by it. It is an immense thought and one which, when held in power, imparts both strength and energy to our souls - that we are even now brought to God. The whole distance - measured by the death of Christ on the cross when He was made sin for us - has been bridged over, and our position of nearness is marked by the place He now occupies as glorified at the right hand of God. In heaven itself we shall not be nearer, as to our position, because it is in Christ. It should not be forgotten that our enjoyment of this truth, indeed even

our apprehension of it, will depend upon our practical condition. God looks for a state corresponding with our standing; that is, our responsibility is measured by our privilege. But until we know our place, there cannot be an answering condition. We must first learn that we are brought to God, if we would in any measure walk in accordance with the position. State and walk must ever flow from a known relationship. Unless therefore we are taught the truth of our standing before God, we shall never answer to it in our souls, or in our walk and conversation.

## The Canaanite Woman

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Matt. 15:21-28

It is in the first Gospel we find this most instructive incident, which reveals the Lord not merely as minister of circumcision for God's truth, but as the display of His sovereign grace where God's curse lay, and Satan's power.

"Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tire and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me. But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." Matt. 15:21-28.

The Lord withdrew from the proud religionists of Jerusalem who made void the law of God for the sake of their tradition. He also laid bare to the disciples that only the plants of His Father take root, while all that issues from man's heart is defiled and defiling. The sinner needs God's grace to save him. This is shown in the otherwise desperate case of the Canaanite, and her daughter sorely possessed of a demon.

Here may many a soul learn why the Lord does not accede to its appeal. Hers was deep and earnest, yet He answered her not a word. What claims on the Son of David had a Canaanite woman? When He reigns, there shall be no more a Canaanite in the house of Jehovah of hosts (Zech. 14:21). When the two blind men cried early or late, saying, Pity us, Son of David, He touched their eyes, which were then opened according to their faith (Matt. 9:27-30; 20:30-34). But repentance has its place as truly as faith, and God will have the soul to judge itself aright. "Cursed be Canaan" is the word from of old, and yet, was she not now asking His pity who is to avenge and deliver Israel?

How many today have said the words, "Father... forgive us our sins"! Yet they too have received no answer; nor would they assert, any more than they believe, that their sins are forgiven. They have gone on ground wholly untenable. They are not His sons by faith in Christ. They are not born of water and Spirit. They stand on law, supplemented by ordinances. They are unrenewed, serving divers lusts and pleasures, a prey to the power of darkness. They do not cry to God in the truth of their estate, but imitate the language of disciples, which they might own they are not in heart. Have we not experienced it ourselves? Our state was below the Canaanite's.

The woman of Canaan evidently knew that no Israelite ever appealed to Christ in vain. She had faith in Him, but she had overlooked her own dismal position. Theirs were "the promises"; but what

had she? Not promise, but curse. And He who is the truth would have her feel it. Not so the disciples; they would have Him dismiss her. This was far from His heart. They disliked the discredit of her importunity, and wished to be rid of her. He meant to bless her, but it must be in the truth as well as the grace of God. For this He waited, and she as yet had no answer; but He answered them, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Now faith, where real, perseveres; and the woman came and did Him homage, saying, "Lord, help me." He is indeed Lord of all - that is truth without assumption of privilege. To such an appeal He does reply, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs."

Thus does His grace help her to see where she was lacking. The light of God shines into her heart, and she bows at once. For she said, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their

masters' table." She apprehends where and what she really was, and takes her true place before God. She had forgotten that she was not a "sheep" to claim the succor of Israel's Shepherd. She was truly a "dog" before Him, no better than a little dog or whelp. Yet while no longer hiding this from her soul, but confessing it freely, she rejoins, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs [little dogs] eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Oh what refreshment did such faith give to our Lord Jesus! She savored the things of God. She appreciated, believed, enjoyed the grace of which she was the object. And the Lord owned her "great... faith," and gave her all she wished.

## A Child of the Bridechamber

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Matt. 9:9-17

The conversion of Matthew the publican will not, I believe, be fully enjoyed if we do not continue with it in our view to the end of verse 17; for I regard Matthew as being at that moment in the thoughts of the Lord - a new bottle with the new wine in it.

The Lord met him in the place where the world had put him. He was a publican and was sitting at the receipt of custom. But He passed by, and it was a day of power, and Matthew was made willing. He hearkened diligently to Christ, and his soul at once delighted itself in fatness. For he arose and followed the Lord and then spread a feast for Him - a great feast (Luke 5:29).

This was joy and liberty, and Jesus sanctioned it. He sat at Matthew's table. This was done suddenly, it is true. But though sudden, it was not premature - though unbidden, it did not remain unsanctioned. The eunuch in his day went on his way rejoicing; and that rejoicing, like that of Matthew, was early and sudden; but it was not premature.

And in Matthew there was light and the mind of Christ, as well as liberty and the joy of Christ. He seated at the same table the publicans and sinners who had been following Jesus (Mark 2:15) - the very people who had brought the Lord of glory from heaven, and the very people whom the Lord Himself will have at His own table in the day of the marriage supper - a company of sinners redeemed and washed in the blood of the Lamb.

Matthew thus justly and beautifully understood the mind of Christ. He knew Him, though he had but just then been introduced to Him. He was like the dying thief, for a short moment is time enough to carry the light and liberty of Christ into the dark and distant heart of either a thief or a publican.

Matthew was in Christ's presence in joy. He was a child of the bridechamber. He feasted the Lord. The King was sitting at his table, because, in spirit, Jesus had already brought Matthew to His banqueting house. This was the time of the kindness of his youth, or the love of his espousals; and in that joy he had risen up, left all, and followed Christ. The world might therefore be to him a "wilderness," a land "not sown" (Jer. 2:2); but with Jesus he feasted. The word of power, the invitation of grace, he had listened to; and to his soul it had been a feast of fat things, wine and milk of the King's providing. It was as a bridegroom, as a lover of his soul, Matthew had apprehended Christ and was now entertaining Him at his table; and because of this newly found liberty and joy, Matthew is among the children of the bridechamber - a new bottle with the new wine in it.

Neither Moses nor John the Baptist could have made such a bottle as this. The word of Christ, heard in the light and energy of the Holy Ghost, could alone have provided it. On Him only, all the vessels of the Lord's house hang - the "flagons" and the "cups." The Pharisees and the disciples of John do not even understand this. The one object to the feast with sinners \* - the

other, that the feast is not a fast. The legalist and the religionist, neither of them can brook the publican's (that is, the sinner's) feast. The elder brother complains of the., fatted calf. The music and the dancing, as the cheerful sound reaches him in his outside place, vex him, as the sight of the table and the company in the house of our Levi irritates the Pharisees as they look on and will not sit.

The Lord, however, vindicates both the feast and the guests. He lets it be heard, there on the spot and at the moment, that He had come to gather such a scene. And He thereby vindicates the host as having done the part of a child of the bridechamber, and as having done it well.

This is a simple sweet story s of grace. Would that one's heart realized the joy that the mind is tracing! Jesus found a publican, a sinner, just at his place in this wretched self-seeking world; He took him up at once, made him a new bottle, and filled him with new wine, like the Samaritan at Jacob's well. She was taken up just as she was, and where she was; and, as another child of the bridechamber, she was sent on her way rejoicing. The world will fret itself and be driven to darkness, as the prophet speaks. The heart of the Pharisees is rent by vexation at such a sight. The publican's feast is lost upon them, and the new wine is spilled; as the Lord adds: "No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment; for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish."

But then, days of absence, and therefore days of sorrow of heart, were to come after these feast days of His presence; but they had not come then. That day in Matthew's house was "one of the days of the Son of Man." But the heart that can feast a present Jesus will mourn an absent Lord. "The days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days."

The children of the bridechamber will fast during the Bridegroom's absence, because He is dear to them. It is not the Pharisee's fast of religious service and merit, but the fast of a heart that has been weaned away from other objects, and for the present has lost the presence it values.

It is not from experience, but from desire only, one's heart traces the path of a child of the bridechamber. Of such a soul some of us will say, "I see from far the beautiful light." There are occasions and seasons when the state of the affections to Christ are sorrowfully discovered; and sure I am, we need a more earnest eye for Him. Our look at Him has need to be a nearer one, more fixed and personal. Our sight of Him is too commonly conducted as by the light of others. We are prone to have Him in company, in the reflections and by the help of the scene and circumstances in which we place ourselves. I covet a more earnest look at Him, a look that can reach Him very closely and personally, without aid, or countenance, or company. The single eye knows Him only; the earnest eye enjoys Him deeply.

Mary at the sepulcher had it when she could pass by the shining ones while looking for Him. The sinner of the city had it when she could let the scorn of the Pharisee pass over her without moving her. The Samaritan had it when she could forget her water pot; and the eunuch, when he went on heedless of the loss of Philip. Our Matthew had it. And it is this which not only realizes Christ, but puts Him in His due supreme place and chief room both of attraction and authority.

## Death of Pope Pius - Apostolic Succession: the Editor's Column

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On October 8 Pope Pius XII died, after a reign of more than 19 years. Now, as we go to press, arrangements are proceeding for the election of another pope. The College of Cardinals will meet and be locked in the Sistine Chapel until they reach a decision. This custom was initiated years ago to prevent considerable lapses of time when there was no pope because a decisive vote could not be reached.

According to present figures, the Pope reigns over 500,000,000 Catholics, and he also exerts a powerful influence in the world far beyond the pale of Romanism. He is a world political figure of great magnitude and receives ambassadors from many nations, even from atheistic, communistic powers. During the reign of Pope Pius XII, the stature and strength of the Romanist organization increased greatly; also, the non-Romanist world became much more tolerant of Rome, and many so-called Protestants suggested a rapprochement to the Papal See.

A careful reading of the Word of God should not fail to impress people with the great difference between the vast system of wealth and power whose head really reigns, and that of the early Church which was everywhere "spoken against," while individual Christians lost their possessions and often their lives simply because they belonged to Christ.

What we see today is but the fulfillment of the parable of the mustard seed - the "least of all seeds" has become "a tree so that the birds of the air" could lodge in its branches (Matt. 13:32). This is not confined to Romanism but also applies to Christendom at large.

Now the Pope has a many-tiered throne; did Christ have a throne? or did Peter have a throne? or Paul? Some may say, But times have changed. They surely have, but Christianity should have remained following a rejected Christ and waiting for Him to return. The Lord Jesus was cast out of the world.

Paul and Peter suffered martyrdom.

Did Peter amass a fortune of this world's goods? He could say, "Silver and gold have I none." Acts 3:6. And when money was offered to him as a lure, he said, "Thy money perish with thee." Acts 8:20. When Cornelius would worship him, "Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man." Acts 10:26. From what Scripture records, it is evident that Peter would have abhorred the thought of a throne and would have indignantly reproved those who would suggest it. Would he have allowed his fellow believers to carry him on their shoulders, or kiss his slippered foot? or have received the thunderous acclaim of multitudes?

But Romanists base all on direct and continual descent from Peter. They speak of Peter's chair, but Peter had no chair to give them or anyone. He did not envisage successors to himself; nay, in his second epistle, written to Jewish believers, he wrote down for them (and us) the early facts of Christianity so that they might "have these things always in remembrance." He certainly gave no hint of apostolic succession, and that in sight of his martyrdom. A prominent thing in this epistle is

the warning against apostates that would come. After his speaking of false prophets and false teachers coming, he says, "Many shall follow their pernicious ways."

Furthermore, Peter was the Apostle to the circumcision, the Jews. With so much of Judaism embodied in Roman Catholicism, perhaps this is significant. The priests, the holy orders, the rituals, all come from a Judaistic foundation.

But Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles. To him were given the great truths of Christianity-the one body of all believers, united to their Head in heaven by the Holy Spirit (not a mortal head on earth, and a body cannot have two heads); the coming of the Lord; the changing of the bodies of the saints; the true order of remembering the Lord in death (not a mass, an unbloody sacrifice for sins); the heavenly calling of the saints. These are the basic truths of the true Church which did not begin until the descent of the Holy Spirit. Is it not clear that Romanism is Peterine, and not Pauline? And this in itself is a great mistake and productive of error.

And what did Paul foresee about successors to the apostles?

In view of his departure to be with Christ, he called the elders (or bishops) from Ephesus to meet him at Troas. (Note that there were many elders or bishops at that one place-they were simply overseers to help the saints.) This was the time for the greatest of the apostles to set forth in order what apostolic succession there was to be, but not a word is said. The Apostle did not commit the saints to any successor or successors, nor to any church or man, but to "God, and to the word of His grace." This is the true resource of believers at all times-God and His Word. God is wiser than men, and this is His inspired word. So-called human successors have only led the sheep astray. Paul foresaw this and told those overseers from Ephesus that Satan would be ever active and would use some of their own number to divide and scatter the flock; and grievous wolves would come in and do great damage to the sheep. (See Acts 20.)

And did Paul acknowledge Peter's supremacy (as they speak)? No, for when Peter came to Antioch and refused to eat with the Gentile believers, Paul rebuked him to his face "before all." That would be a serious thing to do if he were the supreme head. Furthermore, according to the very faulty traditions of Rome, Peter sat in command of the See at Rome for 25 years; but that is a ludicrous fable. Peter had not yet left Jerusalem, in Acts 15. Then we learn from Gal. 2 that later Peter went to Antioch, where, as we have noted, Paul rebuked him. If, as tradition claims, Peter was put to death by Nero, he could not have gone to Rome more than about 11 years before his martyrdom.

One responsible writer says, "The only thing certain is that Peter's sitting-still more his sitting twenty-five years at Rome -is a got-up fable, and a very poor and transparent one."

As for the tradition that Peter founded the church at Rome, that is simply untrue, for Paul's epistle to the Romans proves it. Who founded the church at Rome is not within the knowledge of men, but the gospel was carried there by someone or ones long before an apostle ever visited there. Even Paul did not get there until he was in chains. His epistle to them was written about A.D. 60; he was put to death about A.D. 68.

Pope Pius XII was, according to Papal sources, the 261st pope. But one must be very credible to accept that number, for the history of the succession of the popes for centuries is so clouded in

uncertainty that no one can know anything definitely. Strict Catholic historians do not agree among themselves. If there were anything to a secure line of authority from Peter on down (which there is NONE), it would have been lost time and time again. On numerous occasions there were two, three, or even four popes at one time. True, the Church of Rome aims to cover up the whole sorry mess with giving a list of popes and of antipopes. But that is an arbitrary way to settle disputes that raged for years.

One of Rome's claims is that the sure line of succession is a guarantee of faith and grace; but read Baronius, Fleury, Dupin, Platina, et al. The line was broken many times, and if it were only broken once, where is succession? Further difficulties are encountered, even in the line of succession as approved by Rome, by which Pope Pius was numbered 261.

We cannot look at all the discrepancies in the lists of popes, nor begin to mention the unlawful deeds of many of them; but after the Roman emperors professed Christianity, some became Arians (the doctrine of Arius was a denial of the deity of Christ), and Jerome said that the world awoke and found itself Arian. The bishops (except a few who were banished) became Arians. Then Pope Liberius came on the scene; he was not at first an Arian, but later denied the faith, and signed the heretical creed; in the meanwhile the Arians consecrated Felix II, after banishing Liberius. This Felix acted in the full capacity of a pope, and ordained many presbyters and bishops. He is now omitted from the list, but Bellarmine says he must be considered pope, and gives his reasons. So for some years there were two popes.

Boniface I is listed as reigning from 418 to 422, but another, named Eulalius, was consecrated by the prelate who regularly consecrated the new pontiff; Boniface was consecrated by others. This caused the intervention of the Emperor, and a battle ensued when Boniface and his friends approached Rome armed. Boniface finally got the See, but what of true succession here?

Toward the end of that century, Symmachus and Laurentius were both elected popes the same day. The problem was then referred to Theodoric, king of the Goths, an Arian. Symmachus got the chair, but Laurentius subsequently was brought back, and he accused Symmachus of certain crimes. The king then referred it to a council, but when Symmachus was nearly assassinated on the way, he withdrew and stood on his privileges. He was never cleared of the charges, but Laurentius was given another See to satisfy him and recognize his consecration.

A writer we have already quoted, says that "The grossest outrages, even against nuns, and fighting and murders took place on this occasion.... In their strifes the clergy went so far as to spend all the church's goods to push their candidates."

Later, King Athelric appointed Boniface II to be pope, but the Romans chose Dioscurus; and it seems that the latter was chosen canonically. The writer Baronius supports the point that Dioscurus was the choice of the Romans, but says that the strife happily ended by the death of Dioscurus a few months later. Then Boniface sat in the See of Rome, but if Dioscurus was correctly chosen, Boniface was not really a pope. However, he and not Dioscurus appears in the lists of popes today. Can anyone trace a direct line of apostolic succession in all this medley of voices, intrigues, and wars?

Silverius, who is in the approved list today, was not the choice of the clergy, but was forced upon them by the Emperor of Constantinople who was engaged in reconquering Rome. Then the

empress at Constantinople sent Vigil to Rome; she also sent money to have him named pope. This was done, and Silverius lost out, eventually died of hunger, and Vigil remained pope. Silverius could scarcely claim to be Peter's successor, for he was not the choice of the clergy; and if he did, how could Vigil get in by graft and intrigue and oust him, and then be said to be Peter's successor? What would Peter think of such claims for succession to him? It seems that Peter aptly described some of these. Furthermore, Vigil was not consecrated after Silverius's death.

Pelagius I, the next pope, was accused of poisoning Vigil; Pelagius then became pope. Pope Honorius I, 625-638, was charged with heresy and was anathematized by later popes. There is confusion about Pope Sergius, for his epitaph speaks of a Pope Theodore, and another John, both of whom are not named in official papal lists.

A Pope Constantine was forced into the See by a Tuscan noble. This pope then had to flee, and a Pope Philip was consecrated. Constantine was then deposed, and a third pope, Stephen, got in. During all this upheaval, the eyes of Pope Constantine and his partisans were torn out, and they were otherwise tortured and put into monasteries. Can anyone trace any descending line of grace and truth as security for the Church in these things? All was utter confusion, and popes who consecrated the clergy were later thrown out. Where was there even any Roman authority for the consecrations?

There were again two popes after Pope Adrian, at which time the Emperor's son was sent to settle the matter.

We now quote from another: "It was at this time that the famous history of Pope Joan had its date, a history believed for centuries, not indeed doubted till the Reformation. A German woman, born however in England, went to Athens, and thence to Rome, and became so distinguished in her literary teachings, that she was at length, it is said, elected pope, and held the See two years; but, having given births to a child on the way to the Lateran church near the Coliseum, died, and was buried with disgrace." Rome claims this to be a fable, but there seems to be too much evidence of its truth to discredit it altogether. The excuse is that it was invented by Martinus Polonus, who was an eminent Roman Catholic writer. But why should one of their own writers invent such a story? Furthermore, great difficulties were encountered among Catholic writers over numbering of popes named John-the masculine form of the feminine name Joan. Reckoning Joan as a Pope John, reconciles some differing accounts. The existence of Pope Joan was not a Protestant invention and was believed centuries before Luther. And yet Rome continues to boast of true apostolic succession; and the late Pope, Pius XII, in the encyclical *Humani Generis* in 1950, reaffirmed Rome's contention that it is needful to belong to the "true church" to "gain salvation." Has Rome changed her beliefs, as some would tell us she has? The evidence is against it.

Formosus was chosen pope by transfer from another See. Is that the succession from Peter that the bishops of Rome claim? He later fled from Rome with the Pope's treasures; then he came back and was condemned before Pope John VIII, deprived of his priesthood, degraded, and anathematized.

The next pope, Martinus I, undid what John 8 did to Formosus, and restored him to his bishopric. Baronius (Catholic writer) calls John the ninth pope, but he could not have been ninth unless Pope Joan be counted as a John. This same writer says of popes who got the place by tyranny: "It was

better to tolerate them, whatever they were, than have the church divided by schism.... That we should say this, evident necessity compels us, because the universal Catholic church honored them as legitimate pontiffs, obeyed them and recognized them as vicars of Christ, successors of Peter, and went to them with the respect due to a pontiff." What a way to maintain a holy channel of grace and faith! One who only has recourse "to God, and to the word of His grace" is assured of holiness and perfection in his foundation, and has not to apologize and make expediency better than truth and holiness.

Pope Marinus 1 is said by Platina to have gotten in by "evil arts." Then came Adrian III for two months; then Stephen V; then again Formosus (by bribery, says Platina); then Boniface VI for 15 days until he died. Stephen VI and Boniface VI contested the throne, the latter having been twice deposed before. The sudden death of Boniface left the throne to Stephen, who subsequently disinterred Formosus, after which he arrayed the corpse in pontifical robes, set it on the pontifical throne, and gave the dead Pope a mock trial. He then stripped him of the robes, cut off the fingers which had consecrated others, and threw his body into the Tiber. The consecrations he had made were held to be null and void. These deeds were later condemned, but they are facts of history.

During these hectic and corrupt times, a man by the name of Sergius was being consecrated pope when Formosus came with his party and drove him by force from the altar; Formosus thus became pope. It was bad enough that these supposed successors of Peter should war against each other and be guilty of vice and corruption. A still worse period came to the Roman church - a time when "the most worthless of women and her illegitimate children" disposed of the papal See as they pleased, putting in their paramours or illegitimate children. We would rather not mention this period, but inasmuch as Rome is becoming more and more aggressive in pressing her claim of being "the only true church" and of her unbroken line of descent from Peter, we deem we must briefly mention it.

Theodora was the woman, of Roman nobility; she lived in adultery with a presbyter by the name of John. She forced Pope Lando to consecrate this John to the See of Bologna, and then to a larger archbishopric. But Pope Lando did not live long (a list we have at hand shows his reign to be from 913 to 914). Theodora then brought John to Rome, and he was made Pope John 9

We shall simply quote from the Catholic writer Baronius about this period: "Such was the unhappy state then of the Roman church, that everything was set in motion by the will of the powerful harlot, Theodora, the mother. By her meretricious acts she had this power; but besides, the son of Adelbert, by his wife Wido, had married Marozia [one daughter of Theodora], the mistress of Sergius [a pope]. What then was the face of the holy Roman church! how filthy when most powerful and at the same time base harlots ruled Rome, by whose will Sees were changed, bishops given, and, what is horrible and unutterable to be heard, pseudo-pontiffs their paramours were intruded into the See of Peter who are not to be written save to mark the dates in the catalog of Roman pontiffs." And what of succession?

Baronius also says that the clergy chosen by them were of course like them. A count Hugo at Rheims made his five-year-old son archbishop, and he himself took the revenues. Soon there were two archbishops there, and a fight ensued.

According to Baronius, for about fifty years there could have been no legitimate pope at all. All the old customs were discarded, the ordinations invalidated by each other, so there could have been no true ordinations or sacraments; and a whole generation lived and died during such wickedness and confusion. Still we are urged by Rome to believe she is the true church and has an inalienable right to all truth and grace through a descending line. Surely Peter was right when he forewarned, "There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies... and many shall follow their

pernicious ways." 2 Pet. 2:1, 2. And we have seen that the late Pope Pius XII upheld Rome's supremacy through all this, for he wrote that one could not be saved outside of that "true church."

Pope John 10 was later put in prison by Marozia, where he died either from grief or a violent death, according to which historian one reads. Pope Leo VI succeeded him and was put in prison where he died after little more than a year's reign. Then a Pope Stephen reigned for two years, and Marozia put her son John (son of Pope Sergius) on the papal throne.

Shortly thereafter, Octavian, a boy of 18 years, or perhaps much less, made himself pope. He lived a life of unparalleled debauchery. But we must eliminate much of what lies ahead, for there is surely enough already to prove that Peter's so-called successors are no security for faith and grace, or even of moral uprightness before men or God. This is not to say that there have not been what are called good popes who were sincere and upright men, but history is history and cannot be discarded when succession is sought to be proved as a security for our souls.

Just a few brief points from here on: Leo VIII was pope a short time, but fled Rome, and was later killed by an enraged husband. The next popes present much confusion, as different writers cannot even agree on the order in which they reigned. Benedict VI was strangled to death by a man, Francon, called Boniface, who fled and then came back and put John 14 in prison and starved him to death. Thus Boniface VII took the papal throne. Sylvester II, Baronius declares, was a horrible blasphemer, heretic, and schismatic. Pope Benedict IX was a boy ten years old. His life was one of infamy, murder, and debauchery of every kind. He reigned about 12 years. There were again three consecrated popes at one time.

Through these years the state of the clergy was vile beyond description. Then Gregory VII enforced celibacy, and that made matters worse.

In the days of Innocent III, transubstantiation became a dogma of the Roman church, and the Inquisition was established -the former to force her communicants to accept the statement that the priest actually changed a wafer into the body, blood, soul, and spirit of the Lord Jesus; and the latter to force absolute compliance with Rome (whatever her condition) on the pain of death. Needless to say, transubstantiation is without a shred of scriptural warrant, and, if it were true, it would deny the shed blood of Christ; for it would put it back into what the priest, by using a little Latin, made His body.

Pope Celestine IV lived only about a month after bitter rivalry with another who was consecrated at the same time. About that time the See was vacant one year and six months. Then after Alexander IV there was another vacancy of about four months. Then there was Clement IV, after which there were intrigues and no pope for about three years. About this time it was decided that the cardinals should be shut up until a pope was elected. Then there were four popes within a year, then

another, followed by six months' delay; two more popes followed and then another year's vacancy. Another writer says, "If ever there was a thing disproved, it is what is ridiculously called apostolic succession at Rome."

Urban VI and Clement VII were popes at the same time, but part of Europe followed one and the rest the other. Here was forty years of confusion, and a whole generation died in a state of being in or out of the grace of Rome, and not knowing which. We again quote another: "It is absurd, with two, and even three, popes at a time to keep up the fiction of apostolic succession."

Gregory XII and Alexander V were contending popes, and when the latter died the former was charged with poisoning him-also with incest, adultery, fornication, and another murder. Passing over more strife between contending popes, we mention Innocent VIII, who was mocked in Rome as "father" because of his many children; and Alexander VI, "whose infamies were past belief," was commonly said to sell "kings, altars, Christ; he first bought them and he had a good right to sell them." One daughter (illegitimate) kept the papal court when he was away, and opened the dispatches.

The Reformation was soon to force some changes on Rome, and who can doubt that they are needed? The reformers started out to reform the Roman church, not to abandon it, but a cleavage was forced by the high-handed and arbitrary manner in which they were met. Rome having the upper hand, slaughtered them by the thousands. But God was to bring about a return to His Word and its authority which had been swamped by years of enforced darkness-and how great was that darkness! Rome should hang her head in shame instead of boastfully asserting original and inalienable rights over the souls of men.

But the Roman church during the reign of Pope Pius XIIa period when communistic atheism was making great inroads -gained 108,109,000 members. Her growth in the Western world is great, and increasing. In the United States her advertising is seen in almost any secular periodical, setting forth enormous claims to her being the "true church." These will not stand scrutiny. She says that the United States is the foremost contributor to their "Peter's pence." Would Peter solicit money?

Present appraisals of the reign of the late pope generally list his pronouncement of the dogma of the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven as the most important act. This, needless to say, is absolutely without scriptural warrant, and that she reigns as queen there is a gratuitous addition, to say the least. And as it was spoken ex cathedra, it is supposed to be spoken with infallible authority. It is now binding on all Rome's communicants under fear of excommunication. Poor mortal man has added to God's Word, furthering the adoration of Mary, which is idolatry. It is sacrilegious, if not blasphemy, to call "Mary the mother of God." She was only the mother of the humanity of the Lord Jesus, and she herself needed Him as her Savior. She possesses no power of intercession with the Father or the Son.

We are not unmindful of God's ways in providence, even in the time of and selection of a new pope. We are nearing the end, and at the end of Christendom's sad, sad history, all will be headed up by an organization sitting upon the seven-hilled city of Rome. This organization, or its head, will dominate the coming revived Roman Empire. Perhaps this will require a different type of man than the internationally-minded, politically-oriented Pius XII. At any rate, God's word will be fulfilled.

(Read Rev. 17 and 18.)

NOTE: We have drawn freely on the excellent work of Mr. J. N. Darby who examined Rome's claims from her own sources and then wrote on Apostolicity and Succession.

## Did Christ Build His Church Upon Peter?

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Probably no tenet of the Roman Catholic Church is more vigorously propagated than that our Lord Jesus Christ constituted the Apostle Peter the foundation of His Church. It is our purpose herewith to examine this ambitious claim in the light of God's Word. The Scriptures warrant us in this approach to the question, for the prophet Isaiah instructs us: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Chapter 8:20. Let us then imitate the Bereans of Paul's day, who "searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Acts 17:11.

That the Apostle Peter was granted a special place of administrative responsibility in connection with the early beginnings of the Christian economy, no thoughtful student of the Word would deny. But to confuse such an admittedly privileged position with the gratuitous assumption that our Lord thus indicated Peter as the rock foundation of His Church, is to do violence to many plain and unequivocal statements of Scripture.

From early times Catholic theologians have labored assiduously to prove their baseless assumption of the foundation character of Peter's commission by calling attention to the cognate relationship of the two Greek words used in the historic passage of Matt. 16:18: "Thou art Peter [petros, masculine gender, and meaning 'a stone'], and upon this rock [petra, feminine gender, here correctly rendered 'rock'] I will build My church." To seek to force these two Greek words of different genders into the same identical linguistic connotation is to ignore all the standard Greek lexicons. We will here cite a few selected passages from some recognized authorities. The first is the great work of Liddell and Scott,' pp. 1206-1207:

"Petra, a rock, a ledge or shelf of rock. There is no example, in good authors, of petra in the sense of petros, a stone.

"Petros, a stone, and thus distinguished from petra in Homer. The usual prose word is lithos."

Our next authority is the lexicon of Robinson,' page 579:

"Petra, 1. A rock, cliff, ledge, literally a mass of live rock.

... On such also houses and villages were founded for security

(Matt. 7:24, 25). 2. Figuratively, Of Christ, in allusion to the rock whence the waters flowed in the desert (1 Cor. 10:4).... So too of Christ as a rock of offense or stumbling; that is, as the occasion of destruction to those who reject Him (Rom. 9:33; 1 Pet. 2:8). Petros, a piece of rock, a stone.... In New Testament only as proper noun Peter, the surname of Simon, one of the apostles, son of Jonas."

Our third citation is from Edersheim, Life and Times of Jesus,' Vol. 2, pp. 82, 81:

"Petros is used in Greek for 'stone,' and also sometimes for 'rock,' while Petra always means a 'rock.'... We can further understand how, just as Christ's contemporaries may have regarded the

world as reared on the rock of faithful Abraham, so Christ promised that He would build His Church on the Petrine in Peter on his faith and confession." (Italics supplied.)

Our last citation will be from Vine's Dictionary of New Testament Words,' page 302 of vol. 3: "Petra denotes a mass of rock, as distinct from petros, a detached stone or boulder, or a stone that might be thrown or easily moved.... Petra, 1 Cor. 10:4 (twice), figuratively, of Christ; in Rom. 9:33 and 1 Pet. 2:8, metaphorically, of Christ; in Matt. 16:18, metaphorically, of Christ and the testimony concerning Him; here the distinction between Petra, concerning the Lord Himself, and Petros, the Apostle, is clear."

As if to anticipate the preposterous claim of Rome that Christ intended to build His Church on Peter, the same chapter records the humiliating fact that the Lord had to administer to the man Peter (petros) as stern a rebuke as one might think possible: "Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offense unto Me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Matt. 16:23. No! our Lord never founded His Church upon one who could so readily and immediately be a mouthpiece of Satan.

But if Christ did not mean to convey to us the Romish idea of placing His Church upon the man Peter, what did He mean by this most contested passage, in Matt. 16? I think we cannot do better here than quote from the well-known expositor, William Kelly, as he writes in his volume on Matthew,' in loco: " 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church.' What rock? The confession Peter had made that Jesus was the Son of the living God. On this the Church was built.... 'Thou art Peter' - thou art a stone - a man that derivest thy name from this rock on which the Church is built." (Italics supplied.)

We are firmly convinced that Mr. Kelly has, in these words, given us the mind of the Spirit of God in the passage under consideration. That Peter himself had this view of the Lord's words addressed to him in Matt. 16, is fully corroborated and easily evidenced by his own epistles. In Peter's first epistle, chapter 2, verses 4 to 8, we hear the Apostle comparing believers to stones, and Christ to a rock. It is true, the word for stones here is not petros but lithos; yet this is easily accounted for in the fact to which our attention was called in Liddell and Scott's lexicon - "the usual prose word is lithos." This does not in the least weaken our contention that the rock, petra, is not Peter, but Christ. "Unto you therefore which believe He [Christ] is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone [lithos] of stumbling, and a rock [petra] of offense, even to them which stumble at the word." 1 Pet. 2:7, 8. Here Christ is plainly designated a rock (petra). In the fifth verse of this same chapter Peter shares his "stoneship" with his brethren by admitting them to his privilege of being a living stone (lithos) built upon the living stone (lithos), Christ of verse 4. Remember always that Petros in the New Testament is never used save as a proper name, and is applied to Peter only. But whenever Peter desires to designate a stone, he uses the ordinary Greek term, lithos. According to all the Greek lexicons, the two words, lithos and petros, are synonyms.

Augustine, the great church father, and bishop of Hippo, Africa, 396-340 A.D. gives a clear-cut paraphrase of Matt. 16:18. We quote: "Thou art Petros, and on this petra which thou hast confessed, saying Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God, will I build My Church: that is to say, on Myself. I will build thee on Myself, not Myself on thee." How infinitely above the gross conception of a poor, failing, inconsistent Peter, is this incisive statement of Augustine.

Let us now summon the testimony of another venerable church father, Chrysostom, 345-407 A.D., patriarch of Constantinople: "On this rock; that is, on the faith of his confession, He did not say upon Peter, for it was not upon man, but upon his faith." And if space permitted we could multiply citations from the fathers which show the same interpretation was advocated by them.

Peter was addressed as "Satan" by our Lord (Matt. 16:23); denied his Lord with oaths and curses (Matt. 26:74); played the hypocrite at Antioch (Gal. 2:11-13); and confessed his own difficulty in apprehending Paul's exalted line of ministry (2 Pet. 3:16). In the light of these revealed facts as to Peter, can we think for a moment that our Lord built His Church on such a poor failing instrument? No! there is but one MAN who is worthy to be the foundation rock of that blessed institution; He is "the MAN CHRIST JESUS" (1 Tim. 2:5).

In conclusion we would call attention to a plain and incontestable scripture which forever banishes Rome's frantic, if futile, attempts to place the Church upon Peter. We refer to 1 Cor. 3:11. It is from the pen of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, the one to whom was entrusted the ministry of the truth of the divine mystery of Christ and the Church, the one who said: "I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles." Let us hear his testimony: "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Thus we see that Christ - not Peter - was the foundation of the Church. Peter's priority in the administrative work of the early chapters of The Acts, we happily admit and rejoice in. He was the one chosen of God to open out the new truth of salvation through a risen and glorified Savior (Acts 2:38). He was the one to interpret that stupendous event, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-16). He was the one to gain official recognition to the admission of the hybrid and despised Samaritans (Acts 8:14-17). He was the one who received the heavenly vision teaching God's acceptance of the Gentiles (Acts 10:28), and it was he who officially threw open the door to them at the meeting in the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:43-48; Cf. Acts 15:6-11). But all these wonderful privileges are clearly distinct and separate from any pretense

on Peter's part to be the foundation of the Church of God which is the body of Christ.

We desire to close this brief review of the question at the head of this paper by quoting a passage from J. N. Darby as found in his article, "Romanism: or An Answer to the Pamphlet of a Romish Priest, entitled, 'The Law and the Testimony.'" On pages 85-87 of Mr. Darby's answer we read: "But Peter, let men say what they will, is never called a rock. He is called a stone; he partook of the nature of the rock, God having quickened him with this life, and given him to confess Christ in this character. But Peter means a stone, and does not mean a rock. People do not build upon a stone, even if it partake of the durability of the rock to which it belongs. Peter is not the rock or a rock; he is, as to his name, a stone. Peter having just confessed the true, living, and divine foundation of the new thing, which the rejected Christ was going to raise up in contrast with rebellious Israel; and Christ, having recognized that the Father Himself had taught Peter this great truth, carrying far beyond the hope of Israel, says, 'Thou art a stone,' thou participatest in this truth; and on this rock, this eternal truth of My person, which you have been given of the Father to own, I will build the church. The Father had revealed this great truth of Christ's nature to Simon, and Christ gives him besides the name of Peter; for the confession of truth, by divine teaching, connects a man with the strength and durability of the truth he so confessed: he abides livingly with it and by it."

'Greek-English Lexicon, 1776 pages, Harper & Bros., N.Y., 1883. 'Greek-English Lexicon of N.T., Ed. Robinson, 804 pages, Harper & Bros., N.Y., 1854.

'In two volumes, by Alfred Edersheim, Longman, Green & Co., N.Y., 1903.

'An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words with their Precise Meanings for English Readers, by W. E. Vine, M. A. Oliphants, Ltd. London & Edinburgh, 1956. 1400 pages.

'Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew, A. S. Rouse, London, 1896. 'From Collected Writings of J. N. Darby, Vol. 18. Morrish, London.

## Dispensational Truth: Apostasy

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For the last one hundred years or so it has been the privilege of Christians to have a better understanding of the Word of God in its proper application and scope than perhaps at any other time in the history of the Church. God's purposes and ways concerning man in the various ages may be better apprehended today than in the beginning of Christianity. It has pleased God to unfold His marvelous designs to us who live in the last days. We do not infer by this that there have not been devoted Christians in the Church of God at all times, and at times probably more devoted than those living today; but we speak only of the present privilege of having a clearer understanding of His purposes as revealed in His written Word.

The special aspect of the truth which brings an understanding of God's revealed mind to His own is what is generally called dispensational truth. This term as used in relation to the Scriptures may be a little difficult for some of our readers to understand without an explanation. It is not some special truth, as we might refer to the truth of justification by faith, or the resurrection of the dead. There is a time factor connected with it, for it enables us to discern the mind of God concerning His revelation in the various ages since men were upon the earth, and thus gives us in general a way of understanding all truth. It also enables us to see His ultimate purposes both for a heavenly and an earthly people; and again, to distinguish things that differ and to recognize those that are similar and coincidental.

Without such an understanding, the Bible is a book of confusion and disarray; whereas it is in reality a book of most exquisite beauty and design. And the more anyone understands the divine order of God's Word, the more he will marvel in wondering amazement. He will not wish any other confirmation of its divine authorship; he will not wish the external evidences which may be exhumed from the earth by the archeologist's spade, for its internal structure will carry a conviction far beyond that which may be had from any other source.

Dispensationalism has been a great boon to the saints of God in these last days. May we value that which we have received and hold it fast, for it is being given up and many would take it from us. But the question may be asked, If this is such an important line of teaching, why then is it not found in the writings of the early so-called Church fathers? nor does it appear in any archives of the dark ages. This should present no problem to anyone, for the inculcation of error and departure from the truth was already active in the days of the apostles. An examination of the writings of the so-called fathers will present much mixture of truth and error. Nothing can be proved or disproved by what the fathers wrote, except that the early Church soon departed from the truth. Paul spoke about what would come in after his departure, and committed the saints to God and the word of His grace - not to the fathers of the second, third, or any century. John exhorts the saints to continue in that which was from the beginning, not to what the fathers would bring in. Peter and Jude likewise speak of their not departing from the truth they had received, but of keeping it in remembrance and contending for it.

Moreover, we should not expect to find any clear understanding of truth in the dark ages, when nearly all truth was obscured; even "justification by faith" was lost. True, many suffering saints in those days misapplied the beast of Rev. 13 to the Pope, and took comfort from it too. They felt encouraged that he would be judged, although they had much confusion regarding the Scriptures.

As for the early Christians understanding the whole range of dispensational truth, and seeing then that almost 2000 years must elapse before the Lord's coming for His Church, it was never intended to be so. They were converted from their idols and Jewish ritual to wait for God's Son to come back. This was the immediate result of their salvation, and God never intended that any thought of a long period before the Lord returned should cast a shadow over their hope. This was the hope of the Thessalonians at the beginning; and when Satan sought to dim the hope, two apostolic letters were written to instruct them.

In confirmation of this principle, we should note that nothing in the parables indicated this long lapse of time before the Lord returned. They were the same virgins who at first waited for the bridegroom, who were there when he returned. They were the same servants who received their lord's money, who were there to give an accounting when he came back. Even the addresses to the seven churches, in Rev. 2 and 3, which we now understand as a prophetic outlook of the Church as a responsible witness on earth, were given to seven actual assemblies then existing in the province of Asia. It had a direct and present application, but now that the end is here, we understand their deeper meaning, and should profit thereby.

The parable of the ten virgins tells how the Church would become drowsy and go to sleep, forgetting to watch for their Lord. The wise and the foolish all slept together until a cry went forth at midnight, "Behold the bridegroom." This parable does not indicate that they would all go to sleep again, but the departure from revealed dispensational truth is in a considerable measure putting many to sleep. If we allow anyone to put something before our souls, which must take place before our Lord can come, then the expectancy of hope is GONE. We are not then waiting and watching for the Lord.

But truth, no matter how precious, may become dull in the soul, and remain in a cold intellectual form. When this happens, the love of it is soon given up; and ultimately even the form of it is dropped. This is exactly what has happened and what is happening in Christendom today. Many who once possessed the hope of the Lord's coming for His saints, and day by day thrilled at the bright prospect, now merely hold the doctrine of His pretribulation coming. Thus there is no separating power in it, and the world is embraced rather than being treated as it was by the Apostle - a thing crucified (Gal. 6:14).

Now even the form of it is being dropped by many, and so-called fundamental and evangelical Christendom is going through what is considered as a re-appraisal of dispensational truth and of the Lord's coming. It is having to be re-worked by today's theologians, with the result that many in these circles who formerly embraced it have given it up, and many others take such a neutral stand that it is effectively lost.

Periodicals of evangelical circles have given considerable space to this debate during the last few years. They can clearly define the varying positions of the amillennialist, the premillennialist, and the postmillennialist; and the last named is today gaining favor that it once lost. For the sake of

clarity, may we state: the amillennialist is one who does not believe in the coming kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ to reign for 1000 years on earth, but envisages the coming of Christ at some time to make a new earth; the premillennialist is one who says that the Lord will come and set up His kingdom in Zion and govern this world in righteousness for 1000 years (but these are again divided into two classes, one of which expects Him momentarily before the seven years of trouble, including the final apostasy, come; and the other which says the Church must go through the tribulation). The postmillennialist says that a sort of moral kingdom will gain the ascendancy, and the Lord will not come until after a thousand years of peace has been attained by some such means.

It is impossible to go into all the ramifications of these varying views in these pages, but let us state firmly and clearly the position which we take; and then as we proceed we shall seek to bring the light of the Scriptures to bear upon it. We definitely and without qualification or reservation believe that the moment of our Lord's return to take His people home is near at hand. We trust that we not only hold as a doctrine, but as a living hope, that the Lord Himself will soon descend into the clouds of heaven and call all the believers from the earth and from the tomb to be with Himself according to His unequivocal promise, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself." John 14:3. We are not looking for the apostasy or for seven years of trouble, the latter half of which is called the great tribulation, but for the Lord from heaven, although we can clearly discern the times in which we live as indicated by those epistles which describe the last days. We also see the world being readied for events which will take place after we are gone, so the moment of our departure is NEAR.

When once we understand the importance of the dispensational outlook, we shall, when reading the holy Scriptures, seek to see who was being addressed, who was being spoken of, and what the Spirit of God would convey in that place. Of course all the Bible is for us, but it is not all about us; nor was it originally all spoken to us. Every scripture, when rightly understood, complements every other part; for it was all given by the one Spirit of God. A divine design and ultimate purpose pervades the whole Book from cover to cover. Even as it was written: "Knowing this first, that the scope of no prophecy of scripture is had from its own particular interpretation, for prophecy was not ever uttered by the will of man, but holy men of God spake under the power of the Holy Spirit." 2 Pet. 1:20, 21; J.N.D. Trans. There is one design of the Holy Spirit in the Book, although it deals with the various ages since men have been on the earth until the day of the new heavens and a new earth. When we grasp the divine design, each part falls easily and naturally into its own place without having to be forced or twisted to make it fit.

The word dispensation as used in the Word of God signifies a certain ordered administration for a certain time. It may be called an economy, or the management of an organized system. God, in the beginning, placed the earth under the rule of Adam, and made him lord over it; but, alas, he sinned and pulled the whole creation down with him. God thereafter tried mankind in many and various ways to see if he were recoverable, only to see him fail in every test. Finally He sent His Son, and they cast Him out; then He sent a message of grace through that One whom they rejected. But it is the purpose of God that this world will be ruled by a man, and He will be the Man of His counsels and choice - "the second man," "the last Adam." At that time all His plans for man to rule will be made good; not only will that Man rule on earth, but in heaven. We read, "That in the dispensation [should be translated, administration] of the fullness of times He might gather

together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him." Eph. 1:10. He will then administer all for the glory of God in the culmination of the times.

The above verse has been confused by some opponents of the truth with a verse in Gal. 4 "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law." v. 4. The most careless reader should observe that the "fullness of the time" and the "fullness of times" are not the same terms at all. The former refers to that time when man had been fully tried by every conceivable means and found to be totally wanting. When there was no hope for man in the flesh, God sent forth His Son to redeem men. To mix these two verses and confuse the Lord's coming in flesh the first time to put away sin, and His coming the second time to administer all for the glory of God, is to confound things that differ, which is just what the rejection of dispensational truth does.

We have spoken of the meaning of the word dispensation, but in a larger and more general sense it is used to describe any period of time wherein God operated toward man in a particular manner. In the broader sense we might consider: (a) He first placed man in an earthly paradise, but he was no sooner there than he sinned. (b) After the sin in Eden came expulsion from Eden, and man was left to his own way. This in a strict sense could not be called a dispensation, for man was left to himself; but for our purpose we shall consider it as a special period. Here man became utterly lawless - so much so that God destroyed all except Noah and his family with a flood. (c) After the flood, God put government into the hand of man, and decreed, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Gen. 9:6); but then men turned to idolatry. Read Rom. 1 for the manner in which they turned to the worship of that which their hands had made - images made like to man, to birds, to quadrupeds, to creeping things (or back to the serpent). (d) Out of this prevalent condition of idolatry which came in when man gave up the traditional knowledge of God acquired through Noah's posterity, God called the man Abraham and made a covenant with him; but he soon denied his wife and had to be reproved by a heathen. (e) After God's allowing Abraham's descendants to be enslaved in Egypt, He sent the man Moses to bring them forth; but ere long the children of Israel said, Up, make us gods to go before us, for as "for this Moses,... we wot not what has become of him." (f) At this time the Israelites had covenanted to obey all which God would speak, and put themselves under the conditional arrangement of keeping God's law. While Moses was away receiving the words of God for them, they made the golden calf. (g) God raised up the priesthood for Israel, but, as soon as it was instituted, it failed; and two of Aaron's sons died the first day for offering strange fire. It was more or less set aside later in the days of aged Eli, for his sons had corrupted the people. (h) Afterward, God raised up a king, David, "a man after His own heart." But for a long time he was hunted and his life endangered, and his son Solomon brought idolatry into his own family circle. After that, the kingdom was divided; and God had compassion on His people and sent messenger after messenger unto them, until the sins of Manasseh made judgment on them imperative. (i) God brought a remnant back in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, but the prophet Malachi describes the sad condition into which that remnant sank. (j) Finally, God sent His Son, saying, "They will reverence My Son," but Him they cast out and slew. This is a very brief outline of man's pathway of failure from Adam to Christ.

**In this period in which we live, God has been dealing in great grace and beseeching men to be reconciled to Him (2 Cor. 5:20). The gospel first went forth from an ascended and glorified Christ to the Jews, or, as John Bunyan called them, "Jerusalem sinners." The message was to begin in the very place where the Lord was crucified. Then the book of The Acts outlines the carrying of the message from Jerusalem and Judea to Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. Acts 1:8 is in substance a table of contents of The Acts of the Apostles**

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After Stephen's death, the scenes began to change, for Israel had now rejected the gospel sent down from heaven in the power of the Holy Spirit. From place to place through The Acts, the Jews were given the gospel first ("to the Jew first"); but when they rejected it, it was then given to the Gentiles until, at length, in the last chapter, the sentence of judicial blindness, foretold by the prophet Isaiah, was placed upon them, and Paul said to them: "Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it." Acts 28:28.

We are now living in the end of the period of God's special grace to the Gentiles; it is spoken of as "the fullness of the Gentiles" in Rom. 11:25. Their fullness will come in when the Lord calls His Church home to be with Himself. For this blessed moment we wait. God has been visiting the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name (Acts 15:14), but they are a people destined for heaven. We should, however, keep in mind that in the Church of God there has always been a saved remnant of the Jews. At the first (Acts 2) only Jews or Jewish proselytes were brought into the Church; but as the nation rejected grace, the call went wider, and in Acts 10 a Gentile centurion and his family were saved and brought into the Church. Already a man had been saved (chap. 9) who was to be the Lord's special messenger to the Gentiles (see Acts 15).

Strictly speaking, the Church period is not a dispensation in the sense of an administration of God's way on earth, but a gathering out of a people for heaven; however, we shall consider it as a special period of God's ways while He makes known His purposes and plans not only for them, but for the earth. He has treated us in this age as His friends and made His mind known to us (John 15:14). Perhaps we should consider the Church period as merely a long parenthesis in God's ways and dispensations for the earth. When the Church has been translated to heaven, then God's ways (of which Israel will be the center) will again begin to unfold, and a time is to follow, called "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7). He (that is, a remnant of Israel) will be saved "out of it," like Noah was saved out of the flood, while the Church has been promised by the Lord that it will be kept out of the hour of it - altogether kept from the time of it (Rev. 3:10), as Enoch was taken away before the flood came. For the "time of Jacob's trouble" will also be "the great

tribulation" which "shall come upon all the world."

After the rapture of the Church, apostasy of both Christendom and Judaism will mount up to their peaks to receive the judgments decreed already. The spirit of apostasy has been at work as a mystery since the days of the Apostle, for he speaks of "the mystery of iniquity" (2 Thess. 2:7); and John wrote that there were already many antichrists (1 John 2:18). But the thing, although far advanced, will not be full blown until we are taken from the scene. Then there will be the attempted complete overthrow of all reverence for God, and even the mention of His name. It will be man in daring infidelity who will blaspheme God. Man will be deified, but overthrown in the end. Apostate Christendom and apostate Judaism will perish, while a remnant will be saved.

The increase in numbers and respectability of the false cults, and the shocking infidelity and daring resistance to God and His Word in many places of what was once orthodox Christendom point the way and the trend to the great apostasy. It has been on its way since the days of the apostles, but now has taken over large sections of so-called Christianity. Whenever the moment comes for the home call of the true believers, wickedness will ripen almost over night. There will be no restraining hand of the Spirit of God to hinder its open manifestation. After that, that is, after the great tribulation, and the coming of Christ as "King of kings and Lord of lords" to execute judgment, He will establish His throne on earth in righteousness, and reign for 1000 years. Then, according to Rev. 20, Satan will be loosed out of his prison to test the multitudes of Gentiles who were born during the Millennium. This will be the crowning proof that man, unless born again, is hopelessly bad, even after seeing the wonderful beneficence of God during the Millennium; for they will rise up against Him. At that time God will destroy the rebels, and the present earth and its heaven will be destroyed, and a new heaven and new earth will be formed. In this, righteousness will dwell forever in a state of eternal bliss. But the Church's portion will be to dwell with Christ in heavenly glory forever.

## Dr. Ladd's Errors: the Editor's Column

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Characteristic of those who reject dispensational truth, Dr. Ladd rejects what to us seems quite patent; that is, the dispensational nature of Matthew's Gospel. Each of the four gospels has its own specialty, or distinctive mark; if this is not so, why then are there four? Matthew's Gospel clearly presents the Messiah to the Jews, and develops the consequences dispensationally, to a certain point, of their rejection of their Messiah.

In keeping with this design, the Lord Jesus is presented in Matthew as the son of David and Abraham, through whom the promised Messiah had to come. Consequently, more scriptures of the Old Testament are quoted in Matthew than in any other gospel. At the beginning, the gospel that the King was coming was announced. It was distinctly the gospel of a coming kingdom presented according to the prophecies. This was formally rejected by the mass of the Jews with their leaders, so that in the 12th chapter, they commit the unpardonable sin of attributing the power of the Holy Spirit, by whom the Lord wrought miracles, to the power of Satan. Thereupon, the Lord disclaims relationship with Israel and, in the 13th chapter, goes out to the seaside (which has a figurative bearing) where He gave the parable of the sower who introduces something new. New seed was sown which is the mystery of the kingdom of heaven - a time when the king who came to His own was rejected by them, while something new would grow in the world. A people would be on earth who claimed to honor an absent king. The kingdom of heaven in its mysterious form is Christendom of this age, or that which says, "In God we trust," and, "in the year of our Lord."

Then further on in Matthew, the 16th chapter, Christ announced that He would build His Church; in the 17th chapter, the three apostles were given a preview of the coming millennial kingdom. Chapters 24 and 25 (as we have already noticed) give the prophecy of His coming back in its threefold form.

And the Gospel closes with Him risen and present with His own on earth - figurative of a godly remnant of the Jews who will be waiting for Him when He comes to reign. In the first part of the book, He also gives the principles on which His kingdom will be established. While they refer to His earthly kingdom, yet a well-taught Christian is interested in those principles, and gathers profit from them. No such collection of principles is gathered together in any other gospel, and it should not be supposed that chapters 5 to 7 were all uttered at one time. We know they were not; but Matthew, writing by the Spirit, was led to bring these all together into a group for dispensational reasons. To reject the most evident arrangement of the Gospel of Matthew is to shut out the light and prefer darkness.

Dr. Ladd's statement that "Nowhere are we told to watch for the coming of Christ" (*italics his*) requires some examination. That may be literally correct and yet be basically wrong. Is there no implied need of watching for Him, whom our souls love, in those memorable words sent down from heaven, in which we are exhorted to remember Him in death? And it is given in a touching fashion when it says that "the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed" made such a request. In this message from the ascended and glorified Lord, He said, "For as often as ye eat this bread,

and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." Here we are reminded of His death for us and of His coming again for us. Shall not we watch? Were not the Thessalonians watching for God's Son from heaven? And were they not commended for it? What is the proper response to His promised "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself"? Is it not an upturned eye, eagerly expecting Him? Should we be finding ways to "prove" something must first take place, hence we need not watch? Far be the thought! Furthermore, we dislike the phrase watching for His coming; it should be rather watching for Himself - a person, not something about Him.

Dr. Ladd reasons away the word in Rev. 3:3, "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief." He makes use of other translations which say "wake up" or "be wide awake" to offset the force of watching; but the R.V., A.R.V., Confraternity, J.N.D., and W.K. versions stand by the word "watch" there. After all it is the same word in the Greek that is translated "watch" in Mark 13:33-37 and 14:34-38, where "be wide awake" would scarcely do. And if it is "wake up," wake up to what? Remember the sleeping virgins! And what about the last chapter of Revelation? After the prophecy is fully told, the Lord tells the Church that He is coming - He Himself, not another - and finally a hearty response is awakened, so that "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." 22:17. Maybe we are not commanded to watch for Him, but it is the only proper response of hearts which have heard His accents of promised coming. We greatly fear that dedication to an opposing view is parent to the thought advanced by anti-dispensationalists.

Furthermore, in regard to Rev. 3:3, attention should be called to the fact that failure to watch will bring down the same judgment that will overtake the world. This is borne out in another portion: "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they [the world] shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them,... and they shall not escape." If the professing Church lives with and like the world, it will reap the world's judgment - unbelievers, of course. (1 Thess. 5:1-8.) And a thief never comes for good.

Notice too that it is the "day of the Lord" which so comes, not the coming of the Lord for His own, or the day of Christ which has a heavenly aspect. But the book which we have reviewed more or less confuses the "day of the Lord" and the "day of Christ." They are not the same and never approximate each other. Even men do not confuse differing terms; is God less accurate than men?

Did not all of the ten virgins - the profession of Christianity - go forth to meet the Bridegroom? Was not that their mission? And did they not sin when they went to sleep and failed to watch? And anti-dispensationalists would put the Church back to sleep again. A play on Greek words will not avail in connection with the ten virgins, but of course the obvious can be rejected. Did not the evil servant sin for saying "in his heart," My lord delays his coming? He merely said to himself, "Oh, He will not come yet." It is no longer only said "in the heart," but taught openly.

Dr. Ladd asks, "Is not the Blessed Hope the hope of deliverance from tribulation?" If that is so, then a poor suffering saint might just as well say that death would be the blessed hope. "He [Himself] is our hope." Do we only desire Him to fulfill His word and take us to be with Himself when we suffer tribulation? We trust not!

We have not selected just the points in Dr. Ladd's book that are easy for rebuttal, but have merely picked out things at random. The whole work indicates a lack of spiritual perception of the dispensational line of truth; hence reasoning against it becomes easy for him. And when the whole

is read, we say, "They have taken away the hope that we may see Him today, and given us no substitute" - what a loss! And the effect can be disastrous in the tone of Christian life.

Dr. Ladd would have all of us who have tenaciously held and happily enjoyed the prospect of seeing our Lord at any moment to re-examine and re-think the whole matter, and gives us his deductions and conclusions from which to think. This would lead to confusion and a giving up of a well-charted course in exchange for speculation, although Dr. Ladd assures us that our blessed hope is an unjustified inference. The burden of proof is his.

He has not discovered the beauty of Peter's reference to Joel's prophecy in Acts 2. When Peter defended the Christians, who were speaking the gospel in various tongues, from the charge of intoxication, he merely said, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." It was not the fulfillment of Joel 2, but merely a part of what Joel prophesied for the future. Peter, like his Lord before him, knew where to close the book (Luke 4:16-20), for he did not read the rest of what Joel said. What took place there was not intoxication, but merely evidence of the power of the Spirit; and Joel is only used to that end. The prophecy of Joel will yet be fulfilled in the day of Israel's restoration.

Dr. Ladd's claim that "the new covenant, promised in Jer. 31, was made by our Lord with the Church, and is now in effect," is gratuitous to say the least. There is no scriptural support for this statement. It is to be made with the houses of Israel and Judah, and with none else. Paul did not infer in Hebrews that it was made with the Church; he merely brought in the subject to prove to the converted Jews that it was folly to cling to the old covenant, for it was to be superseded. Paul drops the subject as soon as his point is made. Even the Lord Himself said, "This is My blood of the new testament [covenant], which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Matt. 26:28. It is the blood on which the new covenant will be established with the houses of Israel; and, through it, we who believe now, get the blessing of having our sins forgiven. Even dispensationalists may mistakenly say that we are under the new covenant, but a search will prove we are not.

On pages 89 and 90 of Dr. Ladd's book, he quarrels with the differentiation between the Lord's coming for and coming with His saints. But that should certainly present no problem, for the Old Testament foretold His coming with His saints; for instance, "The LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with Thee"; and Enoch prophesied that the Lord would come with His saints. It was no unrevealed mystery that Christ would come with His saints, but that He should come for them was not revealed until Paul received it from the Lord (see 1 Thess. 4:15-17).

Dr. Ladd uses Titus 2:13 for the title to his book; and quite characteristically he sees only one thing in it, while there are in reality two things. This verse is fully capable, without distention or abuse, of bringing before us both Christ's coming for and with His saints. Let us notice it: "Looking for that blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." A.R.V. We will quote the words of a staunch defender of the faith, William Kelly:

"We need... to look for 'the blessed hope and appearing of the glory.' These are two parts which comprise the revealed object God would have before our souls.

"The one article given to the two objects brackets them together, not at all as if they were identical, but as here expressly associated to convey the complex and combined outlook. 'The blessed hope' is that which alone can satisfy the heart; it is to be in the presence of Christ on high,

changed at His coming into His likeness and with Him forever. 'The appearing of the' divine 'glory' is bound up with it, and follows in due time, as that display or the divine manifestation in power, which our renewed souls cannot but desire to the utter exclusion of moral and physical evil and of Satan's guileful energy." Thus Titus 2:13 is not what Dr. Ladd avers, a "proof-text."

Dr. Ladd makes a considerable play on the Greek words for the Lord's coming, revelation, and manifestation; but those who hold the opposite view use the same words to disprove what he seeks to prove by them. God has used each word in perfect wisdom, and there is nothing in their use that will disprove the Lord's pretribulation coming for His saints. It rests on the matter of the correct understanding of the truth, and not on some quick turn of Greek words. Christ's coming for and with His saints are surely both His coming, but at separate times and under different circumstances.

The book of Revelation is a hopeless muddle in Dr. Ladd's book. By putting the Church in the world to go through the tribulation period, we have a book applied to Christians where their proper relationship with God as their Father is unknown. The fact that the Old Testament names by which God revealed Himself to the fathers and to the people of Israel should be used in Revelation is enough to settle the problem he creates. God was in old time revealed as Lord, God, Almighty; and these names are again seen in Revelation -not Father. Furthermore, there are cries for vengeance from the saints in Revelation, but such cries never belong to Christians. We are followers of One "Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not." Not once in the New Testament is there a reference to a Christian's taking vengeance, or even of his desiring it. Paul's reference to Alexander the coppersmith may seem like an exception, but a better translation will prove otherwise. Paul merely expressed his knowledge that God would reward him according to his works, not that he (Paul) desired it. See 2 Tim. 4:14.

Dr. Ladd says on page 80, "The doctrine of the resurrection had been long taught (cf. Dan. 12:2)." Let us examine this verse which he says taught the resurrection: "And many of them [Daniel's people, the Jews of verse 1] that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." We are bold to say that this verse says nothing about the resurrection, but of the bringing back Jews that have been sleeping among the nations. This will take place at Messiah's coming. (Isa. 26:19-21 and Eze. 37 deal with the same subject.) But suppose we try to make this a resurrection. Confusion is the only result, for it would be only a partial resurrection of both just and unjust. It plainly says that "many," not "all," shall awake; and these fall into two classes.

Another statement of this book is, "The Rapture of the Church before the Tribulation is an assumption it is not taught in the Olivet Discourse." p. 73. Why did the writer look for the pretribulation rapture of the saints in Matt. 24 and 25? The first intimation of such a coming was in John 14 (which was spoken on the night of His agony in Gethsemane) where the Lord said, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." v. 3. This was an unequivocal promise of His personal coming for His saints. The truth of this is later detailed in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18. At that time those who had been converted from idols to "wait" for God's Son to come back (let some say that we are not called to watch for Him - these people knew the reality of watching and waiting) became discouraged when some of their number fell asleep. To correct their misapprehension, the Apostle wrote instructions which he received from the Lord.

They feared that those who died would miss out on His coming, but the Apostle says that when He comes back to reign He will bring them with Him (v. 14). Then in a parenthesis of verses 15 through 18 he explains a special revelation of how the sleeping saints would get to be with Him in order to come back with Him. In the beginning of chapter 5, the Apostle reverts to the subject of His appearing with His saints. The Christians of this age do not belong to the night, but to the coming day. We shall be off the scene before the awful tribulation breaks.

But Dr. Ladd continues: "The only verse in this discourse [Matt. 24 and 25] which can possibly be construed to refer to the Rapture is verse 31 [of Matt. 24], 'And He shall send forth His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other!'

"There are elements of striking similarity between this verse and Paul's teaching about the Rapture of the Church. 'For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God' (1. Thess. 4:16)."

Need we call our reader's attention to the fact that there is much contrast and little or no similarity between the passages in Matthew and 1 Thess. 4? In the former, the Lord tells of His coming back as regards the Jewish people. In that case, He will use the instrumentality of angels to gather the elect Jews. For the Church, He will come and shout the shout that assembles them. This He will do personally. Of what use would angels be to gather the Church when He Himself will assemble the believers from the earth and the grave in such a short time that the transformation will take place "in the twinkling of an eye"? No, He will not send angels to gather the Church, but will do that Himself.

Of course there is the mention of the trumpet in both instances, but will not the trumpet be used to gather the elect of Israel? Verily, it will be the fulfillment of the feast of trumpets (Lev. 23:24); and then "the great trumpet shall be blown," and the dispersed Jews will come from Assyria and Egypt, and "shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem." Isa. 27:13. Can we by any stretch of imagination apply this trumpet blowing to the rapture of the Church, and assume that it will then assemble at Jerusalem to worship the Lord?

Dr. Ladd further states that the presence of angels is found in both the passage in Matt. 24:31 and in 1 Thess. 4, but this is very inaccurate; for in Matt. 24 He will send angels to gather elect Jews, but angels are not mentioned in the epistle, except that He will come with the "voice of the archangel" - where are angels spoken of? To mix these two unrelated verses is to compound confusion.

The author works hard to put the Church in the tribulation period, and applies the sealed 144,000 in Revelation to "the true Israel," as though that meant the Church. Let it be clearly stated that the Church is never called Israel in any sense. The one verse that is often quoted from Galatians (6:16), to prove this contention, is grossly misunderstood. It says: "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, AND UPON THE ISRAEL OF Goo." Those who walked according to the rule were saved Gentiles, and "the Israel of God" were saved Jews, and nothing more or less.

(To be continued)

■ The United States Navy announced that there would be no more medals attached to Vanguard missiles. Their spokesman further said that the St. Christopher medal which was attached to the gyroscopic guidance system of an earlier Vanguard vehicle (see Christian Truth, April issue, page 190) was not officially sanctioned. We did not suppose that it had been, but, that it was possible for such a superstitious thing to happen did indicate a trend that is at work. In this age when man is boasting of his enlightenment, superstition is growing apace; and in this country where the foundations were deeply laid in Protestantism (with its early abhorrence of images), religious charms and medals and statuettes are now affixed to quite a number of automobiles and used increasingly in many places. The trend is one which will culminate in that false religious system called in Rev. 17, "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." "ABOMINATIONS" here means "idols."

As we pointed out before, running concurrently with advancing superstition is infidelity, atheism, and the deification of man, which will reach the terrible climax of man's day in the bold, brazen, and violent head of the coming revived Roman Empire. When once the Lord has called home to Himself the saved from among all nations, then man's superstition and daring will quickly come to their peaks. May the Lord guard His saints from drifting toward either the one or the other, and keep His coming as the bright prospect before our souls.

## Effects of the Word

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There is a difference between getting into the light and into the spirit of the Word. Much depends on the mode of dealing with it. If I make it my study, taking either a subject in it or a portion of it, and deal with such carefully and laboriously, I shall get into the light of it. If I make it my meditation, not so much handling a given portion of it, but in a freer style letting the soul be borne onward by it, I shall get into the spirit of it. Of course I speak of secondary influences, remembering the place of the unction of the Holy Ghost.

Our perfection as disciples should be both to dwell in its light and breathe its spirit, to bear away in our hearts both the one and the other. But the disciple in whom the spirit of the Word prevails will be a happier disciple himself, and generally more grateful to others, than he in whom the light of it is principal.

Peter invites us to that word which ministers such light or knowledge as prophets searched into and angels desired. But he tells us how to pursue this high and blessed study - by laying aside moral evils - as having tasted the grace of Christ - as having fellowship with the disallowed stone - as exercising ourselves in worship of a high order. (1 Pet. 1:12; 2:1-10.)

## Egypt and Syria - Middle East: the Editor's Column

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News of the merger of Egypt and Syria into one nation, with Cairo the capital of the new state, accentuates the place that the Middle East now occupies in the growing world power struggle. It is in this section that war is most likely to break out. Russia has in the last few years forced her way into the region by military and other aid to Egypt and Syria, and her finger may well be decisive in the present move. She has outflanked her traditional old enemy, Turkey, by gaining the support of Syria and, though farther removed, Egypt.

The West was without competition in the Middle East for a long, long time, but today the nations of that part of the world are becoming pawns between the two great forces which are at work. It is not a matter of choice with the West either, for her vast industrialized economy is geared to oil, and, to a large degree, Middle East oil. The newly merged Egyptian-Syrian state now sits astride both the Suez Canal and all the operating oil pipelines carrying oil to the West. It is now possible for the new Arab state to shut off all Middle East oil to Western Europe, except the amount that could be shipped back east through the Indian Ocean and then all the way around the continent of Africa.

But aside from any consideration of oil or its control, the common hatred of the Jews, and of the State of Israel, has perhaps the greatest appeal to these Arab peoples. They have a deeply inbred hatred of Israel, and both Syria and Egypt have been nursing a new grudge since they were defeated by the Israeli armies -Syria once and Egypt twice in a decade. They both vow to get revenge.

Today Israel is caught in a pincers operation, as it lies between Egypt and Syria. The Israeli, situation is further complicated by the fact that the nation of Jordan on her east is both militarily and economically weak and shaky, and it could with very little effort be swallowed up by the new state. In that event Israel

would have three sides exposed to this avowed enemy, with a Russian-equipped Egyptian Syrian navy patrolling her seacoast on the west. Israel would be isolated or have to fight her way out.

This present alignment, however, could easily be broken, for the whole Arab world is in somewhat of a state of flux; and a coup d' etat by a military clique could overthrow the rulers in either end of the new nation. Nevertheless, the present circumstances do point up the serious threat of the Middle East to world peace and, more directly, to Israel's existence.

In the complex Middle East situation, Russia has definitely thrown her support to anti-Israel peoples and propaganda, while the West has been consistently trying to straddle the issue. Israel is definitely oriented toward the West, and it is to the West's advantage to support Israel, for she is the most dependable ally in the region; but (as before, mentioned) the West must have the Middle Eastern oil, and so does not dare to take an openly pro-Israel position. The West's stand is therefore anomalous and confused.

We cannot see through the present maze of conflicts of interests and obsessions, but we can with accuracy know how it will terminate. To this the world's statesmen are blind, but the Word of God instructs us. About the time of the Church's rapture to heaven, the Western "beast" - the head of the revived Roman Empire - will come forward and definitely guarantee Israel the land of Palestine for a period of seven years. He will give them their temple site and temple too. (Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15-22; Dan. 12:11.) Very likely, overt acts of Arab hostility will cause the "beast" to act on behalf of Israel.

There is also a direct word that at the end of these seven years the power hostile to Israel on her north will not be united with Egypt on her south, for "at the time of the end shall the king of the south [Egypt] push at him [the false king in Jerusalem]: and the king of the north [the hostile power on Israel's north - not Russia, but most likely with Russia's support] shall come against him [the false king] like a whirlwind,... and shall overflow and pass over." Dan. 11:40. Then the Jews' covenant with the revived Roman Empire "shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye [says the prophet] shall be trodden down by it." Isa. 28:18.

One lesson that may be learned from this sudden decision to unite two countries is the swiftness with which great moves take place in our day. It may also well furnish an object lesson to Western Europe which has been taking faltering steps now and again toward a union of powers. Such an event as the formation of a revived Roman Empire (which Scripture unqualifiedly predicts) requires a conditioning of the minds of the populace which have been indoctrinated through the years with national pride.

Self-preservation will be the driving force to effectuate such a merger, and the mental conditioning process has been going on for a considerable time. Now an object lesson has been furnished the West by the fusing of the two Arab nations into one on short notice.

Everything on every hand indicates that we are living at the end of this period of the grace of God. The Lord's coming for His people IS IMMINENT! And yet we fear that many of His dear people are too busy with the "cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things" to take cognizance of these times. Days of unprecedented prosperity have lulled many saints to sleep, or at least into profound drowsiness. Many dismiss the comments of the imminence of the Lord's coming as having been heard before; but a little persecution, ill health, loss of property, loss of livelihood, would quickly beget an upward look which would hopefully scan the sky for the first sign of the morning star. A shipwrecked mariner, adrift all night on the wide expanse of the ocean, would eagerly watch the eastern sky for the first indication that the morning was at hand, while those in the same vicinity on an ocean liner, safe in their comfortable berths, would be asleep. O dear fellow-Christians, "let us not sleep as do others," but with watchful patience anticipate the moment of His call to meet Him in the air. There are unmistakable signs of the closing in of this age; therefore, look up, for your redemption by power is at hand. May attachment to His Person cause us to long to see Him, while we place a correct estimate on the scene around us.

■ After considering modern Syria, it may be of profit to take a look back through history (divine and secular) and notice the place that the capital city of Damascus has occupied.

Damascus is probably the oldest city in the world, unless we except the city of Enoch which Cain built (Gen. 4:17). It is mentioned in Gen. 14:15 as being then existent and located on the right

hand of a place called "Hobah." Abraham's steward, Eliezer, was of Damascus (Gen. 15:2). Josephus the Jewish historian said that the city was founded by Uz, grandson of Shem. Be that as it may, we know it was of very ancient origin.

Damascus is beautifully situated on both banks of the Barada (Abana of Scripture) River, on the northwestern edge of a fertile valley. This fruitful valley is also watered by the river Awaj, or the Pharpar River of 2 Kings 5:12. These two picturesque rivers were almost the undoing of Syria's great commanding general Naaman in the days of Elisha. Naaman, as is well known, was a leper, although he was a victorious and honored general; at the suggestion of a captive Israelitish girl, he went to Israel to see if he could be cured of his leprosy. After some misadventures and misunderstandings, he finally arrived at the house of the prophet Elisha. There he was told to go and bathe in the Jordan River seven times and he would be healed. This was most distasteful to him, for it was a muddy river and very unlike the two streams of Damascus and the surrounding valley, so he started away in a rage. It was the wise counsel of his servants that finally prevailed upon him to go down into the Jordan, according to the word of the prophet. He was then fully healed. (2 Kings 5.)

How closely his actions parallel the vain conceit of men today who would be healed of the plague of sin by some ingenious device of their own which would maintain their honor and dignity, as they think, rather than submit to humiliation and repentance toward God, and simple faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is, however, no salvation in any other way, for "There is none other name under heaven... whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12.

In the days of David, the Syrians of Damascus came to succor the king of Zoba with whom David fought. At that time David slew 22,000 Syrians, and put garrisons in Syria, so that they became tributary to David (2 Sam. 8:5, 6). But when David's illustrious son Solomon turned away from the Lord and served other gods, the Lord stirred up Rezon the son of Eliadah who dwelt in Damascus. This man became an adversary to "Israel all the days of Solomon,... and he abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria." (1 Kings 11:23-25.)

Later, the kings of Syria, who resided at Damascus, frequently warred against the ten tribes of Israel. There have been at least three kings of Damascus called Benhadad who successfully fought against Israel. (1 Kings 15:16-20; chap. 20; 2 Kings 10:32, 33; 12:17, 18; 13:22, 3-7.) There were some deliverances from the Syrian oppressors according to the prophecy of the dying Elisha (2 Kings 13:19-25), and the only prophecy recorded of the prophet Jonah concerning Israel was of a deliverance from the king of Damascus. This was fulfilled by "Jeroboam the son of Joash"

(2 Kings 14:23-27).

About a century later the Lord brought Judah (name used to signify the two tribes) low for their sins, and Rezin the king of Syria, allied with the king of the ten tribes, came against Jerusalem; but King Ahaz of Judah trespassed more against the Lord, "For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel" (2 Chron. 28:22-25). He went so far as to write a description of a heathen altar which he saw in Damascus and send it to the high priest in Jerusalem, that he might make a copy of it. This was done, and Ahaz offered sacrifices on it, and commanded the high priest to use it. (See 2

Kings 16:10-16.)

There are many more times that Damascus is mentioned in the Old Testament, and when we come to the New Testament we find that the ancient city had a prominent place in the early days of Christianity. Saul of Tarsus was on his way to this city to persecute Christians who were there when he was stricken by the light from heaven which was brighter than the sun at noonday. It was near the city that this great enemy of Christ was brought to a sudden halt. Then he, being blind, was led by the hand into the old city of Damascus, and found lodging on Straight Street. This street is still distinguishable today. Among all the crooked and narrow streets of the old part of the city, there is one street which is straight for a mile in length and has ruins of old Corinthian columns along it. Ananias was sent to Straight Street to locate Saul in his days of anguish of soul when he neither ate nor slept for three days. And it was there that the great Apostle of the Gentiles received deliverance and was told of the Lord's call to him. And in Damascus the truth was first preached that Jesus was the Son of God. (Read Acts 9.) What a wonderful privilege was granted to Damascus of old to hear those great tidings of salvation. But Jewish opposition caused Paul to escape the city by an ignominious exit over the wall in a basket (2 Cor. 11:32).

Syria was specially blessed by God with the early proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles, for not only in the city of Damascus was Christ preached, but the city of Antioch (now only ruins) was the site of the first Gentile Christian assembly. It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians (Acts 11:26), and that Paul, Barnabas, Silas, and Mark were frequently seen. It became a center for evangelization of the Gentiles, and from there the Holy Spirit sent forth Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:2). It was there that the conflict between the liberty in Christ and the legal requirements of Judaism came to a head, and the issue was taken to Jerusalem where Christian liberty was stoutly maintained (Acts 15). And yet in spite of such great advantages, the area became spiritually darkened, and the truth lost. Today the population of Syria is 85% Mohammedan, and less than 14% professing Christians. If men will not have the truth, God will allow them to be deceived and believe a lie. This is going to happen to the now highly favored Western nations. (2 Thess. 2:10-12.)

In the year 635 the city of Damascus was taken by the followers of Mohammed. In 1401 it fell to the conquering Mongol Tamerlane, who pillaged the city and slaughtered most of its inhabitants.

On July 9, 10, and 11 of 1860, the Christian section of the city was destroyed in an uprising by the Moslem populace, and about 6000 Christians perished. It changed hands often throughout the centuries, and on September 16, 1941, it was declared the capital of the new free state of Syria; the latest census estimates the population of the city as 408,774, in 1950. Its long history has been one of frequent strife and turmoil, and this is probably not over.

We may hear more of this city in the future, for it seems destined to at least be in the orbit (if not the capital) of the future "king of the north" who will be openly hostile to the Jews in their land, as it was prominent in the days of the Selucidae, who persecuted the Jews in the days of the Maccabees, and who were then called in Scripture the kings of the north (Dan. 11). As we have pointed out in previous issues, it is entirely possible that most of the Arab world (or perhaps even the Moslem world) in Asia will be in alliance against Israel.

Palm 83 gives the future confederated enemies of Israel - the descendants of Moab and Ammon, Ishmael, Esau, the Philistines, and the Assyrians. ■ Following the merger of Egypt and Syria into the United Arab Republic, a competing federation is being formed by Iraq and Jordan. The latter is a looser but more natural union than the former; their kings will retain their respective thrones while they operate under one flag, with one army, and one foreign service; their lands are conterminous, thus not separated by Israel as are Egypt and Syria.

While this new confederation was planned as a counterbalance to the aspirations of President Masser to use his new republic (so-called) to gain ascendancy over all Arab peoples, yet it is not a source of comfort to the nation of Israel. The Arab people in both confederations have deep-seated animosity toward Israel, and they may vie with each other in expressing hostility to the Jews. The recent moves really constitute an enlargement of the potential threat to Israel.

One thing seems clearly indicated by all this Middle East activity; namely, powers both seen and unseen are stirring the Middle East in preparation for the times that Scripture has foretold. All is a continuing indication that we are living in the last hour. It is not as aforetime when some occurrence seemed to presage the nearness of the Lord's coming, but with considerable lapse of time before the next appeared. Now one portentous event follows another in rapid succession, and not in one field only. Wherever one may look - East or West, North or South, the Jews or the nations, religiosity or infidelity, all indicate that His coming is at the very door.

## Ephesians 1:4-10

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There is only one thing in which God does not suffice for Himself, and that is, in His love. His love has need of other beings besides Himself, in order to make them happy. He desires to have before Him beings in harmony with what He is, and He sets us before Him "holy and without blame." (The first of these words speaks of the character, the other rather of the conduct.) This is what He is Himself, He who is the Holy One, He who certainly is without blame; for it is impossible to find any fault in Him. He calls Himself the Holy One; He is love! Well; He sets us holy and without blame before Him in love. Precious and most important thought for us! He has resolved that the Church should be such that He could take delight in her, and behold in her before Him the reproduction of Himself- the most perfect happiness possible. He sets before Him beings like to Himself, in order to make them as happy as it is possible; He communicates to us His nature, and takes His delight in us. In order for that, He makes us "holy and without blame in love"; and these things are accomplished here below by the Spirit, though the effects are not fully shown till above in the place of perfectness. So, where is our place even now below? Before Him; and this place is not a joy only, but the most precious thing that can be imagined - to be before Him!

We do not like to be before Him when we are not holy; but when the conscience is cleansed by the blood of Christ, we are truly happy before Him. In order that we may be happy before Him, we must be holy, we must understand the tastes of the divine nature. We ourselves must find our happiness in being "holy and without blame in love." The Apostle John shows in his first epistle (chap. 4:13), that the divine nature is produced in the Christian: the Christian has received God's own Spirit; it is a man who loves, and God is in him and he in God. What is granted is nothing less than the communication of the divine nature, by which we dwell in God, and God in us, "that we might be holy and without blame before Him in love."

What we shall be above ought to be our aim here below, not as a task imposed, but as being made partakers of the divine nature to the glory of God. Now if we would realize these things, our thoughts must be above, according to the nature of the grace which we have received. It is most strengthening for us to think of the things which are above - of their source, of Jesus, of the fulfillment of this purpose of God in glory.

The Apostle has ever this adoption in view; God wills to have us for Himself before Him through Jesus, according to the good pleasure of His will, as His children. Now this is the glory of this grace which has placed us there. In these verses Paul speaks to us of the basis, of the means which God has employed, and on the certainty of which we can count. He speaks of it as a settled thing, as of a thing which we possess, and the possession of which, indeed, is necessary to us, in order that we may partake of all that of which He is about to speak to us.

This is the door by which we have come in; and having passed through the door, in Jesus, I have the certainty of being in the house. But it would be sorrowful to have Jesus only as the door, though it is precious to understand that. If we are not sure of a hearty welcome, and of the love of the Father, we depreciate the riches of His grace, for "we have redemption through His blood,

even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." v. 7. If in uncertainty we do not enjoy this grace, we do not really acknowledge it; and in order to do so we must give ourselves up entirely to God, to the power of the love of Him who tells us to come inside. Here we may remark, that the Spirit, while declaring to us very plainly what is the means of our salvation, does not reason upon it as elsewhere, making known to us its character and its sufficiency; but He speaks of it as a privilege that we possess; He tells us what we have in Christ, before showing what belongs to those who enjoy the effect of this redemption. We have redemption; and instructed in all things, we wait for the redemption of the body, in order to enjoy it. The only thing that we have to do is to contemplate the riches of the grace of God; this will be a means of drawing us close to Him.

We have seen in the preceding verses the purposes of God with regard to us, and the means which He employs to render us partakers of them; namely, redemption through Christ's blood, according to the riches of His grace. Now what we have before us is the portion we have now here below, the understanding of the mystery of God.

God has given us of His grace in all wisdom and prudence. He is not content with only giving us this portion, by bringing us into it hereafter; but He wishes to give us now, here below, the knowledge of it in all wisdom and prudence, according to His good pleasure. We have not to do with a God who sets us before His justice, but with a God of grace who acts according to His own thoughts. God wills that the Church should not be only such before Him, but that it should be also, here below, the depository of all His counsels; that it should have the understanding of the mystery of His will.

Verse 10 gives us the explanation of this mystery. God gathers together in one all things in Christ in the dispensation of the fullness of times. All that which preceded was preparatory; as the law, the prophets, etc. This verse speaks of the fullness of times, when God will arrange all things according to His mind, by setting Christ at the head of all things; and it is by being united to Him that we are made partakers of the inheritance. God acts of His own will to bring about what He wills. All shall be gathered together in one in Christ. It is by Him that all has been created, and by Him all is to be reconciled; and this is set forth here as the result of the counsels of God.

## Eshcol

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We have something besides a report of that land to which we are going. I fully grant that if the Lord had been pleased to give us only His word about the goodness of the land, that would be quite enough to claim our faith. But the question is, Has He confined it to a report of that land? Is it only tidings?

Let us look at Scripture: Eliezer, for instance, gave to Rebecca more than a report - jewels and gold, pledges of Isaac's love and samples of Abraham's wealth. And this is the office of the Holy Ghost in the great economy of redemption. He enters the scene not so much with the report of the distant glory, as with pledges and first fruits of it; He is the earnest of the inheritance. So with the spies and their clusters (Numb. 13) - they did this additional service for the camp. The report of Canaan had reached them through Moses long before this, and the spies also bore a report of it; they said that surely it was a good land flowing with milk and honey. But they did more - something which Moses their redeemer from Egypt had never done - they presented a cluster of grapes, and said, This is the fruit of it. They offered a sample, a first fruits. This was a new thing - this seeing of the produce of Canaan was something additional to all that had hitherto been done for them. Moses described the land, the spies exhibited and brought into the wilderness a taste of its pleasant produce, and this Eshcol, like the jewels of Eliezer, typifies the blessed service of the Spirit in the great work of our salvation; and this is God's way, as appears by these witnesses. He gives an earnest as well as a report. He did so in patriarchal days by His messenger from Abraham's house; He did so in Israel's days by the spies which He commanded to search the promised land (Numb. 13:3) while His people were still in the wilderness; and He does so in this age of ours among His elect by the gospel and indwelling of His Spirit who gives the soul enjoyment of the things reported in the Word, after the manner of a sample or foretaste. It is a part of the divine plan of the great economy, or purpose, to give earnest as well as reports This is essential, and not accidental. J.G.B

## The Failure of the Flesh: Numbers 11

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In the 11th chapter of Numbers we have the history of the failure of the flesh. The whole Bible is just the history of the grace and faithfulness of God, and of the failure of man. The very purpose for which the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt was that He might dwell among them; and if difficulties arose, then it was, "Rise up, LORD,... and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee"; or resting, "Return, O LORD, unto the many thousands of Israel." But there was nothing in this to satisfy the natural man. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing."

"The people complained" (v. 1). Whenever there is complaint in the heart, the flesh is at work. "It displeased the LORD." God being present with us, it is evident we are not satisfied with Him when there is complaining of heart. God has now sent down the Holy Ghost that "He may abide with you forever." But the flesh has all sorts of cravings which are contrary to the Spirit, nor can it find anything in the Spirit of God to satisfy it. If, therefore, we have murmuring and complaining of heart, we are not satisfied with what is of the Spirit of God. The heart has gotten away from God and does not have Him for its portion. Then the flesh is at work. A soul feeding on the Lord will not complain. It may be tried; then it will cry to the Lord. "They cried unto Thee, and were delivered." But complaining is just saying to God, "You are not enough for me." Trial of heart does not produce complaint; it may bring forth humiliation. "The LORD heard it; and His anger was kindled." At first it was only a partial chastening, consuming those who were in the uttermost part of the camp. They got away from the consciousness of His presence, and if they would not know His presence in joy, they must know it in judgment and chastening.

The mixed multitude (v. 4) had no possession in Canaan; they "fell a lusting." When the saints are associated with the world, many thereby are defiled. "The children of Israel... wept again." They were looking for present ease and comfort - good things here-not longing for Canaan. "We remember" (v. 5); now they were lusting like the mixed multitude. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." They had in heart turned back to Egypt, and, the flesh working in them, could recount all the good things which the flesh had in Egypt; and when Satan is thus drawing us back to the world, we never remember the deliverance, but what we lost by the deliverance. Then Pharaoh seems most bountiful. Instead of crying out by reason of hard bondage, "We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely." This was deception, for they ate it in bondage. We can remember the things of the flesh, but not the things of the Spirit.

I may remember that I was happy in communion yesterday, but I must be under the present power of the Holy Ghost to remember what Christ is. The food of yesterday will not do for today. When under the power of present communion, we are sometimes ready to say, "My mountain stands strong; I shall never be moved." When we have lost that communion, all the joy we had in it is gone. It is a constant life of faith in present exercise by the Spirit. When the saint gets into the world, all things appear lovely; but then their souls are murmuring and unhappy. "But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, besides this manna." v. 6. They did not say that the manna was not there, but that there was nothing else. So with us. It is not that Christ is not there, but

saying that He will not satisfy us now in the wilderness where we have nothing at all before our eyes but Christ to feed upon.

"The anger of the LORD was greatly kindled." v. 10. Moses said (v. 11), "Wherefore have I not found favor in Thy sight, that Thou layest the burden of all this people upon me?" Wretched me!

Here his faith broke down. Nor does he now say, "Thy people," but lays the burden on his own shoulder and breaks down; for when "I," proud flesh, did not count upon the Lord's love, and he began to make himself of importance, he failed. It was true, Moses had been sent to deliver Israel, but it was God still; and when Moses got in the flesh, and thought it was his work and strength, he did not count on God's love. "Have I conceived all this people?" In the matter of the golden calf, he had identified God with the people. Then he did not fail. And when they first murmured (v. 2), he prayed unto the Lord; but now in the general failure his own faith failed. The Lord pitied His servant and provided for it by putting some of his honor on others and taking it from him. When the heart gets off the ground of love, it counts on sorrow. "Let me not see my wretchedness" (v. 15).

Then (v. 17) God takes from the proper honor of Moses (the life of faith) and puts it on others to share it with him. Himself alone in immediate communion with God - such is the proper honor of the life of faith. In the Church, it is to bear others' burdens. So with the Lord. All the vessels of His Father's house lay on Him. True honor is to suffer, bearing others' burdens without comfort from any but God. How different the mind of Moses when alone with God's counsels, but now, "not thyself alone" (v. 17). In the matter of the spies, he said, "Thou broughtest up this people." "And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word" (Numb. 14:20), because he referred it all to God's glory. There was chastening of the people and merciful dealing with Moses, but with loss of honor, because of the want of the energy of faith. It was not lust in him, but despising the competency of God to guide and help. Though the Church may have lost the honor of the first glory, the Spirit is competent to guide and bless it now. The Lord may not "restore... counselors as at the beginning" (Isa. 1:26); and though He will not bear with present evil, yet present evil does not put the Lord away. If we are saying, Is the Lord among us? it is despising the presence of the Lord among His people, and arises from losing the joy of His presence, and then forgetting the power of His presence.

When Moses' faith fails, then he begins to reason (vv. 21, 22). In this he limited the Holy One of Israel; for, whatever Israel's sin had been the Lord's hand was not shortened. No matter what the difficulty may be, we must not limit the present power of the Holy One to carry us through the wilderness.

Eldad and Medad prophesied. It was outside the order God had set up. So when some preached Christ of contention, Paul was glad of it because Christ was preached. Moses said, "Would God that all the LORD'S people were prophets." Whenever the Lord acts by the holy power of truth, let us say, The Lord glorify Himself. It is God's prerogative to act contrary to His set order, and for us to bow to it. In the midst of failure, the energy of the Spirit of God will act in spite of the failure.

In verses 31 to 33, there is a further testimony that the Lord was among them. It was love that gave the quails, and they ought to have said, How could we ever doubt the love of God? but such was their persevering lust, that on they go to gratify it. It was this that brought the anger of the Lord; for while the flesh was yet between their teeth, the anger of the Lord was kindled against

them, and He smote them with a great plague. Thus we have the failure of Israel, their dissatisfaction with their portion in Christ, their complaining, and the heart going back to the world. Then comes the failure of Moses - losing the sense of the Lord's presence, with want of confidence in the energy of the Lord to bear all the burdens of His people.

## Faith and Fidelity

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Christian faith, or the faith by which a man becomes a Christian, is the subjection of the soul to the testimony of God. It is believing what God has spoken to us in His Word. It is based on confidence in God Himself, and what has been revealed is believed on God's authority. If a person does not believe what God has spoken, he does not believe God, and is practically an infidel. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Believing on God's authority, and on it alone, is believing God - nothing else is. True faith is faith in what God has said, because God has said it. If you require the church's sanction of it, you have not faith in God. You do not bow to His Word, and that is infidelity.

## Falling Away: True Meaning Troubling Many Souls

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### Heb. 6

This chapter is one of three passages in the New Testament which Satan has most incessantly used to torture and distress the souls of the children of God. One of three, I say, the other two being John 15 and Heb. 10

I want you to notice that it comes in here as a kind of parenthesis, and this parenthesis commences at chapter 5:11; then in chapter 7 he goes on with his subject, "For this Melchisedec," etc. You must connect, therefore, the last four verses of chapter 5 with chapter 6 in order to understand it rightly. The Apostle is writing to Jewish professors of Christianity, though there were among them a great many real, bright Christians; he is writing to those who had been brought up in the traditional religion of Judaism. And now Christianity had come in; and what is Christianity? Christianity is not outward forms and ceremonies and ordinances, but the knowledge of the Son of God - a living Man at the right hand of God - and faith addressing itself to this living One - Christ Jesus the Lord - and finding its all for time and for eternity in Him. Therefore Christianity is a heavenly system, for it has to do with heaven. Judaism was for earth and an earthly system. Satan always delights in drawing people down to earth; it is what he is busy about at this present time; he would have the heart occupied with anything short of the living Christ in the glory. The object of the Holy Ghost, on the contrary, is to attract the heart, and therefore the hearts of these to whom He is writing, to this living Man, this Christ of God in the glory, and therefore to detach them from all that is earthly and carnal.

The danger of these Jewish converts was, because of persecution, to give up a heavenly Christ, and to turn back again to the earthly ritual which God had set aside. Judaism had had its death blow in the cross of Christ. It came to an end there - was as a dead thing in God's sight. And what does God do? He sends Titus and Trajan to sweep away the dead body and bury it entirely from off the scene. Now it is no longer external ceremonies, but the Spirit of God is drawing the hearts of God's ancient people to the Person of Christ in glory; and here in chapter 5 He is reproaching them with being babes when they ought to have been full grown men. In 1 Cor. 3, where He is writing to the philosophizing Greeks, he says, Milk is for babes, and meat for men; but I cannot give you meat, for you are babes - you are carnal. That which hindered the Corinthians' growing was philosophy; that which hindered the Hebrews was traditional religion; and how much of traditional religion there is in your day and mine, you yourselves know; and if He has gathered us out around the Person of His Son, and in His name, and has shown us what the thought of His heart is as to the Church of God, in measure at any rate, it is only His own grace that has done it.

Strong meat belongs to full grown men. Now you will find he contrasts Christianity, as a spiritual and a heavenly thing, with Judaism, as an earthly, and now a carnal system. Judaism, though originally set up by God Himself, had become this, because Christ had come and been rejected; and therefore all that He had to say to man in the flesh was now over, and everything was to be heavenly, connected with the Man at God's right hand. A babe, therefore, in this epistle, is one

who is still associated with that which simply appeals to the senses, and who is not simply and only connected with a living Christ where He is.

"Wherefore, leaving the word of the beginning of the Christ" (J.N.D. Trans.). I have no doubt the Apostle alludes here to Judaism as divinely set up, and Christ as the Messiah, the head and center of it all; but Messiah, the head and center, had been slain, and so Judaism was all over before God; and therefore he says you must leave the earthly thing and go on to perfection, and by perfection in Hebrews, he means Christ in heavenly glory. "Perfect" is used in several different ways in Scripture, and you must know the scope of the passage to understand how it is used in each one. Abraham, for example, is told to walk before God and be perfect, and his perfection was to be in absolute dependence on the God who had called him out to be a pilgrim. Israel's perfection was to have nothing to do with idols - they were not perfect, they fell into idolatry. Our perfection in one way is to be always like our Father, always to show grace, for He makes His sun to rise upon the evil and upon the good (Matt. 5). Then in Phil. 3, we get "perfect" spoken of twice, first in verse 12. Paul says, "Not as though I... were already perfect," because "perfect" there means to be like Christ in glory, and Paul says he is not there yet; but a few verses lower down, in verse 15, he says, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect," because there "perfect" is as to the object, having the soul lifted to Christ where He now is in heaven - taken quite off from earth and linked with Him where He is, and going on to conformity with Him there.

All that you have in the first two verses of Heb. 6 was common to Judaism, and known quite well by the Jew. There must be "repentance from dead works," and a few certainly knew "faith toward God." Then as to "baptisms," here I apprehend the word means simply washings, of which we know there were many under the Jewish ritual; the priests had to wash their hands and their feet, the victims had to be washed ere they were offered, the defiled had to wash their clothes as well as their persons, etc. Then again as to the "laying on of hands," there was in Judaism the laying on of the priest's hands, and the laying on of the worshiper's hands on the head of the victim. "Resurrection of the dead," too, was perfectly well known among the Jews. Resurrection out from among the dead was what was not known to the Jew, but is the doctrine of Christianity. In Judaism there was a measure of light; but the veil was not rent, Christ had not died, and therefore man had not been looked upon as utterly ruined; but now Christ has come and has gone into death, and has been raised out from among the dead, and the heart is linked with Him where He is in heavenly glory; and now the only thing it looks for is the moment when He shall return and take out from among the dead His own people, His resurrection being the pattern and assurance of theirs.

Well, Paul says, laying aside all these beginnings of things (and eternal judgment too, for every Jew believed that), you are not to stop at these things now, but to pass on and learn that the judgment, the eternal judgment you deserved, was borne by another; and having been borne by Him, you can never come into it; you have passed to the other side of death and judgment.

Verses 1 and 2 belong then to Judaism, and verses 4 and 5 belong to professing Christianity. I say professing Christianity, for there are two things lacking which are the very kernels of vital Christianity. I mean, there is no mention of divine life here, and there is no mention of the possession, as a seal from God, of the Holy Ghost. "Once enlightened." What does that mean? "Oh," you say, "that must mean converted." Not at all. In John 1:9, it is said of the Lord Jesus, "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Is every man

therefore converted? Not so; but every man coming into the world is brought into the place where the light is shining.

But does every man avail himself of the light, though it is there? You know it is not so. The sun shines upon this earth day by day, and sheds its light around. Is a blind man conscious of it? Is therefore the sun less shining? The being enlightened is the coming to a man of the good tidings of the gospel, without at all necessitating his receiving them, or being converted by them. Such a one is not left in darkness whether he avails himself of the light or not.

"And have tasted of the heavenly gift." Surely that must mean really converted. No, not necessarily. They may have been moved and touched after a carnal sort. How many a one has come into a gospel preaching, heard of Christ, been deeply impressed for the moment, thought it a wonderful thing, meant to be a Christian; but there has been no work in his conscience. Like the stony-ground hearers, such receive the word with joy, and give it up for a little trouble. And yet they tasted the joy of it, they felt it was a wonderful thing that God could love such as they, and for a moment were touched, but nothing more. They leave the spot where they were thus impressed for the moment, and give it all up - give it up after tasting the joy of it - anon with joy received it.

"And were made partakers of the Holy Ghost." What is a partaker of the Holy Ghost? The Holy Ghost has come down consequent on the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, and is on this earth dwelling in each believer, but dwelling also in what professes the name of the Lord down here, namely, in the house of God; therefore, if I am in the sphere where He is acting, I am in that sense a partaker of the Holy Ghost. In the early days of Christianity, when Paul was writing, people gathered in the name of the Lord, and with the Spirit of God in their midst; they were very conscious of the presence of the Holy Ghost too in their midst, and also of His miraculous powers. Look at the gift of tongues, for example. The Holy Ghost was on earth giving a testimony to the hearts of God's people, and to the world also; and He was present in such power, that a stranger coming in became conscious that God was there. There was an atmosphere of love as well as of power that could not but be felt. If, then, a stranger came in and took his place there, he was with an assembly of people whom the Holy Ghost made one, and in this sense was a partaker of the Holy Ghost. If the Holy Ghost were acting in power, and a man were in the place where He was acting, he was a partaker of that power - felt its influence.

"And have tasted the good word of God." This even does not necessarily imply divine life in the soul. I ask you, Cannot an unconverted man admire Scripture? You know he can. He may admire it, feel its beauty and its depth, and yet his conscience not be reached by it. The Word of God may be brought to him, and he may see its preciousness, but it may leave him as lifeless as before; he may not be quickened by its means.

"And the powers of the world to come." "The world to come" is not eternity, but the future habitable earth under the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ, during which time the power of Christ will be put forth, and Satan's power will be removed from this scene, for he himself will be bound in the bottomless pit. When that time comes, and the Messiah is reigning, the lame shall walk, and the deaf hear, and the blind see, and the sick be healed; but there were beautiful little foretastes of the power of that coming kingdom seen in those early apostolic days. Did not the lame man walk and leap at the gate of the temple (Acts 4), and the palsied man arise and make his bed? and did not Dorcas, who was dead, come to life again? Do we not read too of their bringing out the sick on

beds and couches, that the very shadow of Peter might rest on them, and of their being all healed? and also that handkerchiefs and aprons were taken from Paul's body to the sick, and that their diseases departed from them, and that the evil spirits went out of them? These are the "powers of the world to come," and the Holy Ghost says all this may be known, and yet a person not be converted at all - not have a spark of divine life in him. When the disciples were casting out devils, Judas no doubt cast them out also; for we find from 1 Cor. 13 a person may have faith enough to remove mountains, and yet not have divine life at all; and Judas doubtless believed in the power of his Master, though there was no life in his soul.

In verse 6 the Apostle says that if a person who has been brought under all this power of the Holy Ghost, give it all up, it is impossible to renew t such a one to repentance, for he has crucified to himself the Son of God. What had the nation done? It had crucified the Son of God. What were the people doing? The same as their fathers did. If you give up Christianity, give up this heavenly Christ - and God says He has nothing else left - all God's resources have been employed without effect.

Why does he speak of it being impossible to renew them again to repentance? I believe because repentance is always produced in the soul by the effect of the testimony of the Spirit of God, and God had no further witness to give. When God sent His Son into this world, what did man do? Man spat upon Him and slew Him. What did God do? Did He draw the sword of judgment? No; He took Him up to heaven, and sent from heaven the Holy Ghost to say to man, You would not have Him as an earthly Christ, now will you have Him as a heavenly Christ? If man refuses this - rejects a heavenly Christ -

God, as it were, declares that there is no other means of producing repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. As another has said, "After having been the subject of this influence of the presence of the Holy Ghost, after having tasted the revelation thus made of the goodness of God, and experienced the proofs of His power, if anyone then forsook Christ, there remained no other means for restoring the soul, for leading it to repentance. The heavenly treasures were already expended; he had given them up as worthless; he had rejected the full revelation of grace and power, after having known it. What means could now be used? To return to Judaism, and the first principles of the doctrine of Christ in it, when the truth had been revealed, was impossible: the new light had been known and rejected. In a case like this there was only the flesh; there was no new life. Thorns and briars were being produced as before. There was no real change in the man's state.

"When once we have understood that this passage is a comparison of the power of the spiritual system with Judaism, and that it speaks of giving up the former, after having known it, its difficulty disappears. The possession of life is not supposed, nor is that question touched. The passage speaks not of life, but of the Holy Ghost as a power present in Christianity. To 'taste the good Word' is to have understood how precious that Word is, and not the having been quickened by its means. Hence in speaking to the Jewish Christians he hopes better things and things which accompany salvation, so that all these things could be there and yet no salvation. Fruit there could not be. That supposes life.

"The Apostle does not however apply what he says to the Hebrew Christians, for, however low their state might be, there had been fruits, proofs of life, which in itself no mere power is; and he

continues his discourse by giving them encouragement, and motives for perseverance.

"It will be observed, then, that this passage is a comparison between that which was possessed before and after Christ was glorified-the state and privileges of professors, at these two periods, without any question as to personal conversion. When the power of the Holy Ghost was present, and there was the full revelation of grace, if any forsook the assembly, fell away from Christ, and turned back again, there was no means of renewing them to repentance. The inspired writer therefore would not again lay the foundation of former things with regard to Christ - things already grown old - but would go on, for the profit of those who remained steadfast in the faith." -Synopsis of the Bible,

## Fellowship

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Fellowship with the fullness of Christ helps us, most of all, to fellowship with others. The gushing fountain springs of mighty rivers come not originally from the basin where they are first visible. They have a secret connection, unseen but constant, with a hidden, unfailing, exhaustless reservoir, in unknown distance and depth. By continual supplies, thence received, the fountain overflows; and the streams flow on and come into fellowship with other streams having a similar reservoir; and at last they all unite in the mighty ocean. So let us all draw from the hidden, unsearchable fullness of Christ, the exhaustless reservoir - hid from the eye of flesh, but known to the eye of faith. And we shall come in due time, after refreshing many a thirsty land on our way thither, into the full ocean of joy prepared for the whole Church of God.

## A Few Scriptures Connected

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"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1), for there is nothing there to condemn. He is glorified (Acts 3:13), and there abides the blessed and changeless sunshine of God's favor always. And in Him that changeless favor beams down upon me (1 John 4:17; John 17:26). I awake in the morning, and there it is in all its fullness. He would have me work on all through the hours of the long day with the certainty of it. I lie down tired and weary at night, it may be, but it is still there, still true. "Accepted in the beloved" abides (Eph. 1:6). And truly, since it has pleased God to show the "kindness.. of God" unto me (Titus 3:4 Sam. 9:1, 3) a poor sinner, and since all is "of Him, and through Him, and to Him" (Rom. 11:36), I must add, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." Psalm 16:6. To be now "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17), and now to be able to cry, "Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6), and so to turn to Him in everything - what a portion!

It is best to think little of self and talk less. One thing satisfies the heart, to think much of God and His blessed grace, and to speak of it. We shall know this in heaven. There is little in the best of us worth thinking about, and less worth speaking about. But, oh, to be ransomed and to know it! oh, to be redeemed and going through this world in the daily and hourly communion with our own Redeemer! Ah! then we learn what paltry little things seek to occupy us and fritter time away, and estimate them at their right value. Not to be occupied thus is to lose the blessed privilege which He has died to purchase for us, of bathing our souls all the day long in an ocean of love that is fathomless, but changeless and eternal.

## Four Points of Knowledge

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Read Deut. 8:1-9

"My God, the spring of all my joys,

The life of my delights;

The glory of my brightest days,

The comfort of my nights."

In these verses we have four valuable points of knowledge connected with our walk through the wilderness; namely, (1) the knowledge of ourselves; (2) the knowledge of God; (3) the knowledge of our relationship; (4) the knowledge of our hope.

1. First, as to the knowledge of self, we read: "Thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart." Here is a wondrous point of knowledge. Who can utter it? Who can penetrate the depths of a human heart? Who can tell its windings and labyrinths? The details of a wilderness life tend to bring out a great deal of the evil that is in us. At our first starting upon our Christian career, we are apt to be so occupied with the present joy of deliverance that we know but very little of the real character of nature. It is as we get on from stage to stage of our desert course that we become acquainted with self.

2. But then we are not to suppose that as we grow in self-knowledge our joy must decline. Quite the opposite. This would be to make our joy depend upon ignorance of self, whereas it really depends upon the knowledge of God. As a point of fact, as the believer advances in the knowledge of himself, his joy becomes deeper and more solid, inasmuch as he is led more thoroughly out of and away from himself to find his sole object in Christ. He learns that nature's total ruin is not merely a true doctrine of the Christian faith, but a deep reality in his own experience. He also learns that divine grace is a reality, that salvation is a reality - a deep, personal reality - that sin is a reality, the cross a reality, the advocacy of Christ a reality. In a word, he learns the depth, the fullness, the power, the application of God's gracious resources. "He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger," not that you might be driven to despair, but that He might feed "thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years."

Touching and beautiful appeal! "Forty years" of uninterrupted evidence of what was in the heart of God toward His redeemed people. "Six hundred thousand footmen" clothed, fed, kept and cared for, during "forty years" in a vast "howling wilderness"! What a noble and soul-satisfying display of the fullness of divine resources! How is it possible that, with the history of Israel's desert wanderings lying open before us, we could ever harbor a single doubt or fear? Oh! that our hearts

may be more completely emptied of self, for this is true humility; and more completely filled with Christ, for this is true happiness and true holiness. "For the LORD thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand: He knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the LORD thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing." Deut. 2:7.

3. All that we have been dwelling upon flows out of another thing; that is, the relationship in which we stand. "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee." This accounts for all. The hunger and the food; the thirst and the water; the trackless desert and the guiding pillar; the toil and the refreshment; the sickness and the healing; all tell of the same thing - a Father's hand, a Father's heart. It is well to remember this, lest we be wearied and faint in our minds (Heb. 12:3). An earthly father will have to take down the rod of discipline, as well as imprint the kiss of affection; administer the rebuke as well as express his approval; chasten as well as minister supplies. Thus it is with our heavenly Father. All His dealings flow out of that marvelous relationship in which He stands toward us. He is a "Holy Father." All is summed up in this. Our Father is the "Holy One"; and the "Holy One" is our Father. To walk with, lean on, and imitate Him "as dear children," must secure everything in the way

of genuine happiness, real strength, and true holiness. When we walk with Him, we are happy; when we lean on Him, we are strong; and when we imitate Him, we are practically holy and gracious.

4. Finally, in the midst of all the exercises, the trials, the conflicts, and even the mercies and privileges of the wilderness, we must keep the eye steadily fixed on that which lies before us. The joys of the kingdom are to fill our hearts, and to give vigor and buoyancy to our steps as we pass across the desert. The green fields and vine clad hills of the heavenly Canaan, the pearly gates and golden street of the new Jerusalem are to fill the vision of our souls. We are called to cherish the hope of glory - a hope which will never make ashamed. When the sand of the desert tries us, let the thought of Canaan cheer us. Let us dwell upon the "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." 1 Pet. 1:4. "For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass." Bright and blessed prospect! May we dwell upon it, and upon Him who will be the eternal source of all its brightness and blessedness!

"To Canaan's sacred bound

We haste with songs of joy,

Where peace and liberty are found,

And sweets that never cloy.

Hallelujah!

We are on our way to God!

"How sweet the prospect is!

It cheers the pilgrim's breast;  
We're journeying through the wilderness,  
But soon we'll gain our rest. Hallelujah!  
We are on our way to God."

## Gehazi

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### 2 Kings 8:4-6

It seems to me that Gehazi stands here in a grievous position. Smitten by the hand of God, because his heart clung to earth, even in the presence of Jehovah's mighty and long-suffering testimony, he is now a parasite in the king's court, relating the wonderful things in which he no longer took part. This poor world grows weary enough of itself to lead it to take some pleasure in hearing anything spoken of that has reality and power. Provided that it does not reach the conscience, they will listen to it for their amusement, taking credit to themselves perhaps for an enlarged and a liberal mind which is not enslaved by that which they can yet recognize philosophically in its place. But that is a sad position, which makes it evident that formerly we were connected with a testimony, while now we only relate its marvels at court. Nevertheless God makes use of it; and it does not follow that there was no truth in Gehazi. But to rise in the world, and entertain the world with the mighty works of God, is to fall very deeply.

## Giving Thanks in and for All Things

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Eph. 5:20 Thess. 5:18

These two scriptures, often classed together, are yet very different in their significance. The latter is plainly an exhortation: "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." It is not, as the reader will observe, for everything, but in everything, give thanks. And there are few Christians who would not acknowledge, we will not say their obligation, but rather, their privilege to render thanksgiving to God in all their circumstances and trials. They may be passing through deep sorrows or severe sufferings, and yet, viewing these in the presence of God, they will find abundant cause for praise. Not only so, but, as the Apostle here says, It "is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning" you. This puts the matter on another ground, revealing what is acceptable to God, and, if it may be so expressed, how grateful to Him are the thanksgivings of His people.

Turning now to the former scripture, it will be as plainly seen that it is not an exhortation. Let the reader note well the context. We are bidden not to be "drunk with wine, wherein is excess," but to "be filled with the Spirit"; and then three things are indicated as the consequence. First, our hearts will be overflowing with praise, "speaking," as it is said, "to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord"; then we shall, besides this, be "giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"; and last, we shall be "submitting" ourselves "one to another in the fear of God."

We are not then expected - and this is the point to be noticed - to give thanks always for all things as a matter of subjection to the will of God, as in the case of giving thanks in everything, but the former of these two things will only flow out as fruit of being filled with the Spirit. If therefore we desire - and what believer would not desire to be in such a state? - to be giving thanks always for all things, we must first seek to be filled with the Spirit. Now it is precisely here that the difficulty meets us, for is it not true that few of us are willing to be so filled? For indeed it involves much, even the constant refusing of self, and the daily bearing of the cross - incessant watchfulness that we be not drunk with wine (that is, seeking to be exhilarated with any of the joys of earth) and ever bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. But He gives more grace, and sufficient grace even for this; and surely none of us should have any lower object than this which the Word sets before us of being filled with the Spirit. What a change would then be wrought in our daily lives! and what power too would characterize our walk and service! Even, therefore, if we can already give thanks in everything, we should also seek grace to be in that state in which "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" would be its expression in the power of the Holy Ghost.

## God's Love Set Free

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God's love was like a river with a dam in it. God's love was pent up, so to say. Then Christ came and on His cross removed the barrier and let out the love. That is what the cross was from God's side. Sin was the barrier, and God's Son came and broke down the barrier so God's love can flow out.

For four thousand years God had been testing man to see if he were a recoverable sinner. But every trial proved he was the more hopelessly irrecoverable. Then Christ entered the place of judgment and sin-bearing - bore it - and God raised Him from the dead. When God made the world, it was not said of creation that it was the "exceeding greatness of His power." It was merely the fiat of God as Creator. God spoke, and it was done. But the resurrection of Christ from the dead was "according to the working of His mighty power," or "power of His might," by which He set Him at His own right hand. (Eph. 1:19, 20.) Here it is the energy of the force of God's might put forth to raise Christ from the dead. Christ is looked upon as man here. He is God too, but as man God raised Him. Now why is this? Because Christ went down under judgment and bore the wrath of God on account of sin - because Christ was clearing the whole scene from God's side, that the unhindered heart of God could come out in all its living fullness and take a sinner dead in trespasses and sins and carry him up to the highest place in Christ in the glory. God's love is thus set free; Christ rises from the dead, having accomplished redemption.

## Grace

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Heb. 13:9

There is nothing so hard for our hearts as to abide in the sense of grace. It is by grace that the heart is "established," but there is nothing more difficult for us really to apprehend than the fullness of grace.

Grace supposes all the sin and evil in us, and is the blessed revelation that through Jesus Christ all this sin and evil have been put away. A single sin is more horrible to God than a thousand sins than all the sins in the world - are to us; and yet, with the fullest consciousness of what we are, all that God is pleased to be toward us is Love! It is vain to look to any extent of evil; a person may be (speaking after the manner of men) a great sinner or a little sinner; but this is not the question at all. Grace has reference to what God is, and not to what we are, except indeed that the very greatness of our sins does but magnify the extent of the "grace of God." I have got away from grace if I have the slightest doubt or hesitation about God's love - I shall then be saying, "I am unhappy because I am not what I should like to be." But this is not the question; the real question is, whether God is what we should like Him to be - whether Jesus is all we could wish. If the consciousness of what we are - of what we find in ourselves - has any other effect than while it humbles us, to increase our adoration of what God is, we are off the ground of pure grace. The effect of such consciousness surely should be to humble us, but also to make our hearts reach out to God and to His grace as abounding over it all.

## Has Fallen Man a Free Will?

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A man being really set to choose between evil and good (he may be, for trial to show him what he is) is alike horrible and absurd, because it supposes the good and evil to be outside, and himself neither. If he is one or other in disposition, the choice is there. To have a fair choice, he must be personally indifferent; but to be in a state of indifference to good and evil is perfectly horrible. If a man has an inclination, his choice is not free; a free will is rank nonsense morally, because if he have a will he wills something. God can will to create. But will in moral things means either self-will, which is sin (for we ought to obey), or an inclination to something, which is really a choice made as far as will goes. In truth it is never so. Man was set in good, though not externally forced to remain so. He first exercised his will - free will, morally speaking - in eating the forbidden fruit, and was therein and thereby lost; and since then he has been inclined to evil.

## A Heart for Christ

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Read Matt. 26

In this solemn chapter, we have a great many hearts revealed: the hearts of the chief priests, the hearts of the elders, the hearts of the scribes, the heart of Peter, and the heart of Judas. But there is one heart in particular unlike all the others, and that is the heart of the woman who brought the alabaster box of very precious ointment to anoint the body of Jesus. This woman had a heart for Christ. She may have been a very great sinner - a very ignorant sinner - but her eyes had been opened to see a beauty in Jesus which led her to judge that nothing was too costly to be spent on Him. In a word, she had a heart for Christ. Passing over the chief -I priests, the elders, and the scribes, let us look for a moment at the heart of this woman in contrast with the heart of Judas and the heart of Peter.

1. Judas was a covetous man. He loved money, a very common love in every age. He had preached the gospel. He had walked in company with the Lord Jesus during the days of His public ministry. He had heard His words, seen His ways, experienced His kindness. But, alas! though an apostle, though a companion of Jesus, though a preacher of the gospel, he had no heart for Christ. He had a heart for money. His heart was ever moved by the thought of gain. When money was in question, he was all alive. The deepest depths of his being were stirred by money. "The bag" was his nearest and dearest object. Satan knew this. He knew the special lust of Judas. He was fully aware of the price at which he could be bought. He understood his man, how to tempt him, and how to use him. Solemn thought!

Be it observed also that the very position of Judas made him all the more fit for Satan. His acquaintance with the ways of Christ made him a fit person to betray Him into the hands of His enemies. Head knowledge of sacred things, if the heart be not touched, renders a man more awfully callous, profane, and wicked. The chief priests and scribes in Matthew 2 had a head knowledge of the letter of Scripture, but no heart for

Christ. They could at once hand down the prophetic roll and find the place where it was written: "Thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule My people Israel." v. 6. All this was very well, very true, and very beautiful; but then they had no heart for this "Governor" - no eye to see Him - they did not want Him. They had Scripture at their fingers' ends. They would have felt ashamed, no doubt, had they not been able to answer Herod's question. It would have been a disgrace to men in their position to exhibit ignorance; but they had no heart for Christ. And hence they laid their scriptural knowledge at the feet of an ungodly king who was about to use it, if he could, for the purpose of slaying the true heir to the throne. So much for head knowledge without heart love.

It is not, however, that we would make little of scriptural knowledge. Far from it. The true knowledge of Scripture must lead the heart to Jesus. But there is such a thing as knowing the letter of Scripture so as to be able to repeat chapter after chapter, verse after verse, yea, so as to

be a sort of a walking concordance, and, all the while, the heart be cold and callous toward Christ. This knowledge will only throw one more into the hands of Satan, as in the case of the chief priests and scribes. Herod would not have applied to ignorant men for information. The devil seldom takes up ignorant men, or stupid men, to act against the truth of God. No; he finds fitter agents to do his work. The learned, the intellectual, the deep-thinking, provided only they have no heart for Christ, will answer him well at all times. What was it drew the wise men from the east? Why could not Herod - why could not Satan - enlist them into his service? Oh! reader, mark the reply. They had a heart for Christ. Blessed safeguard! Doubtless, they were ignorant of Scripture. They would have made but a poor hand of searching for a passage in the prophets; but they were looking for Jesus - earnestly, honestly, diligently looking for Jesus. Wherefore, Herod would fain have made use of them if he could; but they were not to be used by him. They found their way to Jesus. They did not know much about the prophet who had spoken of the "Governor"; but they found their way to the "Governor" Himself. They found Him in the Person of the Babe in the manger at Bethlehem; and instead of being tools in the hands of Herod, they were worshipers at the feet of Jesus.

Now, it is not that we would commend ignorance of Scripture. By no means. People are sure to err greatly who know not the Scriptures. It was to the praise of Timothy that the Apostle could say to him: "From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation"; but then he adds, "through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim. 3:15. The true knowledge of Scripture will always conduct us to the feet of Jesus; but mere head knowledge of Scripture, without heart love for Christ, will only render us the more effective agents in the hands of Satan.

Thus, in the case of the hard-hearted, money-loving Judas, he had a knowledge without a mark of affection for Christ; and his very familiarity with that blessed One made him a suitable instrument for the devil. His nearness to Jesus enabled him to be a traitor. The devil knew that thirty pieces of silver could purchase his service in the horrible work of betraying his Master.

Reader, think of this! Here was an apostle - a preacher of the gospel - a high professor; yet, underneath the cloak of profession, lay a heart exercised in covetous practices - a heart which had a wide place for "thirty pieces of silver," but not a corner for Jesus. What a case! what a picture! what a warning! O all ye heartless professors, think of Judas! think of his course! think of his character! think of his end! He preached the gospel, but he never knew it, never believed it, never felt it. He had painted sunbeams on canvas, but he had never felt their influence. He had plenty of heart for money, but no heart for Christ. As "the son of perdition," he "hanged himself," and "went to his own place." Professing Christians, beware of head knowledge, lip profession, official piety, mechanical religion - beware of these things and seek to have a heart for Christ.

2. In Peter we have another warning, though of a different kind. He really loved Jesus, but he feared the cross. He shrank from confessing His name in the midst of the enemy's ranks. He boasted of what he would do, when he should have been self-emptied. He was fast asleep when he ought to have been on his knees. Instead of praying, he was sleeping; and then, instead of being still, he was drawing his sword. He followed Jesus "afar off," and then warmed himself at the high priest's fire. Finally, he cursed and swore that he did not know his gracious Master. All this was terrible! Who could suppose that the Peter of Matt. 16:16 is the Peter of Matt. 26? Yet so it is. Man in his best estate is but like a sere autumn leaf. There is none abiding. The highest position,

the loudest profession, may all end in following Jesus afar off, and basely denying His name.

Peter would have spurned the thought of selling Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, and yet he was afraid to confess Him before a servant maid. He did not betray Him to His enemies, but he denied Him before them.

Christian reader, remember Peter's fall, and beware of self-confidence. Cultivate a prayerful spirit. Keep close to Jesus. Keep away from the influence of this world's favor. "Keep thyself pure." Beware of dropping into a sleepy, torpid condition of soul. Be earnest and watchful. Be occupied with Christ. This is the true safeguard. Do not be satisfied with the mere avoidance of open sin. Do not rest in mere blamelessness of conduct and character. Cherish lively warm affections toward Christ. One who follows Jesus "afar off" may deny Him before long. Let us think of this. Let us profit by the case of Peter. He himself afterward tells us to "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith." 1 Pet. 5:8, 9. These are weighty words, coming, as they do, from the Holy Ghost, through the pen of one who had suffered so much from lack of vigilance.

Blessed be the grace that could say to Peter, before his fall, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Mark, He does not say, "I have prayed for thee, that thou mayest not fall." No; but "that thy faith fail not" when thou hast fallen. Precious,

matchless grace! This was Peter's resource. He was a debtor to grace from first to last.

3. And now, one word as to the woman with the alabaster box. She stands forth in bright and beautiful contrast with all. While the chief priests, elders, and scribes were plotting against Christ "in the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas," she was anointing His body "in the house of Simon the leper." She was wholly absorbed with her object, and her object was Christ. Those who knew not His worth and beauty might pronounce her sacrifice a waste. He who could sell Him for thirty pieces of silver, might talk of giving "to the poor"; but she heeded not. She had found her all in Christ. The disciples might murmur, but she could worship and adore. Jesus was more to her than all the poor in the world. She felt that nothing was "waste" that was spent on Him. Happy woman! May we imitate her! May we ever find our place at the feet of Jesus, loving, adoring, admiring, and worshiping His blessed Person!

Reader, let us ponder these things. And may the Lord grant us a heart for Christ!

## Heavenly Truth and Practice

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Christianity is characteristically heavenly. He who is essentially its life and exemplar is Christ, as we know Him, risen and enthroned at the right hand of God; and the Holy Ghost is come down, since Christ was glorified, to be the power and guide of the Christian and the Church here below. It was the business of the Christian individually and corporately to maintain this for their testimony, both as truth and in practice. Not only have they not maintained it, but they have allowed themselves to become Judaised. What the Apostle Paul fought against so energetically during his ministry, has taken place; and there has been a most painful compound of heavenly truth with earthly rule, practice, and hope. The consequence is that conglomerate, which we commonly now call "Christendom," consisting of Greek church and Roman, Oriental and Protestant bodies of every description, national or dissenting.

Where is the witness to the one body animated by the one Spirit? These various and opposed communities may have different measures of light, but in none do they exhibit an approach to an adequate testimony, either of the Spirit's presence and power, or of the Word of God, in subjection to the Lord Jesus. They really testify to the actual state of ruin which pervades the house of God, though doubtless to His infinite patience and grace.

## Himself

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Beloved fellow believer, is there not a tendency at this time to overlook the Person of the Lord, what He is in Himself, in the common testimony that is now borne so extendedly to His work? Would it not be for His glory, and very highly edifying for us, His people, if we were acquainting ourselves more really with a living, personal JESUS? We need His work surely for the conscience; we need Himself for the heart. The region of doctrine may be surveyed, as by a measuring line and a level, instead of being eyed as the place of the glories of the Son of God, with an admiring, worshiping heart. And yet, it is this He prizes in us. He has made us personally His objects, and He looks for it, that we may make Him ours.

There are surely doctrines to learn, lines of conduct with which to make ourselves acquainted; but, in doing so, we need to guard against learning doctrines as bare doctrines, or acquainting ourselves with lines of conduct in an abstract way. Rather let us be found, as to the attitude of our hearts when reading the Word, sitting like Mary of old at the feet of JESUS hearing His word (Luke 10:39), having Himself a living Person (whose love we know) consciously before us and finding in Him the living embodiment of the doctrines learned, and the practical expression of the line of conduct enjoined; then are we truly learning of Him (Matt. 11:29). Truth so learned has the effect of producing in us meekness and lowliness of heart (Matt. 11:29) instead of puffing us up (1 Cor. 8:1). And the line of conduct learned thus guards against legality as the affections are brought into play and the "love of Christ" becomes the constraining motive.

The Holy Spirit delights to tell of the work of Christ, and to bear it in its preciousness and sufficiency to the heart and conscience. Nothing could suffice for a moment, had not the work been just what it was, and so counseled and ordered of God. But still the work of the Lord Jesus Christ may be the great subject, where He Himself is but a faint Object, and the soul will then be a great loser.

## "I Shall Not Want": the 23rd Psalm

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"I shall not want"

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want."

I SHALL NOT WANT REST. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures."

I SHALL NOT WANT REFRESHMENT. "He leadeth me beside the still waters."

I SHALL NOT WANT FORGIVENESS. "He restoreth my soul."

I SHALL NOT WANT GUIDANCE. "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

I SHALL NOT WANT COMPANIONSHIP. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me."

I SHALL NOT WANT COMFORT. "Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

I SHALL NOT WANT FOOD. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies."

I SHALL NOT WANT JOY. "Thou anointest my head with oil." I SHALL NOT WANT ANYTHING. "My cup runneth over."

I SHALL NOT WANT ANYTHING IN THIS LIFE. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

I SHALL NOT WANT ANYTHING IN ETERNITY. "And I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."

## Iraq - Lebanon - Egypt - Dispensations: the Editor's Column

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How suddenly world-shaking events take place in these days! It took only two hours on the morning of July 14th for rebels in the Iraqi army to overthrow the established government of Iraq, and set up another government. From then on, events moved swiftly and threatened to embroil the whole Middle East, if not the major powers of the world. Quickly the United States moved men and equipment into tiny Lebanon in an attempt to protect the government of that country, while Great Britain moved forces into Jordan, hoping to save King Hussein and his government.

There was a time when the Balkan nations of Southeastern Europe were called the "tinderbox" of Europe, and it was there that the first world war broke out. Today, however, it is growingly apparent that of all the troubled spots on earth, the Middle East is the world tinderbox. Anything can happen there, and what happens there affects the whole world immediately.

There are many natural reasons for this, as men speak; for instance, the great oil resources of the area which both East and West wish to control (and Western Europe is definitely in need of that oil). It is there where East meets West, and North and South cross each other's paths. It is the great crossroads of the land mass of Europe and Asia, and the road into the continent of Africa. It is also on the East and West trade route through the Suez Canal.

This area was under real Western control until about six years ago; then things began to happen. Britain and France withdrew from the area, and King Farouk of Egypt was overthrown. From then on, the turbulence of the Middle East has caused great misgivings among statesmen who seem powerless to stem the tide which began to flow in the opposite direction. Arab nationalism began to flourish, and finally Gamal Abdel Nasser came into power in Egypt; he is bent on establishing an Arab empire throughout the region.

Besides Russia's voracious appetite which desires to swallow everything possible, she is also known to foment trouble wherever there is an opportunity. She always hopes to win (and most frequently has won) something by fishing in such troubled waters. Even in the days of the Czars, Russia enviously eyed the Middle East and its warm water ports into the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf. The Czars never got to see any realization of their dreams, as this 20th century behemoth has. She is now poised, awaiting the opportune moment to seize that vital region.

There is another reason for the very delicate balance in the Middle East, and that is the new nation of Israel. While her homeland was originally in the area, her years of exile in the far corners of the earth have given her people a Western orientation. It is in the West where the Jews have flourished generally (not counting the cruel oppression and genocide practiced against them by Hitler). But today her leanings are toward the West.

It is Israel's very presence in the Middle East that has helped to promote the cause of Arab nationalism, for it has furnished every demagogue a platform on which to rally the masses behind him in opposition to Israel. Many of the leaders of the Arabs are not nearly as bitter against Israel as their speeches seem to indicate, but Israel's presence furnishes an ever-ready lament by the

leaders to the masses to stir them to a frenzied zeal ready to extirpate the sons of Jacob from the land. Some leaders, however, with large segments of the Arab populace are so thoroughly bitter against Israel that their animosities are easily inflamed.

Not long ago, President Nasser executed a clever maneuver by which he annexed Syria on the north of Israel, thus forming what is called the United Arab Republic. In all these moves he has had both secret and public support from Russia. At that time, Jordan and Iraq made a close alliance which was to offset the new United Arab Republic. Now, evidently through Nasser's intrigue, the Jordan-Iraq alliance has been broken; and it looks like Iraq will probably fall into Nasser's empire. After that, the insecure state of Jordan is all that the dictator Nasser would require to encircle Israel on north, east, and south; and presumably he could control the waters on her west coast, by using Russian ships. There may be many direct and indirect aspirations in Egypt's spreading herself, but let us never forget that perhaps the foremost motive is to get into position for the day when she can crush Israel. When Nasser was an Egyptian army officer during the war against Israel in 1948, he with his country sustained a humiliating defeat at Israel's hands, which he is determined to avenge at some time.

But it is certain that God is working out His own designs, and in the end they will be accomplished—all man's wit and cunning notwithstanding. At the time of the end, God is going to stir the nations as it pleases Him. He will bring them down to Israel to meet their doom, not from Israel but at His own hand of power. Zech. 14 is much to the point:

"Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle.... Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle." Chap. 14:1-4. This is the testimony of the Old Testament, and the testimony of the New Testament is similar:

"And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils demons, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty... and he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon." Rev. 16:13-16.

The rapidity with which events have taken place in the last decade is astonishing. Think of a few of the more important happenings: Israel, a nation after almost two millennia of wanderings; Egypt out from under the power of England; also Egypt a rising power, with great aspirations; Russia is definitely a power in the Middle East, through her backing of Egypt and Syria; Russia near her goal of warm water ports on her south, and with access to the Persian Gulf almost within her grasp. All she needs now to attain the last mentioned is an access road through Iran into Iraq and the Persian Gulf. If things are moving at that pace now, how easily they could be accelerated when once the Lord has taken home His beloved Church. Fellow-Christian, let us take heart and rejoice, for He Himself will SOON come for us.

If some of our readers are puzzled by the fact that Egypt seems to be the dominating factor both to the north and south of Israel, instead of there being an independent power north of Palestine, let us remember how quickly changes take place. See how soon the alliance of Iraq and Jordan vanished, and even today some statesmen talk of the possibility that a strong man may emerge in

Iraq and unite the country with Syria, thus breaking the bond between Syria and Egypt - between North and South. Scripture does definitely speak of the king of the north and the king of the south during the days of the tribulation (Dan. 1:1: 4 0 4 5), and a few days of convulsions in the region could force a complete realignment. We, with an understanding of dispensational truth and with the Word of God open before us, can know what is coming, while the statesmen of the world try their best to bring peace, only to meet with disappointments and frustrations. That One is coming whose right it all is. To Him be the glory and the dominion, forever and ever.

It may be of interest to some to recall that Iraq contains the old cradle of the human race. It was in that general region where the Garden of Eden was, and from that area mankind spread abroad after the confounding of the languages at the tower of Babel. The fertile region between the Euphrates and the Tigris rivers often found a place in the Biblical accounts. The city of Nineveh spoken of in Gen. 10 was located on the Tigris, and the great city of Babylon was situated on both sides of the Euphrates.

■ (Continued from last month)

For Christians today to reject dispensationalism is to go (as it were) to sea without chart or compass, trusting only to their own feelings and intuitions. Such will not know whither they sail, nor have directions day by day how to live. During the past economies in God's ways on earth, His saints have

needed directions for their path, and have required faith to discern His mind in each particular period. When Saul first reigned, for instance, obedience to the king was obedience to God; when David was rejected, faith identified itself with a king in hiding; when the time came to make David king, the ones who discerned what to do came to make him king in Hebron. Some, of whom we read, "had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do." 1 Chron: 12:32. O Christians with true understanding of these times! Such will not belittle dispensational truth.

God's people have always needed a directed path for their feet since the expulsion from Eden. Multitudes of examples might be adduced, but let us mention a few: there was a time when Isaac was told, "Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of." Gen. 26:2. Later, Jacob was told, "Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will make of thee a great nation." Gen. 46:3. And in the days of Jeremiah, when the people thought to go down into Egypt to escape trouble, God said, "O ye remnant of Judah; Go ye not into Egypt." Jer. 42:19. At that time God had given Jerusalem into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar to destroy it; but, in the days of Ezra, to be in the current of His thoughts one would help to build the temple; and in the days of Nehemiah, discerning Jews would help rebuild the walls of the city. Then in the days when the epistle to the Hebrews was written, Christian discernment made them leave the temple and all its ritual, even as they were exhorted to go forth unto Christ outside of the camp of Judaism.

From these few examples it should be evident that a Christian cannot pick up his Bible and read just anywhere and find directions for his feet. If he does not read discerningly, he may think it is his duty to help rebuild a temple in Jerusalem today, or do any of thousands of things that would be totally inconsistent with his position as a Christian, whose life, commonwealth, and hopes are in heaven (Col. 3:1-3).

A lack of understanding of dispensational truth led the men who wrote the page headings in our King James Version Bibles to make huge mistakes. Take up the average Bible and run through the headings of the Old Testament and you will find the blessings promised to Israel ascribed to the Church, while the threats of judgment are generally applied to Israel. Is that consistent? Is it in any sense the truth?

Are we to consider that Israel and the Church are one and the same thing? This is exactly what the rejection of dispensational understanding leads to. This has been the bane of the Church from its formation at the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Judaizing teachers have ever sought to corrupt the Church and bring Judaistic principles into Christianity, and the Apostle Paul contended energetically against this all through his ministry. Today a new term is in common vogue - "Judeo-Christianity." Let it be once and forever clear that the Church is not an adjunct of Judaism. Did not the Lord Himself say that one cannot put new wine into old bottles (or skins) lest the bottles burst and the wine be lost? But the lack of the clear-cut distinction between the two has caused Christendom to put many patches on the old bottles in an effort to contain the new within the old.

Dr. George E. Ladd, of the Fuller Seminary of Pasadena, California, has recently written a book entitled, "The Blessed Hope." Dr. Ladd takes a premillennial outlook, but his book is an attack on the doctrine of the Lord's coming for His Church before the tribulation. Hence the title of his book is misleading, for we have not a present hope of expecting our Lord if we have to wait and go through the great apostasy and the tribulation period, perhaps to suffer martyrdom. The immediacy of the hope being lost, it ceases to be the blessed hope. Certainly the apostasy and martyrdom are poor substitutes for the hope of seeing Him momentarily. The one who embraces these has lost the blessed expectancy which many Christians have rightly enjoyed.

It would take a lengthy tome to answer Dr. Ladd's book, but it is certainly answerable. It displays much of the confusion that goes with the denial of dispensationalism; at times it misrepresents the true position of those who zealously hold the pretribulation rapture of the saints of this age; for instance, it says that dispensationalists define His pretribulation coming "in terms of escape from suffering [in the tribulation] rather than union with Christ." This is not true for the great body of those who watch for their Lord.

Dr. Ladd's remarks on page 130 exhibit a sad lack of understanding of that notable prophecy of our Lord's on Olivet. In His discourse with His own after His public ministry was closed, He opens up the future and explains His coming back, in three parts: first (Matt. 24:1-44), He tells of His coming as regards the Jewish people; second (chap. 24:45 to chap. 25:30), as it will relate to the Christian profession; third (chap. 25:31 to end), with reference to the Gentile nations. Dr. Ladd, however, will have the Church treated of throughout. He sees no distinction between "the gospel of the kingdom" and "the gospel of the grace of God." Neither will he allow that it is the Jews who are to flee from Jerusalem when an idol (spoken of in Dan. 12, which Dr. Ladd confuses with the antichrist pp. 72, 73) is set up in the holy place of their new temple; for he makes this fleeing to apply to Christians. Dr. Ladd says: "The people of God are seen in the Tribulation. They are to be put to flight by the Abomination of Desolation (Matt. 24:20). The Tribulation will bring martyrdom to the elect.... Who are the elect? Are they the Church, or Israel? Dispensationalism solves this problem by the application of its major premise," meaning Israel, of course. But will Dr. Ladd please explain, if his thesis is correct and it means the Church, why it is that Christians are to pray

that their flight be not on the Sabbath day? His stand would please the Seventh-day Adventists, who would make Jews out of us. Did he never discover that in Luke 21, when the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70 was prophesied, the believers were not inhibited by Jewish rules of a Sabbath day? But when the Church has been translated to heaven, and the Jews become once more the center of God's ways, they will be bound by the Sabbath; therefore the Lord said (anticipating the Jewish remnant who will be in Jerusalem at that time), "Pray ye that your flight be not... on the sabbath day." v. 20.

Dr. Ladd's confusion over the "abomination of desolation" is an example of his inexactitude in dealing with subjects which have been ably set forth by spiritual men of profound learning. He speaks of, "The coming of antichrist who is called the Abomination of Desolation" (pp. 72, 73), and "the persecutions of the Great Tribulation which shall be inflicted upon the people of God by the Abomination of Desolation" (p. 86), and "In both Matthew and the Revelation where the Great Tribulation is prophesied, the people of God are seen in the Tribulation. They are put to flight by the Abomination of Desolation" (p. 130). He thus plainly identifies the "abomination of desolation" with what he terms the antichrist; by this he means "the beast" of the Roman Empire (the "antichrist" is more generally considered as the second beast of Rev. 13 - the false Messiah in Jerusalem).

This word "abomination" in both Dan. 12:11 and Matt. 24:15, in both the Hebrew and the Greek, means "an idol" or "idolatry" and does not refer to a man. It is the same original word that is used in Dan. 9:27, "for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate"; or better translated, because of idolatry "shall come one that maketh desolate" (A.R.V.). It is plainly evident that the "abomination of desolation" is the image which the second beast of Rev. 13 makes of the first beast of that chapter, whereupon worship of the image becomes mandatory. And the Lord Jesus in giving instructions for the Jewish remnant of the future day tells them to flee Jerusalem when this image is set up, or stands "in the holy place" of the temple. A man will not stand in the holy place, but an idol will.

Furthermore, the Lord's directions concerning the placement of this abomination of desolation in the temple instructed "them which be in Judea" to "flee to the mountains.": To make this passage instruction for all the Church during the tribulation would of necessity place all the Church in Judea. Such an idea

would be nonsense. Only confusion results from mixing instructions for the Church with those for a future Jewish remnant. On page 131 of his book, he challenges the believers who enjoy the blessed hope by referring them to Rev. 17, where the corrupt woman - "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" is said to be "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." Here he again asks, "Who are the saints

who suffer martyrdom? Are they the Church or Israel?" He seems to feel he has executed a coup here, and says that dispensationalists apply their major premise to this; that is, they make the martyrs to be of Israel. The evidence of Scripture is that this woman is the last stage of the false church which has had the seven-hilled city of Rome for its headquarters. Would not Dr. Ladd admit that according to this scripture God is going to judge her for the blood she shed in her inquisitions, and her systematic destruction of those whom she called heretics? It is a review of her whole

course, and not merely tribulation martyrdom committed by her.

In an article of Dr. Ladd's published in Eternity magazine of May, 1957, wherein he attempts to answer Dr. John F. Walvoord's new book, *The Rapture Question*, he says: "In the Old Testament, Israel was the people of God; now, it is the church; and there is continuity rather than discontinuity between the two. There is one people of God, not two. This truth is clearly set forth in Rom. 11. There is one olive tree - the people of God. Natural branches have been broken off - unbelieving Israel. Wild branches have been grafted on - believing Gentiles." And this he makes out to be the ekklesia, or Church of God. This is a ready-made example of the confusion Christians get into by rejecting dispensational truth. How readily he mixes Israel and the Church. They never were one, or intended to be one. Israel will be God's earthly people of the future, but the Church will be the heavenly bride of Christ.

Let us notice Dr. Ladd's confusion regarding Rom. 11. He says the olive tree there represents the one people of God. This it does not. The olive tree there is the tree of privilege and blessing on the earth. Surely Israel had many advantages - "much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." Rom. 3:2. They were cut off, but not until after they rejected the gospel sent down from a glorified Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Gentiles have been brought into the privileged place. They have the advantage today, for there is no veil over their hearts. But the branches which are grafted in are not believing Gentiles, but Gentiles as Gentiles. If this is not so, will Dr. Ladd say that believing Gentiles who have been brought into this "one people of God" are to be cut off? Will he allow believers to be utterly lost? Yet his statements make that a necessity. His arguments are bankrupt.

When the Apostle began to speak about the olive tree, he said, "For I speak to you Gentiles" (v. 13). Thus there is no excuse for the confusion of supposing he was speaking to believers among them. How could he say to a believer, "Thou shalt be cut off." Down in the 25th verse he began to explain truth to believers, and his form of address changed to, "I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery." But rejecters of dispensational truth have not learned what Paul sought to explain to his brethren in the remainder of the 11th chapter of Romans. It is a marvelous unfolding of God's wisdom in His dispensational dealings with Jew and Gentile which leads the Apostle into a grand doxology: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" etc.

## Is God Sovereign?

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Where is man's so-called free will in the following verses? "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." 1 Cor. 12:3.

"God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, bath quickened us together with Christ." Eph. 2:4, 5.

"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him." Col. 2:13. "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. "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus." 1 Cor. 1:30.

"Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." John 15:16. "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures." Jas. 1:18. "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:13.

" 'Twas the same grace that spread the feast,

That gently forced me in;

Else I had still refused to come,

And perished in my sin."

## Israel and Man-Made Progress: the Editor's Column

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May 14 is a memorable date in contemporary history, for on that day in 1948 the new State of Israel was born. Simultaneously with the withdrawal of the last British troops which had occupied Palestine under a League of Nations mandate, the Palestinian Jewish leaders announced to the world that they had established a sovereign state; they were henceforth to be reckoned among the world-family of nations. This was no ordinary, everyday event; it was of epochal significance and almost an incredible event, for since the remote year of A.D. 70 the Jews had no national polity or even center of religion. They had been dispersed to all points of the compass.

The prophet Hosea had announced that the Jews were to be "wanderers among the nations" and abide "many days" without a king or a prince, and without the appointed means of the worship of God; for they were to have no sacrifice, or official priest wearing the "ephod." God had further announced that they were to be unwelcome people in many lands of their dispersion, for they were to "be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein is no pleasure." (See Hos. 3:4 and 8:8.) This has been their condition for almost two millennia. They have been ostracized and proscribed in one nation after another. They were driven out of Rome, Spain, England, and other nations in turn. They met the inquisition, the pogroms, and the gas chambers, and were deprived of a means of livelihood time and again. They were confined in ghettos, and forbidden to own land; yet they lived and continued as a distinct people.

We should not fail to see the hand of God in all this. In Old Testament times they turned from the living and true God to worship the idols of the heathen, and God turned them over to Nebuchadnezzar for chastisement. After 70 years of exile in Babylon, a remnant was permitted to return under the Persian monarch's favor (as had been prophetically foretold in Isa. 44:26 through 45:4). But they were not masters of their own possessions or bodies; they were beholden to Gentile sovereigns

for all things. Nehemiah described their plight in these words: "Behold, we are servants this day, and for the land that Thou gavest unto our fathers,... we are servants in it: and it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom Thou hast set over us... also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress." Neh. 9:36, 37. Nevertheless, through much hardship and trouble, they continued. Finally, at the appointed time, their Messiah appeared according to the conditions laid down in their prophetic scriptures. When He came, Herod an Idumean (a descendant of Esau) was king in the land, and there was no room for David's greater Son. In due time they rejected their Messiah precisely as had been foretold by the prophets. Led on by their priests and chief men they clamored for His death, and disclaimed Him as their king, saying, "We have no king but Caesar." John 19:15. When Pilate, the Roman governor, sought to free Him whom he recognized as an innocent man, they cried out, "His blood be on us, and on our children." Matt. 27:25.

For their idolatry, they had been subjected to Babylonian captivity; for their rejection of Christ and choice of Caesar and Barabbas, they were destroyed by Titus and dispersed for almost twenty

centuries. The Lord Jesus wept over their coming destruction by the Romans (Luke 19:41). When He gave them the parable of the vineyard and the husbandmen, He told them of His own rejection by them and asked them what the owner of the vineyard would do to those husbandmen; and they replied, "He will miserably destroy those wicked men." Matt. 21:41. He further said that God would send His armies (the Romans under Titus) and destroy them and burn up their city (Matt. 22:7). He also said that "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Luke 21:24.

Thus we see that it was by no accident that Titus destroyed Jerusalem and dispersed the Jews. It was a divine judgment that befell them, for the "Scripture cannot be broken." The prophet Isaiah arraigned Israel for their idolatry in chapters 40 to 48, inclusive, and in the last verse of chapter 48 said, "There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked"-the wicked being those who forsook Jehovah for idols. Then in the next chapters their Messiah is mentioned, also their rejection of Him, and this section ends with, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Isa. 57:21. The wicked of this latter verse are those who rejected their Messiah, the Son of God.

Their preservation as a distinct people was not the result of fortuitous circumstances. They, like Cain, had a mark on them that was to keep them from being exterminated. Cain had killed his brother, and they rejected Him who came down in grace as their Brother. (He, the blessed Son of God, came of David's seed according to the flesh [Rom. 1:3].) Cain was to be preserved and bear his punishment, and so were the Jews who cast out their King. A summation of their law was, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," and, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. 22:37-40); yet they did not love the Lord Jesus as God, nor as their neighbor (which place He had in grace taken). To one enlightened by the Word of God, Jewish preservation is clearly understood and is not, as some call it, "the enigma of Jewish survival."

However, the condition in which they have existed for almost 2000 years is not going to last forever. God has decreed certain limitations on the days of their exile and suffering. The language of faith in the Old Testament, when anticipating their fall, was a cry to God, "How long?" And God's word regarding their dispersion contains an "until." When Isaiah was told to prophecy about Israel's being blinded, the prophet said, "Lord, how long?" God answered, "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate.... But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return." Isa. 6:11, 13. And the Lord Jesus said, "And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Luke 21:24. The terminus of their exile and suffering is definitely decreed.

There are many people in Christendom who say that God will not reinstate Israel as His special possession in the land which He gave to their fathers. This is either ignorance or self-will, or both. To reject the thought of Israel's reinvestiture is to reject Scripture. Rom. 11 alone should decide the issue; first the Apostle reasons that God has not cast away His people by proving that at that very time there was a remnant saved according to His purposes in grace (v. 5). There never was a time in this age when there were not Jews saved and brought into the Church of God on earth. At the beginning, all the believers were Jews. But then the Apostle continues to show in the figure of the olive tree how the people of promise had been cut off from the tree symbolizing privilege on earth, but were to be grafted in again. His promises to Abraham were unconditional, although the Jews had subsequently put themselves under the law as a condition on which their blessings were

to hang. They lost everything for the time on that basis, for their unfaithfulness, but God will yet fulfill to the letter His irrevocable promises to Abraham.

The Apostle by the Spirit of God says, "Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles." Rom. 11:11. They stumbled over their Messiah when He came in lowly grace, but this does not mean that they have been permanently rejected. In the present time, however, their rejection of the Lord Jesus has opened the way to bring the Gentiles into this marvelous grace of God. But the Apostle goes on to speak of the day coming of Israel's "fullness." They are to be blessed and be a blessing. The day of their fullness will bring blessing to the earth. After conclusive divine reasoning on the point of Israel's restoration to His special favor, the Apostle adds, "that blindness in part [not total, for some have always believed and received the Lord Jesus] is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in." The present is the time of the fullness of the Gentiles -their being offered the mercy and salvation of God - but they have not continued "in His goodness." Christendom, with all its increased emphasis on religion as a bulwark against communism, is generally rejecting the gospel. They are soon going to lose their present preferred position and Israel be brought back into it.

For many centuries Palestine was almost totally uninhabited by the descendants of Jacob - the people of the promise and of the Book. In the year 1882, only 25,000 lived there. Toward the end of that century, Zionism became active in promoting the return of Jews to the land. By 1914, about 100,000 Jews resided there, but their numbers soon began to diminish as they emigrated to other lands. Then during the first world war, a notable Jew, Dr. Chaim Weizmann, who later became the first president of the new state of Israel, developed acetone, needed to make TNT, for the British. This definitely helped the allies to win the war, and he was offered great honors; but he chose rather to petition for a national home for his people. This in turn brought the Balfour declaration, stating that the British government looked with favor upon Palestine as a land for the Jews. Jewish population then mounted from only 55,000 in 1919 to 600,000 in 1942. And when the auspicious day of May 14, 1948 came, there were only about 650,000 Jews in Palestine; but many seeking entry had been interned on the Island of Cyprus. During these ten years of Israel's sovereignty, well over 1,000,000 Jews from 60 nations have taken up residence in the land of their fathers. So on their independence day this year, there are almost 2,000,000 Jews back in the land. It is a reunion of the land, the people, and the language.

But what should be the Christian's view of this achievement of the seemingly impossible? Are we to rejoice over Israel's being gathered together in Palestine as though this is the work of God of which He spoke by His prophets? We judge not. While God moves behind the scenes and permits or holds in check the plans and schemes of men, the present revival of the Jewish nation and the great strides of the past decade in their Palestinian-held territory bear no resemblance to God's promises to gather them back to their land. God has said.: "Fear not; for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west:... even every one that is called by My name." Isa. 43:5, 7. "With great mercies will I gather thee.... With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer." Isa. 54:7, 8. "And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I have not cast them off: for I am the LORD their God." Zech. 10:6. And the Lord Himself said, "And He shall send His angels with a great sound of

a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds." Matt. 24:31. Very many scriptures might be adduced to prove that it is God Himself who shall do the gathering, and they shall be called by His name. It will not be a return to the land merely, but to God.

What we have been witnessing is preponderantly the work of men of zeal, not that which is to characterize what their Messiah will display on Israel's behalf. They refer to the idea of a coming Messiah, but only as an indefinite thing. One of their leaders, when asked about the coming of the Messiah, said, "We do not know what the coming of the Messiah will be, whether a person or a national revival, but we know that it will not be the Christian Messiah." They speak much more of their accomplishments. Mr. Abba Eban (Israel's ambassador to the United Nations and the United States) is regarded as the Voice of Israel, and indeed a book of his many speeches has been entitled, "The Voice of Israel," in which the great leader says: "The restoration is described by Jewish historians both as a Divine will and as a human duty. The Divine promise decreed that this people should be restored; it was, therefore, its own duty not only to dream but also labor for that redemption." "A dream which had no ostensible prospect of realization was carried to fulfillment against all calculation of material chance."

In one chapter of his book the famous ambassador takes issue with the modern historian, Arnold Toynbee. Toynbee insists that if and when God would restore Israel to their land, He would do it without their help. But Abba Eban says in rebuttal: "It is true that the Hebrew doctrine of history describes the Restoration as a Divine purpose. But it also describes it as a purpose which human effort should strive to accelerate. Indeed, Judaism rejects Dr. Toynbee's persistent division between the Divine Will and human action. He constantly sees these two concepts in terms of antithesis. In Judaism, except for the mystical heresies, it is deemed that if something is willed by God, then it is the duty of man in his material life to strive for its fulfillment." "Toynbee portrays the movement for the restoration of Jewish nationhood as a usurpation by human beings of a destiny which can only be righteously envisaged as the work of the Creator." The basis of Dr. Toynbee's argument is not within the scope of our examination, for he is striking

out against the displacement of 750,000 Arabs when Israel took over the land. Although by so doing Israel may have sowed the seeds of her own destruction. We cite Mr. Eban, however, as an authoritative voice of Israel to show that they consider the present achievement to be a monument to the power of man's will and determination. Truly they have done great things, but the restoration spoken of by God is what He will do. Was their original deliverance from Egypt the result of their prowess, or divine intervention? The coming restoration of Israel will be entirely God's doing. (Our comments on Dr. Toynbee's history should not be construed as any approval of his humanistic approach to Christianity.)

At the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to execute judgment on His enemies, and reign, He will set up His perfect government on earth; and He will give a redeemed and quickened remnant of Israel a new heart; they will be born again - they will be a changed people with His law written in their hearts. The last three chapters of Zechariah, Jer. 31:31-34, Eze. 36:25-38, and other prophecies make this very clear. Is there one particle of evidence that in their present return to the land they have really returned to their God? True, they have rabbis who exert a strong political influence over the use of Hebrew as a language, and over dietary laws, etc.; but in the main there is nothing for God in the whole affair. They have gone back as to a national land, not as to a holy land. It is a

return of the people to the land and the language in unbelief. They are trusting in man for the accomplishment of God's purposes.

A Los Angeles Times correspondent reported: "Far from being ultra-religious, the majority of Jews to whom this writer talked in Israel are bitterly resentful of personal restrictions imposed on them in deference to the religious element and regard the orthodox as obstacles in the path of progress.

"It annoys them, for instance, that the rabbis wage unremitting war against the importation of non-kosher meat.... They object to restrictions on travel on their weekly holiday. They want civil marriage and divorce laws.

"It is true enough that ardently zealous young Zionists are little interested in the rich Biblical associations of their country, or for that matter in any of its ancient glories. They think

less of Solomon's temple than of the new row of cement houses rising on a Galilean hillside. Their orientation is wholly toward the future, and the state's furious progress promises to submerge much of the antique charm of what the world regards as the Holy Land.

"Zionism is not, as so many non-Jews believe, a religious movement, though religion has been useful in reinforcing its claims and enlisting international support."

Even Theodore Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism, saw it as a nationalistic movement, and expressed the aims of Zionism in these words: "The creation of a home secured by public right for those Jews who cannot or will not be assimilated by the country of their adoption." Where in this is their repentance and turning to God in contrition which will be a prerequisite to their being established by God in the land which He gave unto their fathers? It is true that they resisted being assimilated in the nations where they sojourned, and kept a consciousness of their being the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but this is all understood by God's putting a mark on them until they must meet the One whom they rejected. Joseph's brethren were a type of them, both in selling him and in having to meet him in humiliation and confession at a later date.

Speaking naturally, as men, Israel has good reason to boast of its achievements of the first decade. The nation was no sooner born than it was attacked by the surrounding Arab states; and though outnumbered 40 to 1, it not only repulsed the Arabs, but drove them back beyond the early lines of demarcation. Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan joined in the attack for the purpose of eliminating the new state before it could take root. In those days considerable pressure was put on both sides to agree to an armistice; and after various attempts such agreements were completed, but to this day no settled peace has ever been made. During the entire decade, Israel has faced hostile foes, blockades, boycotts, sporadic attacks, and pressures, but with the backing of world Jewry their progress has been steady. It is a modern marvel that a young nation could make such a defense and yet assimilate well over 1,000,000 Jews, and still make progress in the process.

The Israelis have shown great scientific and technological skill, so that in many things they are already self-sufficient and, in some produce and manufactured products, they are now exporters.

We all know that Palestine receives very little rainfall, and that water is a vital necessity for Israel's continued existence and expansion. Through great fortitude and human endeavor they have brought water from the more favored parts of the land to those less favored. They have taken

water from the Yarkon River through massive pipelines down to the Negev, and that area long known as a desert is producing bumper crops. They have drilled wells and have sought to turn barren land into a fertile country. To a large degree, they are succeeding. And so writers, both secular and religious, are proclaiming that this is the accomplishment of God's promises, as:

"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly.... Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water." (Isa. 35:1-7.) "Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth;.. I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert." Isa. 43:19.

The crucial point is not whether Israel has done great things, but whether they are the works of their hands or the things God has promised to do. Would it be anything new for irrigation to take water to a desert area? Of course not! But God has said He will do a new thing. Does He need the work of men's hands to accomplish His design? When He promised Israel the land of Canaan long ago, He described it as very different from the land of Egypt with which they were acquainted - "For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot [that is, by irrigation].... But the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: a land which the Lord thy God careth for... from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." Deut. 11:10-12.

Did God need man's foot to water the land in that day? No. It is quite evident that the Negev desert supported numerous people and flocks and herds in the days of Abraham. By the prophet Isaiah, God foretold what would happen to them and to their land for their sin. He said He would break down the wall that He had put around them for their protection. He said, moreover, "I will lay it [His vineyard] waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it." Isa. 5:6.

God commended the land to them in the beginning as one which had sufficient rainfall, then told them that He would withhold rain from it for their disobedience, and then promised to send an abundance of rain in a future day. He needs neither man's efforts nor inventions to supplement what He deigns to do.

Israel and Man-Made Progress: the Editor's Column

(Continued)

Even the tremendous yields that the Israelis boast of on their newly reclaimed land are nothing to be compared with that which God has promised them. Think of verses like these: "There shall be a handful of corn in the earth [perhaps 'land' meaning Canaan] upon the top of the mountains; and the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon" (where the majestic "cedars of Lebanon" grew). Psalm 72:16. But this is predicated upon: "Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him.... Daily shall He be praised.... His name shall endure forever... and men shall be blessed in Him.... Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things." And in Amos 9:13 we read: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed." In other words, the crop will be so

abundant that while they are still reaping last year's crop the man plowing for this year's planting will catch up with the reapers. Is there anything to compare with that on the earth today? Israel or elsewhere?

Some Christians have failed to notice that all the future blessing promised for that land is dependent upon Israel's restoration to God. Isa. 35, from which we have quoted about the abundant water, verdure, and fruitfulness, also says, "They shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God." "Your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; He will come and save you." "And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it." "The redeemed shall walk there." Verses may be multiplied from other portions which speak of Israel's blessing in that day. The most careless reader or the most superficial observer should not fail to see that while Israel may now boast of its great achievements, these are not the fulfillment of God's promises to that people and that land. There is much trouble for them to pass through before that time of blessing comes. We should have compassion on them, for they are "beloved for the fathers' sakes," but let us keep a clear perspective.

While the moment approaches for the completion of the "times of the Gentiles," it has not yet come. These times began with the overthrow of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, when God withdrew from the active government of the earth through Israel. After that, God is not called the God of the "earth," but of "heaven" (see Josh. 3:11, 13 and Dan. 2:18, 28; 4:37); and Israel is called "Lo-ammi," or "not My people." This period of Gentile supremacy will not end until the Lord Jesus comes "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel." 2 Thess. 1:8. He will then smash the Gentiles and return a converted remnant of Israel to their own land in peace and security; but until then the Gentiles are to tread Jerusalem under foot, even as our Lord said: "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Luke 21:24. While the Jews have now made Jerusalem their capital, they still do not possess the city of which the Lord spoke, but only the "new city." A Mohammedan mosque still defiles the temple site. So in this sense there has been a continuity of fulfillment of the Lord's words, from the destruction by Titus in A.D. 70 until this moment.

We would not for a moment make light of the dedicated efforts of the Jewish people to regain that land, nor of the fortitude, perseverance, and hard labor of those who have accomplished great things; nor would we be unthankful that a downtrodden people, among them survivors of the outrages committed in Germany, have at least a respite. But O that they would get their eyes opened to see who Jesus of Nazareth really was! Their real restoration and future blessing depend on this, and will surely come; they will then look on Him whom they pierced, and will mourn over what they did; but what an awful doom awaits the rejecters of Christ!

Today, as Israel looks back on its decade of progress, it may well ponder the years ahead. Their enemies are daily becoming stronger, and the whole Middle East stirs with strong anti-Israel sentiment, while Russia promotes Arab hostility to the Jews in the hope of controlling the Middle East to the discomfiture of the West. But with the clouds of uncertainty hanging over the Jews, is their hope and trust in God who is over all? Are they counting upon Him who so marvelously helped them in days of old? The following quotations may well indicate the prevalent Jewish feeling: "The first decade has established a home for almost two million Jews throughout the

world.... There are still many danger points ahead, including the threat of Soviet economic and even military antagonism." This was taken from the Los Angeles B'nai B'rith which then continues, and quotes Premier David Ben-Gurion from the New York Times: " 'To those Jews in free and prosperous countries we present a new type of Jew. A Jew who depends upon himself for his security.' " And David Horowitz in the B'nai B'rith says: "It [the consolidations and mergers of Arab states] may still hold many surprises for the world in which Israel, always on guard, must work out its own destiny." And ex-president Truman is quoted as saying, "The Israelites will take care of themselves as they always did in historic times." (Emphasis ours.)

How different is this self-confident spirit from that which is expressed in the Psalm as the language of a faithful Jewish remnant in days of tribulation still to come. In many psalms are cries which indicate a dependence on God and a calling on Him for refuge and strength in their trouble. The middle verse of the Bible is found in the 118th Psalm: "It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man." v. 8. The poor Jews will yet have to learn this.

Although the present restoration of almost two million Jews to Palestine is not what Scripture speaks of as God's calling them back, nor is their amazing achievement of providing water by irrigation what God meant when He spoke of giving them an abundance of water, yet it is evident from Scripture that when the Lord Jesus comes to put down His enemies and reign triumphantly there will be a nation of Jews in their land, with a sovereign ruler. So it is necessary that they be back there before the end of this age. And doubtless God has allowed all that has taken place there in His all-wise and overruling hand. They have gone back in unbelief, not to receive their true Messiah, but to receive a false Christ - the antichrist.

All that has been accomplished so far in the restoration of the land and the people, may come to nothing at the hands of the Arabs. There will be some cause for the head of the great Western confederacy - the beast - to come to the Jews' rescue and give them a temple at Jerusalem and help them re-establish the Jews' religious worship. He will make a covenant with the mass of the Jews in Palestine for their guaranteed protection for seven years. He will make this deal with them through their leader (the antichrist).

The time of the contract's inauguration may be the moment for the fulfillment of Isa. 18:1-3, when a call goes out (really "He," and not "Woe") to a great maritime power to bring the Jews back. At that time Numb. 24:24 may be fulfilled, when the owner of Western ships afflicts the old enemies of Israel - Asshur and Eber. But whether it is the self-propelled immigration from sixty or more nations to the land of Palestine, as the past decade has witnessed, or the massive forces to be put at the disposal of returning Jews by the Western coalition at the beginning of the seven years of trouble before the Lord comes to reign, it is of man and not of God. The Jews are going back there with a reviving of intense nationalism, rather than with repentance toward God, at His call. They are going back for the worse and not the better, for the steps to acceptance of "the antichrist" are being trodden with accelerated pace.

When the Jews rejected their Messiah at His coming, He said unto them: "I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." John 5:43. He also said: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep. But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth.... The hireling fleeth, because he is a hireling, and

careth not for the sheep." John 10:11-13. So they are to have a ruler who does not come in God's name, but who will be a false shepherd who will leave them and flee to save himself in their hour of deep trouble. This is also borne out in Zech. 11, where prophetically the Lord Jesus is commissioned of God as the true shepherd of the sheep, and then rejected by them; then God says: "For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. Woe to the idol shepherd [or shepherd of nothingness] that leaveth the flock!" vv. 16, 17. This man that is coming will be the very antithesis of the Shepherd who came to them, who was also the owner of the sheep, and who "gave His life for the sheep."

This false shepherd whom the Jews will receive is also called "the king"; he may be known by some other title, but the "king" of Scripture designates him as the ruler. In Isa. 30, the future enemy of the Jews on the north of Israel is referred to as "the Assyrian," for he shall have some of the same features of that former enemy of Israel, and be somewhat similarly located. So the last verse of the chapter says, "For Tophet [evidently referring to the lake of fire] is ordained of old [that is, for the Assyrian of the future]"; then God adds, "yea, for the king [also] it is prepared"; that is, for the antichrist. This is borne out by a word in Rev. 19:20, where this same "king" is referred to as "the false prophet" who will be taken by the Lord when He returns and (with the head of the revived Roman Empire - the beast of the same verse) cast alive into the lake of fire without trial for his rebellion against Christ when He comes to reign. He is also called "the king" in Isa. 57:9: "And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes,... and didst debase thyself even unto hell." The returned Jews will render homage to that man who assumes to take the place of the Messiah, but they will reap the terrible consequences of their doings.

This coming head of the Jewish people in Israel is also called "the king" in Dan. 11:36: "And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself [what a contrast to the true Shepherd 'who humbled Himself'], and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers.... But in his estate shall he honor the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things." vv. 36-38. This man will put himself in league with the corrupt and violent head of the revived Roman Empire in order to secure his support against the Arab world. This Roman head will be actually energized by Satan, and be his tool; he is called "the beast" in Rev. 11:7; 13:1-10; 14:9, 11; 17:3-17; 19:19, 20. How solemn to think that all this auspicious return of two million Jews to their homeland is only a forerunner of their acceptance of an ungodly, profane, and defiant false prophet and king who will be in league with the "beast" of the Roman Empire, and with Satan himself. This apostate Jew is also called a "beast" in Rev. 13; but he is the second "beast" in the chapter.

Because they rejected their Messiah, the true Shepherd of Israel, the Jews are going to receive and worship this antichrist, who will be in league with and will worship the Roman beast, called in Dan. 11 the "God of forces" - the head of all the vast materiel of war of the Western world, and who will not hesitate to use the most lethal weapons at his disposal. The Psalm often speak of a deceitful and a violent man - the former is the false prophet in Israel, and the latter is the Roman beast. These twin characters marked the world since the fall, and corruption and violence were

rampant before the flood. They will reach their peak in these two beasts of the future.

We also learn that at least seven years before the true Messiah comes back to "make His enemies His footstool," the Roman beast will make a solemn covenant with the Jewish antichrist to give the Jews their land and protect them for seven years. This can be found in the last verse of Dan. 9. That verse explained would read something like this: And he [the Roman beast] shall confirm a covenant [not the new covenant which God will make later with Israel] with the many [or the majority of the Jews in Israel under the leadership of "their king"] for one heptad [or a period of seven years]; and in the middle of those seven years he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease [this indicates that the Jews will have a temple and have re-established their religious service under the beast's protection] and for the overspreading of abominations [or for the placement of an image of the beast

in the holy place of the temple (see Matt. 24:15)] there shall be a desolator, even unto the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate. (The covenant will be broken after three and one half years to the extent that the Roman beast will suddenly stop the re-established Jewish religious ritual, and seek to blot out the mention of God.)

Perhaps an all-out Arab attack on the Nation of Israel, aggravated by Russian assistance, may help to force the formation of the revived Roman Empire and bring its future violent head to the rescue of Israel. If this be so, there would be a serious setback for Israel not too far in the future; then with the Roman Empire's backing they would feel secure for seven years; but at the end of those seven years, the Arab world - called in Dan. 11 "the king of the north" and alternately with "the king of the south" (Egypt) - will wreak untold havoc against the Jews in Palestine (Dan. 11:40). Isa. 28:14-20 describes the awful time of the incursion of the Arab world against Israel, seemingly secure with their contract (or covenant) for protection by the Roman Empire, only to find it fail. So terrible will be the destruction of life in Israel at the end of those seven years that, "It shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third part shall be left therein." We might well weep over that people, not merely for what they have endured for those fateful words, "His blood be on us, and on our children," but for the extremity of trouble that is still in store for them. And if the loss of life and destruction of property will be so great, it will easily be seen that a new restitution of land and people will be needed, and it will be God's work. When He cleanses and brings "the third part through the fire," and refines them as silver and tries them as gold in the crucible of affliction, then it will be true, "They shall call on My name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is My people [reversing Loammí]: and they shall say, The LORD is my God." (Zech. 13:8, 9.)

When the Son of Man returns in the clouds of heaven with "power and great glory," He will come to a largely devastated land of Israel. A godly remnant of the Jews who refused to acknowledge the antichrist or worship the beast or his image will have fled from the land according to the Lord's instruction to the Jewish disciples: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation [the image of the beast], spoken of by Daniel the prophet [Dan. 12:11], stand in the holy place [that is, in the temple],... then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." Matt. 24:15, 16. These faithful Jews are also spoken of in Rev. 12:6 as "the woman" who fled into the wilderness for 1,260 days, or three and one half years - that period of the time of "Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7), "the great tribulation." They will then return and welcome Him for whom they were waiting.

The Lord as the Son of Man will then "send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect [the dispersed of Israel - not of the two tribes only] from the four winds." None but truly "born again" Israelites will enter into the land in that day, for He will meet them in the wilderness and cause them to "pass under the rod," and bring them into "the bond of the covenant." He will further purge out the rebels from among the returning Israelites, "and them that transgress against Me." (See Eze. 20:34-38; 36:25-30.)

Just who and where the ten tribes are is still a matter that is not clear, and over which many have speculated. We do know that when the remnant returned from Babylonish captivity in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, they were almost entirely of Judah and Benjamin, with the Levites. The ten tribes were taken captive by the Assyrians at an early date, and as far as we know never returned. Stragglers were no doubt among the Jews who returned, for Anna the prophetess was of the tribe of Asher (Luke 2:36). The ten tribes may have lost any characteristic feature and the consciousness of being of Israel, but the Lord knows who and where they are, and will bring them back. It was not necessary that they have a mark on them, as the Jews did, for they were not guilty of the crucifixion of their Messiah. That all twelve tribes will have their places in the millennial kingdom of Christ is abundantly clear from Eze. 48, where the future alignment is given. Isa. 11:12, 13 speaks of "the outcasts of Israel" and "the dispersed of Judah" being brought back, while the envy between the ten and the two tribes will cease. And from Eze. 37 we learn that God will bring both groups of tribes back into their land, and they will be "one nation," and they will never be "divided into two kingdoms any more at all" (vv. 18-22).

So when we see Israel back in their land in unbelief, looking for some sort of Messiah, we understand that they are readying themselves for the false Messiah and all the scourging that will follow his reception. The moment is fast approaching when all these things will be fulfilled. As another once said: "If you want to know what time it is, just look at Israel and see where they are, or look at the nations and see if they are getting together for the mergers of both East and West; then look at the Church and see the ruin." Today the hands of the prophetic clock are almost at the appointed hour. The coming of the Lord for the Church is not a part of the prophecy concerning the earth, but we must be off the scene before the great end developments take place.

Israel as a nation is often spoken of as a "fig tree." And the Lord said, when addressing the disciples as a figure of a godly remnant of the Jews which will be here after the Church is gone: "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." Matt. 24:32, 33. If the budding of the "fig tree" is to be a sure sign of the coming of the Messiah to reign, to be understood by the godly remnant at that day, shall we close our eyes to the budding of the fig tree now? And in Luke 21:29, the Spirit of God speaks of the fig tree, and then adds, "and all the trees"; that is, the other nations will likewise show signs of coming events. It is not only that Israel is already back in their land, with natural fortitude doing amazing things, but they are morally and spiritually ready for the advent of the antichrist - any leader who will promise great things may be the man of the hour to them.

To point up the ease with which the Jews could accept a man as their Messiah today, we need only call attention to the feeling of some of their number toward Premier David BenGurion. The Los Angeles Times correspondent reports that "Ben-Gurion... is sometimes jokingly called King

David II."

The article also says, "A lot of the Yemenites... actually believe that Ben-Gurion is the Messiah.... Political opponents of the Prime Minister charge that he does not discourage this Messiah theory, though not notably orthodox himself." Truly he has done great things for his young state, but at his age he is not likely to be the man of whom Scripture speaks, although the man to come may be on the scene today.

As a further indication of the time at which we have arrived, we should remember that the nations of the Middle East are moving and stirring, the nations of the West have been experimenting with consolidations, while Russia and her satellites are also readying themselves for their part, which will be enacted after Christ has established His kingdom in righteousness (see Eze. 38 and 39). He will not put down all enemies at once. Surely the signs that will be recognizable by a godly remnant of the Jews who will, at the risk of death, refuse to do obeisance either to the Jewish antichrist or to the Roman beast or his image (Rev. 13:14, 15), are already becoming discernible. If the remnant of the Jews are to then look up in anticipation of their redemption by power, then the coming of the Lord for His saints cannot be far removed. Let us look up and rejoice, for the coming of Jesus draws nigh.

## Jesus - Salvation Army Rejects Adventism: the Editor's Column

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"And thou shalt call His name JESUS." Matt. 1:21.

"There is a name we love to hear,

We love to sing its worth;

It sounds like music in our ear,

The sweetest name on earth.

"It tells us of a Savior's love,

Who died to set us free;

It tells us of His precious blood,

The sinner's perfect plea.

"Jesus! the name we love so well,

The name we love to hear!

No saint on earth its worth can tell,

No heart conceive how dear."

When the blessed Son of God came down into this world and took human form, He received the name of JESUS. In fact, He was so named of the angel before His birth. It was the name which God chose to express who that Person was. It was not like the names often given to children, without any thought of their meanings. His name Jesus signifies that He was Jehovah the Savior. It is the same name that is found in the Old Testament as Joshua, or Jehoshua. There it was only as a type of Him who was to come. (There are two places in the New Testament where the name Jesus is the Greek translation of the Hebrew name Joshua, and refers strictly to Joshua of the Old Testament, as the contexts prove. See Acts 7:45 and Heb. 4:8.)

The precious name of Jesus stirs the affections of the children of God as it recalls His lowly pathway of suffering in obedience to God and service to man. It recalls to our hearts the cross with all its shame and abnegation, and reminds us of His death

for us on the accursed tree. Can we who know Him meditate on the import of that name and not be moved to thankful praise and adoration? But that precious name was only despised by men. When the Jews brought Jesus to Pilate to have Him sentenced to death, Pilate sought to reason with them, and, when they chose Barabbas, he said, "What shall I do then with JESUS?" To this they replied, "Let Him be crucified." Matt. 27:22. Then, when He had been crucified, Pilate put up over the cross these words - "This is JESUS." It was the world's verdict, and not only Pilate's. They thus gave vent to their evil hearts and, as it were, said, This is what we think of JESUS. But though cast

out here, God raised Him from the dead and "made that same Jesus,... both Lord and Christ." Well has the poet, J. G. Deck, said,

"Though earth disowns Thy lowly name,  
God honors it in heaven."

When the rebellious Saul of Tarsus was stopped on the road to Damascus, he saw "a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun," and heard the voice of that blessed One speaking from heaven, which said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." (Acts 26:13-15.) What a revelation to his soul that he had been fighting against JESUS whom God had highly exalted. He was glorified in heaven, but identified with His suffering saints on earth. He had made them one with Him; that is, they were members of His body (Eph. 4:12, 16).

Stephen also, just before his martyrdom, "saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." Acts 7:55. But his recounting of what he saw only filled the crowd with mad rage, so that they "stopped their ears,... cast him out of the city, and stoned him." It was an augmenting of their wicked hatred of Jesus which had been shown out at the cross.

But God has "highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of JESUS every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth" (infernals beings); "and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Phil. 2:9-11. God has decreed that all men, angels, and infernal beings are going to bow before that One who has the name of JESUS. Many of these will not do it willingly, but this chapter expresses their entire subjugation to Jesus. All must bow before that One who was the lowly and despised Jesus of Nazareth. The poet Deck also wrote:

"Father, Thy holy name we bless,  
Gracious and just Thy wise decree,  
That ev'ry tongue shall soon confess  
Jesus the Lord of all to be!  
But oh! Thy grace has taught us now  
Before that Lord the knee to bow."

By God's grace we have been led to praise Him and bow before Him in the day of His grace. What a wonderful thing it is to have our eyes opened to see some of the beauties in Him who was called Jesus, and to have our hearts drawn out in affection to His blessed Person, so that we can further sing with the poet:

"Him as our Lord we gladly own;  
To Him alone we now would live,  
Who bowed our hearts before Thy throne,  
And gave us all that love could give.

Our willing voices cry aloud,

Worthy art Thou, O Lamb of God!"

But alas there is in Christendom a careless, flippant way of mentioning the name of Jesus. He is not spoken of with the reverence due to Him whom God has delighted to honor. It shows a sad lack of appreciation of the glory of His Person, and a lack of heartfelt attachment to Him. The blessed Savior would encourage the intimacy of those who are His by faith in His finished work and shed blood, but He does not condone familiarity. He would say to the disciples, "I then, your Lord and Master." He did not say to Peter, Take a piece of money from the fish and give it as tribute for "us," but rather, for "Me and thee." He must have the pre-eminence, and a heart taught of God will certainly and gladly render it to Him. "He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father." John 5:23. Well may the mention of His name bow our hearts to worship Him!

Yet, that precious name is often taken in vain and used in profanity among men and women. Fellow-Christian, does it offend and try your soul when you hear it thus used? Or have you become calloused by its common usage, so that it does not affect you? It tells a sad state of soul if your answer is that you are not grieved when you hear it. We may not always be able to reprove it, but we should never cease to feel it as an affront to One whom we dearly love. We should dissociate ourselves from such use of the precious name of Jesus; but if we reprove it, it is well if it can be done in the attitude of one who is wounded by it.

In the last chapter of Revelation the Lord Jesus speaks of His coming back with His rewards, but it is when the accents of the words which give assurance that it is Himself - the same Jesus who was here - sound on the ears of the Church, that there is a response: "I JESUS have sent Mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." Rev. 22:16, 17. The Holy Spirit desires His coming, and the bride responds to those words from His own mouth- "I Jesus." She says, "Come," and, finally, "Even so, Come, Lord Jesus." v. 20. She gives Him His title, "Lord."

And it is well when Christians give Him His full title - Lord Jesus Christ. He is worthy of all honor, and we delight to give it to Him. But still, it is what is involved in the precious name JESUS that awakens a responsive chord in our hearts.

#### (THE SALVATION ARMY REJECTS ADVENTIST LITERATURE)

- In our October issue, on page 271, we published a report taken from the Seventh-day Adventists' official "church paper," the Review and Herald, stating that the New York headquarters of The Salvation Army had applied to the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference headquarters for "inspirational literature that could be supplied to their 2000 field leaders across the United States." Our editorial has brought forth from The Salvation Army a letter which states that the Review and Herald story "is not according to all the facts, and represents The Salvation Army in a light altogether false and unfortunate."

According to The Salvation Army's letter, one of their officers had come across a temperance magazine named "Alert" and thought it would be good material to put into the hands of their field representatives. This magazine carried the imprint of the International Temperance Association, to

which this officer applied for 2000 copies. (There were no indications in the magazine that it was published under the auspices of the Seventh-day Adventist sect.) The International Temperance Association assured The Salvation Army officer that the Association would be glad to supply the material without cost, and would also send other material useful for youth leaders. This was accepted on the supposition that "it would be temperance material."

The following day The Salvation Army headquarters received a letter "from the Home Missionary Department of the Seventh-day Adventists following an alleged telephone message and offering to send free 2000 copies of Seventh-day Adventist pamphlets. The S.D.A. pamphlets and the Alerts arrived at the same time." The Salvation Army statement continues:

"Now it is obvious that The Salvation Army had no way of knowing the connection between the temperance people and the S.D.A. group as they have different letterheads and seemingly different offices in Washington, D.C. When the two sets of materials arrived, however, it seemed obvious that there was a tie-in." Then their letter says:

"We are naturally perplexed concerning the situation whereby a telephone communication to the International Temperance Association can bring forth an inquiry and shipment of pamphlets from the Seventh-day Adventists, but so it is."

The plight of The Salvation Army is understandable, for they are not the first ones to be led inadvertently into contact with the Seventh-day Adventists through literature published by the Adventists under the name of some innocuous-sounding publishing house, such as the Southern Publishing Association, Pacific Press Publishing Association, etc. They have so many different front organizations (even the Pathfinders youth group) that the unwary are easily caught. For many years their weekly (now monthly) publication, The Signs of the Times, had nothing in it to indicate that it was a Seventh-day Adventist publication, nor did their principal radio program, The Voice of Prophecy, make any mention of its being an Adventist broadcast.

Now we see that the publication, Alert, does not carry any Seventh-day Adventist identification, and they have various other publications which still conceal their real identity. Not long ago we had a card from one of our readers stating that the Seventh-day Adventists have a radio program known as "The Quiet Hour" which goes unsigned. Their special tent meetings. and various campaigns to draw the crowds are frequently advertised without stating that they are Adventist.

Now we are happy to report that when The Salvation Army discovered the "tie-in" between Alert and Seventh-day Adventism, "Instructions were therefore immediately given that the Alerts should not be used even though they did not appear on the surface to have any S.D.A. implication." As for the straight Adventist literature received, this "has been shipped back to the S.D.A. headquarters in Washington as undesirable and unsuitable for Salvation Army needs." "Not a single S.D.A. pamphlet has been distributed to any Salvation Army Officers."

While on the subject of Adventist fervor and methods, we can inform you that approximately 150 television stations carry the nationwide Adventist TV program, Faith for Today, on a sustaining basis; that is, without charge (Review and Herald, Dec. 5, 1957). Doubtless Seventh-day Adventists' zeal equals that of those to whom the Lord said, "Ye compass land and sea to make one proselyte" (Luke 23:15). (It may well put many orthodox, fundamental Christians to shame.)

Therefore, Christians, beware of covert and overt Seventh-day Adventist efforts.

How good that God has let us know that deceptions would increase in these last days (and they have on every side), so that we need not be discouraged by them, but remember the words:

"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." 2 Tim. 3:13, 14.

■ With the December issue of Our Hope magazine, that publication ceased after almost 64 years of continuous circulation. It was founded and for more than fifty years was edited by

Arno C. Gaebelein. We had occasion last year to call our readers' attention to the capitulation of Our Hope to the great effort being made to whitewash Seventh-day Adventism. This will end the matter as far as Our Hope is concerned (except for the damage to souls), for those responsible will now have no way to retrace their steps in what we consider to have been a colossal blunder. We had hoped that its publisher and its editor would yet see the light and retract their statements regarding the Seventh-day Adventists and their doctrines.

But Dr. D. G. Barnhouse now takes over the name of Our Hope to add to his Eternity magazine, as well as the circulation lists, etcetera. This will be of no help by and large to people who will get the new Eternity-Our Hope, for Dr. Barnhouse is a most outspoken advocate of Christians' taking the Seventh-day Adventists into their embrace. Furthermore, he has written derisively of those who would stand faithful and reject such compromise with delusion and error. He has fallen in with the character of the day and its broad inclusivism and toleration. He can go on with the National Council of Churches and the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., with their modernist elements and doctrinal compromises, which have undermined the foundations of the faith.

In another day, "Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me." Exod. 32:26. When the camp was defiled, and the Lord's glory involved, it was no time for indifference or compromise. Faithfulness demanded decision. Just so, in these last days, the days of which Jude speaks, we need to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," for we are in danger of having it taken from us. Are we willing to lose it by default? Inclusivism and ecumenicalism (promotion of a world church) are hastening on the days of Babylon the Great and that state of the professing church most hateful to Christ "lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot." Because of this very noxious state, Christ will spew the detestable thing out of His mouth. (Rev. 3:16.)

■ A copy of the January issue of the newly-merged Eternity Our Hope magazine has reached us. On its cover its a large picture of Arno C. Gaebelein, and on the inside is an article by Dr. D. G. Barnhouse in which he "traces the life of A. C. Gaebelein, outstanding Bible teacher and founder of Our Hope." It is a very laudatory article in which the Editor-in-Chief, D. G. Barnhouse, promises to run some writings of A. C. Gaebelein in future issues. At this point we hasten to call attention to the incongruity of the combination, for A. C. Gaebelein was uncompromising in his opposition to the false doctrines and deceptive teachings of Seventh-day Adventists. Numerous quotations of his could be adduced, but we shall use just one (which has been sent to us by one of our readers):

"We have special reference to the Seventh-day Adventist delusion. They teach the abominable untruth that the Lord Jesus Christ did not enter into the Holiest till the year 1844 had been reached.... THAT THIS IS A DENIAL OF THE GOSPEL AND SATANIC IS SELF-EVIDENT" (emphasis ours).-A. C. Gaebelin on Daniel the Prophet, p. 100. So to have some of this faithful man's writings posthumously used in a magazine which has taken the lead in accrediting the Seventh-day Adventists with all their frightful evil doctrines as "sincere believers" and "redeemed brethren and members of the body of Christ" is ironical to say the least. To put the writings of a man who called the Adventists' bizarre teaching "a denial of the Gospel" and "Satanic," along with the writings of a man who said of the very same false doctrine that "while admittedly strange" it "is not heretical," ill befits his memory.

## A Few Thoughts From John 13

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In divine things the wisdom of the believer is subjection to Christ and confidence in Him. What He does, we are called to accept with thankfulness of heart, and as Mary said to the servants at the marriage feast, "Whatsoever He saith unto you,

do it." This, Simon Peter did not. For when the Lord approached him "in the form of a servant," or bondman, he demurred. Was there not faith, working by love, in Peter's heart? Both undoubtedly, yet not then in action, but buried under superabundant feeling of a human sort, else he had not allowed his mind to question what the Lord saw fit to do. He had rather bowed to Christ's love and sought to learn, as He might teach, what deep need must be in him and his fellows to draw forth such a lowly, yet requisite service from his Master. Ah! he knew not yet that Jesus must go lower down far than stooping to wash the disciples' feet, even to the death of the cross, if God were to be glorified and sinful man to be justified and delivered with an indisputable title.

We grant that he could not know what was not yet revealed; but was it comely in him, was it reverent, to question what the Lord was doing? He may have thought it humility in himself, and honor to the Lord, to decline a service so menial at His hands. But Peter should never have forgotten that as Jesus never said a word, so He never did an act, save worthy of God and demonstrative of the Father; and now more than ever were His words and ways an exhibition of divine grace, when human evil set on by Satan, not only in those outside, but within the innermost circle of His own, called for increased distinctness and intensity in view of His departure.

The truth is that we need to learn from God how to honor Him, and learn to love according to His mind.

But Peter was not yet of those who are guided with the Lord's eye; he did not feel the need of being instructed and taught in the way in which he should go. There was too much of the horse or of the mule in him, too much need of being held with bit and bridle; and, failing to receive of the Lord that he should submit now and learn later, he plunges farther and more boldly into error.

Jesus said to him, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." Alarmed by the Lord's warning, His servant instantly flies to the opposite extreme: "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Now Peter cannot have too much. He seeks to be bathed all over, as if all the value of his previous washing could evaporate. But it is never so. To see and enter the kingdom of God one must be born afresh, born of water and of the Spirit. But this is never repeated. The new birth admits of no such repetition. It was wrong to suppose that, born of God, one needs nothing else, that defilements either cannot befall a believer, or that, if they do, they are of no consequence.

## A Profitable Servant John Mark

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Substance of an Address Delivered at Los Angeles January 2, 1956

I have it before me this afternoon to group the remarks I might make, around the life story of John Mark. In the Word of God we get instruction by precept, proverb, history, and example. In these manifold ways God seeks to make the path of faith plain. Thus we do well to heed every little shadow of truth, for the indirect shadows are designedly intended for our profit.

So now to John Mark. The first reference to this young man is in Acts 12:11, 12: "And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent His angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying."

Let us here note carefully the situation. Peter had been imprisoned. The purpose of King Herod was to kill him, as he had done to the Apostle James a short time before. But he reckoned without God. Though Peter was later to earn a martyr's crown, his time was not yet come. Until God saw fit, there was no weapon forged that could take his life.

Delivered by angelic power and presence, Peter stands a lone figure on the street of the city. It is night. He stops to consider. I can see him there in deep thought. "What shall I do next?" Then he comes to his decision. "I will go to the home of John Mark's mother." Why did he choose that home? He knew the atmosphere of that home. He was no stranger there. He well knew they were consecrated to the interests of Christ. He had confidence they would be burdened for him in his prison experiences. Yes, he knew where to go.

Shall we stop here to ask ourselves a question? If someone finds himself in difficulty and says to himself, "I wonder where I can go to get a little spiritual help," would his decision be to come to your house? Is not that a searching question for us all?

Let us take a look into John Mark's home. How were they occupied? They were praying. The other day I was arrested by a motto I saw. It read, "The family that prays together, stays together." What a privilege to grow up in such a home. John Mark had an enviable background. He had a praying mother. Do you have a mother who taught you to pray? Does your life today answer to those prayers?

There is no mention here of Mark's father. Perhaps he was deceased. Be that as it may, the fact remains that it is the mother who is here singled out as the responsible one in this home. Are you a mother with the sole responsibility of bringing up your children for the Lord? Then take courage; remember John Mark's mother.

Another side light on this situation here is given to us in Peter's first epistle, written long after this night. He says in the last chapter, verse 13, "The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son." I would judge from this that John Mark had made

his confession of faith under the personal ministry of Peter. This leads to another thought. If you are ever used of God to lead anyone to Christ, as long as you both live there will be a special link between the two of you. You will never cease to be interested in his or her spiritual progress. No doubt John Mark's mother prayerfully brought her boy up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Peter's ministry led him to the definite confession of faith in Christ. So let none of us think when we lead someone to a confession of faith in Christ, that we can individually claim all the credit. In all probability others had labored before, and we entered into their labors. God alone knows, and He will give credit to whom credit belongs.

Let us turn now to the end of the 11th chapter of Acts, verses 29, 30. "Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt at Judea: which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul." Now the end of the 12th chapter, verses 24, 25. "But the word of God grew and multiplied. And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark." Here we have our young man, Mark, again. We learn from another scripture that Barnabas was the uncle of this John Mark (Col. 4:10). From what we shall find in succeeding portions of the Word, I think we shall rightly judge that Mark was quite a favorite with his uncle Barnabas. This, of course, we can readily understand, as there was not only the natural bond, but also the spiritual.

Barnabas and Saul had gone to Jerusalem on this errand of mercy to the needy saints. Before returning they thought well to take Barnabas's nephew with them back to Antioch. Very probably they called at the mother's home where Peter had been so wonderfully prayed for. We can rest assured that John Mark's mother would feel thankful to the Lord that her brother and Saul had confidence enough in her son to ask his company on their journey.

John Mark's uncle Barnabas was a most remarkable man. I know of no other man in Scripture of whom it is said, "He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost." Acts 11:24.

This could not be said of every Christian. A Christian might be a faithful person, but yet not be termed "a good man." There is a special connotation in the expression that is easier to enjoy than to explain. You and I know some such men, and we love to think of them and speak of them.

In Acts 13:1-4 we find these three men, Barnabas, Saul, and Mark, actively associated with the assembly of Antioch. John Mark must have profited by the abundant ministry that was there manifest in that gifted assembly. The meeting in Antioch was really the pivotal assembly of the Gentile testimony. At this particular moment it was divinely revealed that it was the mind of God for Barnabas and Saul to go forth on a special gospel mission. The better reading of verses 3 and 4 is, "Then, having fasted and prayed, and having laid their hands on them, they let them go. They therefore, having been sent forth by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia, and thence sailed away to Cyprus" (J.N. D. Trans.). Gathered saints of the past century have felt free before the Lord to thus express their fellowship with brethren who were going forth on some special mission for the Lord. It was no question of official appointment, but rather of happy identification with the servants' work.

"They therefore, having been sent forth by the Holy Spirit." Do not miss that; it was the Holy Spirit who sent them - not the brethren. I remember a sister talking to me repeatedly about why the

brethren would not send her to the foreign field. I told her she might wait the rest of her life for such a commission, but she would not receive it. We do not send forth servants. What authority have we from the Word to send anyone? It is God by the Holy Spirit who sends His laborers into the field. We can express our fellowship with them, but we do not send them.

Now the 5th verse. "And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister." Let us not overrate this word, "minister." The word so translated in this verse comes from a Greek word that originally meant, "underrower." From this literal meaning it gradually came to signify any subordinate in service to another. So we find in J.N.D.'s translation the word is rendered, "attendant." Thus John Mark went along as a helper to Barnabas and Saul. I believe the most of those who have found their way into full-time ministry of the Word, had their start in some very humble way. Such early attempts were usually under the supervision or advice of older brothers. So here, John Mark was, as it were, serving an apprenticeship. And lovely company he had. Think of it: the opportunity to go about with a "good man, and full of the Holy Ghost," and with Paul, the great Apostle to the Gentiles. Thus was our John Mark highly favored. One of the sad things about our lives is that so often we fail to realize our high privileges. We do not always count our blessings. We do not always know the "day of [our] visitation." Perhaps even now we are sighing for the green pastures in the distance, and do not recognize that we are presently surrounded by the Lord's abundance.

The trio, Barnabas, Paul, and Mark, continue on their journey, taking their time along the way to sound out the gospel. It may have been that John Mark discovered there was more involved in being a missionary than he had at first reckoned on. He evidently had not first sat down and counted the cost. The thoughts of home and loved ones seemed too strong for his spirit to carry on in the work. The climax of his faintheartedness came at Perga in Pamphylia. We read: "Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem."

But this is not the end of the story. When God gives us the biography of a saint, He tells the whole story; He gives a true picture. This is for our profit and our instruction. As I have read my Bible, I have been thankful that God has been pleased to use poor failing instruments. This has encouraged me to continue in the path of faith. Have you not found it so? If we examine the history of the servants of God as recorded in His Word, we find that they all were flecked with some measure of failure. There was only one perfect Servant.

After poor Mark turned his face homeward, leaving Paul and Barnabas to continue on without him, they encountered violent opposition. Paul himself was viciously stoned and left by the wayside, supposedly dead. Yes, John Mark escaped a deal of trouble by turning back home, but what a badge of shame he carried with him! Nor was this all; it was to lead to sorry consequences later.

Turn now to Acts 15:35, 36. "Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also. And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do." This was a wholesome decision, was it not? When you get people saved, your responsibility toward them does not cease. In the Word of God you find the opposite of this attitude. Paul and Barnabas decided to re-contact these converts, that they might see how they fared. It is a mark of a real shepherd that he desires to see how the sheep are getting on.

Now we come to a painful episode in the lives of these two dear men of God, Barnabas and Paul. As we seek to serve the Lord, we at times find ourselves in situations that we heartily dislike to face. We long for some escape from having to make a decision, but we find we cannot side-step the situation. When such occasions arise, we just have to face them. Here is Barnabas, a man of God, and here is Paul, the most devoted servant God ever had, yet we find them deadlocked over the advisability of taking John Mark with them on their tour of visitation. Let us read the account.

Acts 15:38-40. "But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God." Each man seemed determined to have his way. How sad! The account would warrant us in supposing an argument somewhat as follows: Barnabas contended, "We are taking my nephew with us." Paul countered, "We are not taking him with us; I know what he is like. He left us in the lurch when we needed him most. No, we do not desire his company." But Barnabas was adamant. "He is my nephew and he is going along." So the argument waxed hot. I cannot believe that either Barnabas or Paul said everything in a spirit of grace. But be this as it may, the sad fact remains that, as far as the record shows, these two devoted men never labored together again. Isn't that tragic? And yet the history of the Church of God presents many such parallels.

So Barnabas embarked with his nephew, but no mention is made of the prayers of the saints commending them. As we read about it, we feel a weight on our hearts; this dear man and his blunder! I would here make an observation which I feel to be timely and important. What caused Barnabas to err? It was blood relationship - the ties of nature. During the fifty years of my life among gathered saints, I have witnessed many troubles and frictions. No small part of such could be traced to this very thing - blood ties. The inability of a saint to view things objectively when his own flesh and blood is involved, is pathetic. Nor are any of us immune.

For an encouraging contrast in such an eventuality, let us turn to the Old Testament. I refer to Exodus, chapters 32 and 33. Moses had gone up into the mount to receive the law at the mouth of God. When he returned to the camp he found that Aaron, his brother, had led the camp into rebellion and idolatry. Under Aaron's leadership and encouragement they had made a golden calf, and worshiped it. Moses launched an impartial investigation and thus discovered that his own brother was involved in the guilt. But this did not deter Moses from bold and decisive action for the glory of God. He issued the clarion call, "Who is on the LORD'S side?" The tribe of Levi joined him, and he gave them the stern commission, "Put every man his sword by his side,... slay every man his brother,... consecrate yourselves to-day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother." So they did. Blood relationship did not stop them.

If we now turn to Deut. 33, we shall find how highly God rated such prompt obedience. "And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death." Now verse 8. "And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah." Here is a remarkable statement that the Lord has preserved as to this unselfish faithfulness. In verses 9-11 God personalizes the case even more closely: "Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren nor knew his own children: for they have

observed Thy word, and kept Thy covenant. They shall teach Jacob Thy judgments, and Israel Thy law: they shall put incense before Thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon Thine altar. Bless, LORD, his substance, and accept the work of his hands." Is that not a remarkable memorial to Levi's single-eyed loyalty to the interests of God? How little they thought when they set aside the claims of natural relationship, that they would, as a result, become heirs to such a place of trust and responsibility before God.

May we not all learn a needed lesson from the foregoing incident. Oh, the sorrow that has been caused among gathered saints because of failure to set aside considerations of family relationship when weighing matters regarding assembly decisions. This weakness among us often hinders the carrying out of cases of needed discipline. Let us sum it all up this way: There are comparatively few true Levites among us.

Salvation is free, but we pay a price to be a disciple. Let us read Luke 14:26, 27: "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple." May we all learn from the sad blunder of poor Barnabas, and never put family relationship ahead of the Lord's mind for us in the path of faith.

Is it not significant that the Spirit has drawn a curtain of complete silence over the mission of Barnabas and his nephew. Acts 15:39: "Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus." This was the same route he had pursued before when he became fainthearted and turned back. In contrast with the silence as to any further movements of this pair, we read a very detailed account of the fruitful journey of Paul and his new companion, Silas. It is long years afterward before we find any mention of John Mark.

But now let us turn to the brighter side of the story. We will read Col. 4:10. "Aristarchus my fellow prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)." During the years that have elapsed since the last mention of John Mark, we may rest assured that he is by now a much more matured man, and wiser in his path of service. Paul himself is now an old man, nearing the end of his testimony for Christ. How gracious of the Spirit of God to let us know that the man who had turned his back on Paul, thus forfeiting his confidence, was at long last restored to his esteem. Paul specifically asks the Colossian saints to receive Mark if he came that way. Note, too, how careful the Spirit of God is to identify this "Marcus" lest we might jump to the conclusion that he was another by the same name. No, he is the same man, Barnabas's nephew, who is now in Paul's good graces. Paul was a man taught of God, and as soon as he discovered that a failing servant of the Lord had judged himself for his mistake, he was one of the first to forgive. What we have in the 10th verse of this 4th of Colossians virtually amounts to a letter of commendation of Mark, signed by the Apostle Paul himself.

But there is a letter yet to come, so let us turn to 2 Tim. 4:6: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." This was written at the time of Paul's second imprisonment, right at the end of his life. This makes it very touching; let us read verses 7-11: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing. Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me:

for Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry." I have ventured to add the emphasis to this last sentence. How wonderful are the ways of God. He was faithful in seeing to it that this unqualified endorsement of John Mark as a faithful servant should go into the record of the Word. Is not that lovely? "He is profitable." It adds weight to this encomium to realize that it was almost the last line of inspired writ that was ever communicated by the Apostle Paul.

Dear saint of God, dear servant of the Lord, you and I have made mistakes, perhaps painful mistakes. Let, us not be discouraged; let us not give up; let us not think that God is through with us. What is the way of recovery? Just get low in His presence and humble ourselves, and tell Him all about our blunder or our sin. Let us not excuse ourselves, or attempt to let ourselves off easily. Simply own the truth, "I was ' wrong!" Own it all thus, and you will be amazed to discover how gracious and forgiving your brethren are. I remember hearing an old brother get to his feet at the beginning of an assembly prayer meeting and make an unqualified acknowledgment of his wrong attitude in a certain matter which had grieved his brethren. He said, "I was wrong; my brethren were right." Then as the saints knelt in prayer there was not a prayer offered that did not betray a deep response to our brother's humble owning of his fault. It was an occasion long to be remembered.

We are ready now for the best part of our meditations on the life of John Mark. "He that shall humble himself shall be exalted." Matt. 23:12. The first man to whom God ever entrusted the writing of an inspired life of the Lord Jesus was none other than this same John Mark. And all the more remarkable is the fact that his Gospel is the one which gives us the picture of our Lord as the perfect Servant. At the same time Mark gives us the Lord as the sin offering. Apart from the sin offering God could have accepted no man (save Christ) as His servant. Apart from the priestly advocacy of Christ we must all have been set aside long ago. How encouraging to know that "He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." Psalm 23:3.

Shall we close our meditation with the last two verses of John Mark's Gospel:

"So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."

## Joyful in Tribulation

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I doubt if I ever saw such an instance of accumulated sufferings of the most terrific kind in any one person as I found in R. P. At the time of my visit to him, he was 38 years of age and had been ill for 18 years. He evidently had been a large, fine man; but to the eye of nature it was pitiable to see the "outward man" as I saw him. He was bent down almost double, his face turned in toward his chest, with his chin pressing hard upon his breastbone, so that for two years he had seen nothing but the light. His jaws were so locked that he could only take food the thickness of a penny, which had to be slipped in between his teeth. His limbs were not only deformed, but useless to him. He could move only two fingers when I saw him; all the rest of his body, except his tongue, was as immovable as if it had been a wood carving. This his Father was pleased to leave him the full use of; and as he had a heart completely at rest and fully satisfied - for he had CHRIST there - he used the member left him to speak of the love and mercy of that gracious God who gave His Son for sinners, and of that blessed Lord Jesus Christ who had filled his soul with sunshine. Some time after I had seen him, his eyes failed before the ravages of that direful disease so that, physically, he was to sit in darkness for the rest of his days on earth. Besides this, the two fingers that he had been able to move, became as rigid as the rest of his

body. It was when in this state that he called someone to him to write down from his lips the good matter which his heart was inditing, and he spoke as follows:

"Once I could see, but ne'er again  
Shall I behold the verdant plain,  
Jeweled with flowers of colors bright,  
Bathed in a flood of golden light.  
The birds, the brilliant butterflies,  
These all in thought before me rise;  
The shining rivulet, whose song  
Comes sweetly murmuring along;  
The sky, the clouds, the grass, the trees,  
All waving, glancing in the breeze -  
I see them pictured in my mind,  
But there alone, for I am blind.  
Blind, did I say? how can that be?  
Since I, by faith, my Savior see

Exalted on the throne above,  
Beaming with mercy, grace, and love.  
A view like this is better far  
Than sun, or moon, or glittering star,  
Or glowing landscape, sunny skies,  
Or sight that's fair to mortal eyes.  
I THANK my God that He has put  
A veil before mine eyes, and shut  
All earthly objects from my sight,  
And Christ revealed in glory bright.  
Henceforth my word shall ever be,  
Once I was blind, but NOW I see."

R. P., beloved of the Lord, has gone to be forever with Him whose he was. Converted from the darkness and evil of Unitarianism - chastened, not in wrath, but in love - he enjoyed that which he possessed by faith. HE HAD CHRIST; his heart was satisfied.

## King Uzziah Strengthened and Strong: Word of Admonition

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2 Chron. 26

Uzziah, we learn from this chapter, "sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper." He went forth and warred, and "God helped him." "He strengthened himself exceedingly." He built towers in Jerusalem and fortified them, and towers in the desert, and digged many wells. He had husbandmen also, and vine-dressers in the mountains and in Carmel. Moreover, he had a host of fighting men that went out to war by bands. "The whole number of the chief of the fathers of the mighty men of valor were two thousand and six hundred. And under their hand was an army, three hundred thousand and seven thousand and five hundred, that made war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy. And Uzziah prepared for them throughout all the host shields, and spears, and helmets, and habergeons, and bows, and slings to cast stones. And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal." We need not dwell upon the description of the numerous army of King Uzziah. We will turn to God's instruction for ourselves about it. "And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvelously helped, till he was strong. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction." Of all the words we find put together, there are few more remarkable than these.

One would have thought that the very object to be gained by Uzziah was to be strong. Alas! the strength we naturally covet is independence of God. Saints are found mourning over their weakness, and what do they mean? Is it not that they have no resources in themselves? We forget that all real strength is derived from the fullness that is in Jesus; otherwise, we should ever be able to say with Paul, "When I am weak, then am I strong." We need to be deprived of every resource in ourselves, that we may know our strength to be in Him. When Uzziah felt himself to be strong, God left him.

There is great danger of our putting multiplied means in the place of the Lord Himself; we may go the whole round of means, and forget that they are not the supply.

What has been the history of the Church? - marvelously helped till she was strong; when she was strong, her heart became lifted up. The saints at Corinth, who had multiplied resources, men, and wisdom and the like, and whose temptation it was to think that by the exercise of this wisdom they could refute the heathen, were told by the Apostle, No; it is only by the bringing in of the "wisdom of God," that which is "foolishness with man," and of the "strength of God," that which is weakness with man. The Spirit of God shows us in The Acts, the Church, when few in number, was marvelously helped. But how soon did the Church begin to look to itself, to its own resources and greatness, instead of to the Lord. And has this no voice to ourselves? Our blessing is in taking the place of weakness, so that God may for His own name's sake help.

There is danger in our saying or supposing that we have attained to something. It is a mark of failure when a Christian looks to his own honor and credit, instead of the honor of the Lord. The great thing is to be regardful of His name. A single eye will be occupied with Christ.

It is a very strong word in reference to a saint that we have here - "His heart was lifted up to his destruction." But there is as strong a word in the New Testament. "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." If any, even a saint of God, "soweth to his flesh," he will reap but a sorrowful harvest of corruption, all his time having been misspent. We need to give heed to the searching words of Scripture, not turning away the point of them from ourselves under the supposition that they cannot apply to us. This thought has been the source of much mischief in the Church. That soul will prosper which trembles at God's Word and is willing to face the most searching parts of it. The saint of God can sow to the flesh, can walk "according to the flesh," can "war after the flesh"; but the miserable end will be, that he will "of the flesh reap corruption." When Uzziah was strong (his strength being in his, own resources), his heart became "lifted up," and more like the heart of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon (Dan. 4:20) than that of God's anointed king of Judah. A heart that is "lifted up" is in a dangerous state and almost always on the eve of a fall.

Though Uzziah was God's anointed king, he was not God's anointed priest; yet he would have nothing restrained from him, and we find him transgressing "against the LORD his God," and going into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense, which appertained not unto him, but unto the priests only, the sons of Aaron who were consecrated to burn incense. Let us too beware of dealing with the Lord in unholy familiarity; a humble spirit is always a confident spirit, but a humble spirit can trust only in the blood of Jesus; it does not rush into God's presence as the man who is "lifted up" in heart does. We can only come there through the incense of the Lord Jesus, not on the credit of our own graces, or devotedness, or in fleshly fervor.

"Neither shall it be for thine honor from the LORD

God," said Azariah the priest, as with fourscore priests, valiant men, he withstood the king. "Then Uzziah was wroth,... and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD."

Beloved, this history of king Uzziah is written for our admonition. Lifting up of heart is always self-seeking, not God seeking. We have (blessed be God) liberty to enter into the holiest, for we are priests unto God by the blood of Jesus, but it is ever through the incense of our great High Priest.

In chapter 27:6, we have no mention of Jotham's great army; he "became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God." This is the way for the saint to grow in practical strength. Thus it was with the Thessalonians; their "work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope" was "in the sight of God and our Father." Jotham set the Lord always before him and went on in an even tenor of conduct. In the eyes of man, he might not be as mighty as Uzziah, but the Holy Ghost records his name as that of one "mighty" in the eyes of God.

## Labor and Conflict: Exposition on Nehemiah

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### Introduction

In commencing an exposition of the book of Nehemiah, a few brief remarks may be permitted by way of introduction to its study. Scarcely thirteen years had passed since Ezra had gone up to Jerusalem, armed with royal authority and impelled by his godly zeal for the glory of Jehovah in the welfare of His people, "to teach in Israel statutes and judgments"; to seek, in a word, to re-establish over the people the authority of the law. And now in His grace and tender mercy God prepared another vessel of blessing for His beloved people. This fact illustrates in a striking manner a divine principle. It might have been thought that Ezra would be sufficient for the work; but, as is so often seen in the history of God's ways in government, a servant who is suited to one state of the people may be altogether unadapted for another, and even be a hindrance to the work of God if he continue to occupy his position or to assert his claims to leadership. How often has this been seen even in the assembly! More than this may be said. [Ezra's gift was that of a teacher or pastor, a gift of a very high order, but he evidently was not suited to direct the work of building the wall. It required that of a ruler, and Nehemiah's position under the king had developed in him the qualities to make him a suitable servant to carry out this important work.

He was a devoted man, habitually turning to God in all his difficulties- this was the source of all his strength. But it can be easily seen that Ezra walked on a higher level than his successor.] (Compare Ezra 8:21-23 with Neh. 2:7-9; Ezra 9:3 with Neh. 13:25.) Yet, though Ezra was still at Jerusalem, it was Nehemiah who was sent at this special moment. Happy is it when the servant receives his work from the hands of the Lord, and, discerning when his mission for any particular purpose is ended, can retire.

In the book of Nehemiah, as well as in that of Ezra, it will be observed that God is ever watching over His people, and sustaining them by the successive interventions of His grace. First He sent Ezra, and afterward, Nehemiah, to revive His work and to effect the restoration of His people. But as in the book of Judges, so at this period; and as it ever has been in the experience of the Church, every successive revival, when the energy that produced it has died away, has left the people in a lower, a worse state than before. The reason is evident. The need for a revival springs from the fact of increasing corruption and decay. By the revival, the downward tendency is for the moment checked or arrested; and hence the moment the force which came into conflict with the evil is expended, the corrupt stream sweeps onward with increased power and volume. Such is man; and such is the patient grace of God that, in spite of the unfaithfulness and even apostasy of His people, it unweariedly continues to busy itself with their interests and blessing.

As to the character of the book itself, we may quote the words of another. He says, "In Nehemiah we witness the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, and the restoration of what may be termed the civil condition of the people, but under circumstances that definitely prove their subjection to the Gentiles." This will be unfolded to us as we pursue our consideration of the book.

## Chapter 1

The book opens with a brief narrative of the circumstance which God used to touch the heart of Nehemiah by the condition of His people, and to produce that exercise of soul in His presence which issued, in the ordering and purpose of God, in his mission to Jerusalem. First, giving the date and the place of the occurrence, Nehemiah says, "It came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace," etc. The first verse of chapter 2 shows that this was the twentieth year of Artaxerxes; that is, as already noted, thirteen years after Ezra had gone up to Jerusalem. He had gone up from Babylon (Ezra 7); but Nehemiah was occupied in the king's court as a personal attendant upon the king - "the king's cupbearer" - at Shushan. While engaged in his duties, he says, "Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem." v. 2.

Nehemiah himself was thus an exile; but, though one of a captive race, he had found favor in the eyes of the king, and occupied a high and lucrative position. In such circumstances some might have forgotten the land of their fathers. Not so Nehemiah, for he was evidently known as one who did not cease to remember Zion, from the fact of the visit here recorded of his brother Hanani and certain men of Judah. And from the nature of his question, it will be perceived that his heart embraced all the people of the land. He inquired "concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity" (that is, concerning those that were left behind when so many were carried away captive to Babylon) "and concerning Jerusalem" - concerning the remnant that had gone up, with the permission of Cyrus, to build the Lord's house (Ezra 1). He was thus in fellowship with the heart of God, occupied as he was with His people and His interests. Surely Christians might learn many a lesson from these godly Jews. They never dreamed of isolating themselves from the whole nation, nor of seeking the welfare, for example, of a single tribe; but their affections, according to their measure, moved throughout the entire circle of God's interests on the earth. They lost themselves, so to speak, in the welfare and blessing of the whole people. If the ties which bound them together were so intimate and imperishable, how much more should it be so with those who have all been baptized by one Spirit into one body!

In answer to his inquiry his visitor said, "The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire." v. 3. A sad account indeed of the chosen people in the land of promise! "A land," as Moses described it, "of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: a land which the LORD thy God careth for: the eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." Deut. 11:11, 12. Ah! what a tale is unfolded by the present circumstances of the children of the captivity - a tale of sin, rebellion, and even apostasy. And what were their circumstances? They were in great affliction, arising out of their own moral condition and from the activity and enmity of their enemies by whom they were surrounded. (See chap. 4:1, 2.) They were also in reproach. Blessed is it when God's people are reproached because they are His people or on account of the name of their God (compare 1 Pet. 4:14); but nothing is more sorrowful than when the Lord's people are reproached by, or become a reproach to, the world through their inconsistent walk and ways. And it would seem from the close of the book of Ezra that the reproach in this case was of the latter kind. Professing to be what they really were - God's people - they were denying it by their alliances with

the heathen and by their forgetfulness of the claims of their God.

That this is the interpretation of their affliction and sorrowful condition would seem\_ to be borne out by the statement concerning Jerusalem: "The wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire." This was the fact, and Nebuchadnezzar had been the instrument, through his army, to accomplish it ( see 2 Chron. 36). There is however another meaning. The wall is the symbol of separation; and, as we have seen, the wall of separation between Israel and the heathen had been broken down. The gate was the place, and thus the emblem, of judgment; and we are thereby instructed that justice and equity were no longer administered (see chap. 5).

What then could be more lamentable than this report which was conveyed to Nehemiah concerning the remnant in Judah and Jerusalem? And the effect was great upon this truehearted Israelite. He says, "And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven." v. 4. He made the sorrowful state of the people his own. He felt it according to God. In their affliction he was afflicted. But he knew to whom to turn. He wept, mourned, fasted, and prayed. "Is any among you afflicted?" says James, "let him pray." And the sorrow and affliction of Nehemiah, as expressed in his tears, mourning, and fasting, found an outlet in his prayer. This was a true mark of a mighty action of the Spirit of God upon his soul.

Let us examine the nature of his supplications. He said, "I beseech Thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love Him and observe His commandments: let Thine ear be attentive, and Thine eyes open, that Thou mayest hear the prayer of Thy servant, which I pray before Thee now, day and night. for the children of Israel Thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against Thee: both I and my father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against Thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which Thou commandest Thy servant Moses." vv. 5-7.

So far, there are chiefly two things - vindication of God, and confession of sins. Nehemiah owns most distinctly God's faithfulness, that there has been no failure on His part; while at the same time, he fully recognizes the character of God's relationship with Israel - that, in other words, His attitude toward them depended on their conduct. "God... keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love Him, and observe His commandments." This, together with his address to God, brings out, in a most marked way, the contrast between law and grace. Devoted and God-fearing as Nehemiah was, one cannot but be sensible of distance in the terms which he uses - "O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God" - a distance necessitated by the dispensation under which he lived. How different from the place into which the Lord brought His disciples, consequent on His resurrection, as set forth in His words, "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." But in the place he occupied, Nehemiah had learned what is rarely learned in such a measure even by Christians, that is, how to be an intercessor for his people. "Day and night" he was praying for them, and hence it was that he had the power to confess their sins. No higher privilege could be vouchsafed to a servant than this which was granted to Nehemiah - the power so to identify himself with Israel, as to enable him to take up and confess their sins as his own. "I," he says, "and my father's house have sinned." This is a true sign of spiritual power.

Many can lament the condition of God's people, but there are few who can identify themselves with it. It is only such that can truly intercede for them in the presence of God. And let it be noted that, as yet, he could only take God's part against himself and his people. God is ever faithful to those that love Him and observe His commandments; but, alas! they had not kept His commandments, nor His statutes, nor His judgments. All this is fully confessed; but he now turns to a promise on which he can ground his prayer and count upon the interposition of God on his behalf. He proceeds: "Remember, I beseech Thee, the word that Thou commandest Thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: but if ye turn unto Me, and keep My commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set My name there." vv. 8, 9. This reference is undoubtedly to

Lev. 26, and looks on to the final restoration of Israel. And herein lay the spiritual intelligence of Nehemiah, as led of the Spirit; for this restoration, as the reader may perceive if he turns to the chapter, will be a work of pure grace, founded upon God's absolute and unconditional covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (see Lev. 26:42).

Nehemiah really, therefore, threw himself, while confessing the sins of his people, upon the mercy and unconditional promises of God. He rose in this way above law, and reached, in his faith, the source of all blessing - the heart of God Himself. Hence he adds, gathering strength by waiting on God, "Now these are Thy servants and Thy people, whom Thou hast redeemed by Thy great power, and by Thy strong hand." v. 10. He thus touchingly presents Israel, sinners and transgressors as they were, before God on the ground of redemption, reminding God, as He graciously permits His people to do, of His purposes of grace toward them.

Having reached the only foundation on which he could rest, he presents the special petition that lay upon his heart. "O Lord," he says, "I beseech Thee, let now Thine ear be attentive to the prayer of Thy servant, and to the prayer of Thy servants, who desire to fear Thy name: and prosper, I pray Thee, Thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer." It is to be observed that Nehemiah associated others with him in his prayer. It was continually so also with the Apostle Paul. The fact is, when we are led of the Spirit of God we necessarily identify all in whose hearts He is also working with ourselves, whether in service, or in thanksgivings, or prayer. So one are the people of God, that isolation in spirit is impossible; and hence, when Nehemiah is bowed before God in his sorrow for the state of Israel, and his desires for their deliverance and blessing, he is assured that every godly Israelite is united with him in his supplications. His prayer is very simple; it is for "mercy in the sight of this man." For he knew that it was only through the king's permission that his desire could be accomplished. The scepter of the earth having been transferred by God Himself, consequent upon the sin and rebellion of His chosen people, to the Gentiles, in acknowledgment of the authority which He Himself had ordained, God would now work only through and by means of the Gentile king. Nehemiah was therefore in communion with the mind of God in making this prayer. But it will also be perceived that, while he understood the position in which he and his people were placed in subjection to Gentile authority, the king was nothing, in the presence of God, but "this man." A monarch of almost universal dominion, he dwindled into nothingness before the eyes of faith, being nothing but a man invested with a brief authority for the accomplishment of the purposes of God. Faith thus recognizes that, while the king was the appointed channel through which the requisite

permission to go to Jerusalem must be obtained, all depended not upon the king, but upon God acting on his mind to grant what Nehemiah desired.

Then Nehemiah adds the explanation - "For I was the king's cupbearer" - to show how, humanly speaking, he was both entirely subject to and dependent on the king. With this the chapter closes. Nehemiah has poured out his heart before the Lord, made known his request, and now he must wait; and many days he must wait, in expectation of the answer to his cries. A prayer may be entirely according to the will of God, and the fruit of communion with His mind, and yet not be answered immediately. This should be well understood, or the soul might be plunged into distress and unbelief without a cause. A prayer is often heard and granted, although God waits, in His infinite wisdom, for the suited moment to bestow the answer. This was the case with that of Nehemiah.

Labor and Conflict: Exposition on Nehemiah

## Chapter 2

This chapter is divided into several sections. First, we have the record of the manner in which God answered His servant's prayer and disposed the heart of the king to grant all that was necessary for Nehemiah's journey and mission (vv. 1-8). Then there is a brief account of his journey to Jerusalem, together with the effect it produced in certain quarters (vv. 9-11). Next, Nehemiah describes his nocturnal survey of the condition of the walls of the city, as also his conference with the rulers upon the object he had in view (vv. 12-18). And, last, the opposition of the enemies of God's people is given, with Nehemiah's answer (vv. 19, 20).

It is exceedingly interesting to observe the way in which God brought about the accomplishment of Nehemiah's desire. Four months had passed since he had offered the prayer recorded in chapter 1. He is careful to give us the dates. In the month Chisleu (answering to our November) he had prayed; and in the month Nisan (answering to our March) the answer came. During this period, man of faith as he was, he must have waited in daily expectation upon God. He could not foresee how the answer would come, but he knew that God could intervene when and how He would; and thus, to borrow a Hebrew expression, "in waiting he waited." It is in this way God both tries and strengthens the faith of His people. He waits while they wait. But if He wait, it is only to shut His people up to more entire dependence upon Himself, and thus to prepare their hearts more fully for the blessing He is about to bestow. And when He steps in, it is oftentimes, as in this case, in such a quiet and unseen way - unseen by all but the eye of faith - that it needs the exercise of faith to detect His presence. How natural thus is the way, on the surface, in which Artaxerxes was induced to give Nehemiah permission to visit Jerusalem, etc., only it must be remembered that Nehemiah had prayed that God would "grant him mercy in the sight of this man." Let us examine the scene.

The chapter, as it opens, shows us Nehemiah occupied with the duties of his office as the king's cupbearer. He "took up the wine, and gave it unto the king"; but his heart was occupied with other things, burdened as it was with the unutterable sorrow of his people's condition. But wine and sadness are incongruous, and it was intolerable to the king that his cupbearer should wear a sorrowful face at such a time. It destroyed his own pleasure. And Nehemiah confesses that he "had not been beforetime sad in his presence." The king therefore was angry and said, "Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart." "Then," says

Nehemiah, "I was very sore afraid." v. 2. And well he might have been; for in such a mood, like a true oriental despot, Artaxerxes might have ordered him forth to instant execution. But if afraid, God preserved to him his presence of mind, and led him, out of the abundance of his heart, to tell simply and truly the cause of his sorrow. He said to the king, "Let the king live forever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchers lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?" v. 3.

The king was not unacquainted with the subject of his cupbearer's sorrow, for it was he who had permitted Ezra to go up to build the temple, and had himself given gold and silver to aid his object. And God used Nehemiah's simple words to interest the king once more in the condition of Jerusalem. And he said, "For what dost thou make request?" Surely most would have hastened to answer the king, assuredly concluding that he would be certain, since he had deigned to put the question, to grant the desired favor. Not so Nehemiah (and this brings out a special trait of his character), for he says, "So I prayed

to the God of heaven," and afterward he presented his petition. Not that we are to conclude that he kept the king waiting; by no means. But the point to be observed is, that before he answered his master he cast himself upon his God - he prayed to the God of heaven. He thus acknowledges his dependence for wisdom to say the right thing, and reveals the special characteristic which another has termed "a heart that habitually turned to God." We might well seek the same grace; for surely it is blessed to be so walking in dependence on God, that when, in the presence of difficulties, perplexities, and dangers, we naturally (if we may use the word) look to the Lord for the needed wisdom, direction, and succor. When this is the case, the presence of God will be more real to us than the presence of men.

Having thus prayed, Nehemiah makes his request - "If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favor in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchers, that I may build it." v. 5. The king (who had the queen at that moment sitting with him), having asked how long he proposed to be absent, etc., at once granted his request. Nehemiah perceiving his opportunity - the opportunity God had vouchsafed and strengthened by his faith, waxed bolder, and ventured to ask for royal letters "to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come unto Judah; and a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into." Such were his objects, precise and defined: the restoration of the fortress, necessary for the protection of the temple, the rebuilding of the walls of the city, and the erection of a house suitable for himself in the exercise of his office. "And," we read, "the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me." v. 8. Before God he had poured out the desires of his heart (desires which God Himself had produced), to God he had looked for guidance and strength when in the presence of the king, and God now showed that He had undertaken for His servant by inclining the king to grant all that was necessary for the accomplishment of the work. And Nehemiah acknowledged this: it was "according to the good hand of my God upon me."

It is well for us to mark this principle in the ways of God with His people. If He puts within our hearts a desire for any service - a service for His glory - He will surely open out before us the way to it. If it be really His work on which our minds are set, He will enable us to do it in His own way

and time. The door may seem to be closed and barred; but if we wait on Him "who openeth, and no man shutteth," we shall find that it will suddenly open to us, so that we may enter in without let or hindrance. There could be no more difficult position than this of Nehemiah; but the Lord who had touched his heart with the affliction of His people removed all obstacles and set him free for his labor of love in Jerusalem. "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD."

Nehemiah lost no time in the execution of his purpose. He knew how to redeem the opportunity; for he adds, "Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters." But he had not gone alone; he was escorted by captains of the army and horsemen (v. 9). There is a great difference, therefore, between his and Ezra's journey to Jerusalem. Ezra would not ask the king for any military escort, because he had expressed to the king his confidence in God (Ezra 8:22); and God had abundantly justified his confidence, in guarding him and his companions "from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way." Nehemiah was not endowed with the same simple faith; but, though a godly and devout man, he traveled with the pomp and circumstance of one of the king's governors; in a way, therefore, more likely to secure the respect of the world and the assistance of the king's servants.

But immediately on his arrival, there was the sign of opposition to his mission - an opposition which grew and confronted him at every step, for in fact it was the opposition of Satan to the work of God. At first it seemed a very small thing. It says, "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. And why should they be grieved? The nationality of Sanballat is uncertain; probably he was a Moabite, and his servant was an Ammonite; and of these it is written, "that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God forever." (Chap. 13:1; Deut. 23:3-6.) They were, therefore, the implacable foes of Israel; and, being as such the suited instruments of Satan, they were naturally antagonistic to any effort to improve the condition of the people they contemned. And, indeed, Satan's object is gained in the corruption of God's people; and as long as they are living in forgetfulness of their true place and character, associating themselves with the world, and adopting its manners and customs, Satan will be a professed friend. But the moment a man of God appears on the scene, and seeks to recall them to the claims of God and His truth, Satan is roused to active enmity. Not that this is always avowed. As in the case before us, his servants are only "grieved" - grieved, of course, that the peace, the peace between Israel and their enemies, should be disturbed. For the faithful ones in the midst of God's people, like Elijah of old, are ever regarded as the troublers of Israel - troublers because they stand for God in the midst of evil.

Hence it was that Sanballat and Tobiah were "grieved" at the advent of Nehemiah; and, as we shall see, so bitter was their hatred, that they spared no labor to baffle him in his work, and even to compass his death. So far, however, the fact of their "grief" only is noticed; but the Spirit of God shows us thus the cunning of Satan, and the method of his activities.

There follows, in the next place, the account of Nehemiah's survey of the state of Jerusalem. After three days, he says, "I arose in the night," the burden of his mission pressing upon his soul so that he could not rest, "I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon." v.

12. This simple statement reveals the characteristics of a true servant. First, he confesses the source of his inspiration for his work. God had put the thought of it into his heart. The assurance of this is the secret of all strength and perseverance in service. Thus the Lord said to Joshua, "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage." Then, as already noted, Nehemiah could not rest until he had commenced his labors. The work of God admits of no delays. This principle is involved in the charge of our blessed Lord to His disciples, "Salute no man by the way." When He sent them forth, they must go straight on their mission. So felt Nehemiah; and he thus sallied forth on the first opportunity to learn the character and extent of the work God had put into his heart to do at Jerusalem.

He tells us, moreover, that he did not communicate his secret to any. To have done so, indeed, might have raised up hindrances on every hand. When the Lord distinctly enjoins a service upon any of His servants, nothing is frequently more dangerous than consultation with others. Faith trusts in Him who commissions for the work, for the strength and wisdom needed in its execution. Conference with others often produces many questions; such as, Is it possible? Is it wise? or, Is it the proper time? And the effect is, that faith droops under the influence of many a suggested doubt, if it does not become altogether extinguished by prudence and common sense. When the time arrives for the mission to be executed, helpers may be welcomed; but until all is arranged according to the dictates of faith, the secret must be kept between the soul and God.

From verses 13-15, the description is given of Nehemiah's tour of inspection, and of the condition in which he found the walls and gates of the city - a condition which corresponded exactly with the report brought to him in Shushan. (Compare verse 13 with chapter 1:3.) No one suspected the object Nehemiah had in view, for he adds, "And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work." v. 16. He had made his survey in silence - alone with God (though some attendants were with him), and gathered strength from his communings with God during the solemnity of that eventful night; and if his heart had been touched by the desolations of the holy city, it was only a feeble reflection of the pity and the compassion of Jehovah for the place which He Himself had chosen, and where, during the kingdom, He had dwelt between the cherubim on the mercy seat.

All was now prepared, and hence the next thing we find is, that Nehemiah took the rulers into his confidence. He could allow no one to advise as to the work, because he had received his mission from the Lord; but now that it was only a question of its execution, he could welcome the aid and fellowship of others. This is ever the path of the man of faith. He cannot alter or modify his purposes; but he rejoices in associating others with himself if they are willing to help forward, in dependence on the Lord, the object he has in view. Nehemiah, therefore, said to the rulers and the rest of the people, "Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work." vv. 17, 18.

It is evident from this address also that Nehemiah's heart was sorely burdened with the condition of his people and city. It was the account of this which had first bowed him down to the ground in

the presence of God (chap. 1:3, 4); and the words then used seemed to have been indelibly graven on his heart, for he uses them again, as we have seen, in verse 13, as also now in speaking to the people. It was intolerable to him, in his zeal for the Lord and for Jerusalem, that His chosen people should be in such a reproach to the heathen around; and his one desire

was to rebuild the wall of separation, and to restore justice and judgment in their midst by setting up the gates. Why should the boar out of the wood continue to waste the vine which God had once more, in His mercy, replanted, and the wild beast of the field devour it? (Psalm 80). Then, after exhorting them to build, he related to them concerning the hand of God which was good upon him, and concerning the king's permission (for by God's appointment, as the result of His judicial dealing, they were all subject to the king's authority) to do the work which the hand of God had laid upon him. God wrought with His servant's words, and produced a ready response in His people's hearts, so that they said, "Let us rise up and build." When we are in communion with God's mind as to our service, He never fails to send the needed helpers. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power" - words which contain a principle for all dispensations; for it is ever true that when God goes forth in power for the accomplishment of any purpose, He prepares willing-hearted servants to execute His designs. So, in the present instance, "they strengthened their hands for this good work," for they had been made to feel that it was of God.

This working of the Spirit of God aroused again the opposition of the enemy. Whenever God works, Satan counterworks. It was so now; for "when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?" v. 19. In addition to the Moabite and Ammonite, there is now an Arabian - every form of the flesh, as it were, lusting against the Spirit, stirred up as it had been by the craft and subtlety of Satan. It will be observed also that the opposition now assumes another character. At first Sanballat and Tobiah were grieved exceedingly at the intervention of Nehemiah. They affected to be sorry that he should come and disturb the peace that had prevailed between Israel and the heathen; but now they "laughed us to scorn, and despised us." One weapon is as good as another in the hands of the enemy. Seeing that their grief did not affect the purposes of Nehemiah, they would try mockery and contempt; and at the same time, they would, if possible, produce fear by insinuating a charge of rebellion. Surely we need to be acquainted with the wiles and devices of Satan, for he knows how to work upon every possible feeling of the natural man. Nehemiah, strong in the sense of the protection of God, and knowing that he was in the path of obedience, was proof against all his artifices. He said, "The God of heaven, He will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem." v. 20. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you," says the Apostle James. And Nehemiah resisted him by a bold confession of the name of his God, of confidence in His protecting care, and by the expression of His claims over His servants, and by the utter refusal of the title of the enemy to any right or interest in the holy city. There is nothing like boldness in the face of the adversary; but this can only spring from a divine courage, begotten by the assurance that if God be for us, none can be against us (Rom. 8:31).

Labor and Conflict: Exposition on Nehemiah

Chapter 3

The zeal of Nehemiah was used of the Lord to rouse almost the whole people. There were degrees of energy among them and, it may be, lukewarmness if not hostility in the hearts of some; but outwardly, and by profession, nearly all came forth and offered their services as builders. It was, in fact, a real revival, and such a one as could only be produced by the Spirit of God. And the value God set upon it is seen in that He has caused the names of those who engaged in this work to be written and preserved. This very circumstance shows that they had His mind in building the wall. It could not be otherwise, for what was the meaning of their proposed work? It was that they, led forth by Nehemiah, confessed their need of separation from the nations around, and took measures to secure it. Long ages before, Moses had said to the Lord, "Wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? is it not in that Thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth." Exod. 33:16. They had forgotten this truth; but now, through grace, they were about once again to take the place of a people set apart for God. Such is the significance of the activity recorded in this chapter, though, alas! their energy and faithfulness were soon proved to be like the morning cloud that passes away.

There is much to interest in the details of the chapter, a chapter that can scarcely fail to remind the reader of Rom. 16, in which the Apostle Paul, as guided of the Spirit, specifies many of the saints by name, and describes in many cases, their different characteristics in service. For example, he says, "Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which labored much in the Lord." v. 12. Thus by adding two words in his salutation to Persis, he gives her a special place before God, as well as in his affections and the affections of the saints, and a superior commendation. So in our chapter we read, "After him Baruch the son of Zabbai earnestly repaired the other piece." v. 20. It tells us with what minuteness (if we may so speak) God surveys His people, how carefully He notes the state of their hearts and the character of their service; and how grateful to Him is the exhibition of devotedness to His glory. Such commendations - not of man, but of God, and therefore infallible - while they, on the one hand, anticipate the judgment seat of Christ, should, on the other, stir us all up to seek the same zeal and unwearied diligence in the Lord's service.

While we may leave the reader to examine for himself this interesting record, some of its details may profitably be indicated.

Eliashib the high priest, and his brethren the priests, are the first workers mentioned - not, it is to be concluded, because they surpassed the rest in energy or devotedness, but rather because of the position they occupied among the people. It is their rank, as will be afterward seen, that gives them the precedence in the record. "They builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel." Comparing this account with that in verse 3, a significant difference will be noted. "But the fish gate did the sons of Hassenaah build, who also laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof." (See also v. 6.) The high priest and his brethren built a gate, and set up its door, but they did not lay "the beams thereof" to give it stability, nor is it mentioned that they provided locks or bars. The truth is, they were not so much in earnest as the sons of Hassenaah and Jehoiada the son of Paseah and his companion. They were willing to have the gate and its doors; but they made no provision to make it secure, in case of need, against the ingress of the enemy. They did not object to the convenience, but they were not prepared to renounce all

commerce with the enemy. And the reason was, that Eliashib himself, in whose mouth the law of truth should have been found, and who should have walked with God in peace and equity, and have turned many from iniquity (Mal. 2:6), was allied unto Tobiah the Ammonite (chap. 13:4), and his grandson was son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite (chap. 13:28). He had, therefore, but faint heart for the work of separation, connected as he was by such intimate ties with the enemies of Israel, though under the influence of the energetic Nehemiah, he made a show of agreement with his brethren in their efforts to rebuild the wall and gates of the city. It was a solemn position for the high priest, as well as a source of danger to the people.

In verse 5 an exception is noted: "And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord." The Tekoites were willing servants, for in verse 27 it is said that they "repaired another piece." They evidently were zealous men, and this in spite of the indifference, if not opposition, of "their nobles." It is often the case, when God is working in the midst of His people, that the "nobles" are outside the circle of blessing. Even as not many mighty, not many noble are called of God in His grace, so in revivals, in new and distinct actions of the Spirit of God, the first to respond to His energy are most generally found among the poor and despised. The "nobles" may, in God's tender mercy, be drawn in afterward; but He most frequently begins with the poor of this world, whom He has chosen rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to them that love Him. Moreover, the cause of the dissent of these nobles is apparent. They "put not their necks to the work of their Lord." Pride was governing their hearts. They could not stoop low enough. They were not accustomed to the yoke, and they thus preferred their own importance and ease to the Lord's work. What a contrast to Him who, though rich, became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich forever! He came into this world to do the will of God, and was in the midst of His own "as He that serveth"; and having finished the work which the Father gave Him to do, He has, in His unspeakable grace and love, become forever the servant of His people. It is well for every child of God to learn the lesson, that it is only in bowing their necks to the Lord's yoke that rest to their souls can be found. The nobles of Tekoa chose their own will, and lost by their stubbornness the blessing of the service offered to them, and at the same time procured for themselves everlasting exclusion from the commendation given to their brethren, as well as a mark of condemnation for their pride.

In several cases it is specified that certain repaired over against their houses (vv. 10, 23, 28, 29, etc.). In these notices two things have to be distinguished - the fact and the teaching of the fact. The fact was, as stated, that these children of Israel undertook the building of the wall opposite their own dwellings; but, over and above this, the Spirit of God would have us understand its meaning. And it is not far to seek. We are thus taught - bearing in mind that the wall is an emblem of separation - that these servants of the Lord began first with their own houses, that they sought first of all to bring their own families into subjection to the word of God, and thereby to effect separation from evil within the circle of their own responsibility. And this has ever been the divine order. Thus, when God called Gideon to be the deliverer of His people, He commanded him to throw down the altar of Baal in his father's house before he could go forth to battle against the Midianites. As another has remarked, "Faithfulness within precedes outward strength. Evil must be put away from Israel before the enemy can be driven out. Obedience first and then strength. This is God's order."

The record, therefore, that these several individuals repaired every one over against his house, shows that conscience was at work, that they rightly understood God's claims upon them in the sphere of their own homes, and that they felt that to set their houses in order was a necessary qualification for any public service. This principle obtains also in the Church. "A bishop," writes the Apostle, must be "one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity." And deacons are also required to rule "their children and their own houses well" (1 Tim. 3). And it is to the loss of the Church and of the saints, as well as to the damage of the souls of those who take the place of rule in the assembly, when this principle is neglected. It is true that the Spirit of God enjoins us to obey them that have the rule over us; but it is likewise important that those who have the lead should possess the scriptural qualifications for the places they have assumed or accepted.

Another interesting point may be noticed. Some who built the gates and assisted with the wall did not repair over against their houses. Eliashib, the high priest, for example (compare v. 1 with vv. 20 and 21), and those who repaired over against their houses, are not said to have assisted in building the gates, etc. Two classes of saints are herein indicated. The first class are what may be termed ecclesiastical saints; that is, those who are strong upon Church truth, and in maintaining the truth of separation from evil for the Church, and at the same time are careless as to their own houses. A more sorrowful spectacle cannot be presented in the Church of God (and one not infrequently seen), when a public advocate of the claims of Christ over His people, of the maintenance of His authority in the midst of those who are gathered to His name, allows his own house, through its disorder, to become an occasion of reproach by the enemy. Eliashib is an example, in this very chapter, of this class. Whatever the indifference of his heart, he was professedly engaged in the maintenance of separation and justice and judgment in Israel - through building, together with his brethren, the gate, and sanctifying it, while at the same time he left others to care for the wall over against his own house. (See vv. 20, 21.) Tending the vineyard of others, his own vineyard he had not kept; and this is proved by the fact already mentioned, that he was allied unto Tobiah the Ammonite, while his grandson married a daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. Eli and Samuel and David of an earlier day are also examples of this numerous class.

Then there are others, as we learn from this chapter, who, most zealous in tending their own houses, and regulating them according to God, are almost entirely careless of the welfare of the Church. Such have apprehended the truth that they themselves individually are to be witnesses for Christ; but they have not learned that the Church is to be a light-bearer in the midst of the world. In other words, they have not realized the oneness of God's people, that believers are "the body of Christ, and members in particular." As a consequence, while they fully admit the Word of God is their guide as to their individual path, they do not recognize its authority over the saints collectively or corporately. They are thus often linked with such departures from the truth, such disregard of the supremacy of Christ as Head of the Church, through their public connection with the people of God, as would fill them with fear if they did but own their responsibility in the Church as well as in their own families. But if we understand the position in which through grace we have been set, it will be our earnest desire to unite the repairing over against our own houses with building the wall and the gates.

Nothing in the service of the Lord's people passes unnoticed; and thus in verse 12 we read that "next unto him repaired Shallum the son of Haloesh, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, he

and his daughters." The zeal of these godly women has thus obtained for them a place in this memorial of the work of the Lord. Such a record, as well as the more abundant records of the New Testament, shows that there is never any difficulty as to women's place in service when they are filled with the energy of the Spirit of God. The account preserved of Joanna the wife of Chuza, Susanna, and many others who ministered to the Lord of their substance, of Mary and Martha, of Phoebe, a servant of the Church, of Priscilla, of Persis, and of many more, is surely sufficient for guidance to any who are willing to sit at Jesus' feet and learn His mind. This scripture gives us not necessarily what man saw, but what God saw. The father and his daughters were all engaged in repairing the wall, and the fact that it is mentioned is its commendation. Beyond this, nothing can be said; but the examples already cited are enough to teach that there is room enough in the Church of God, and also in the world, for women's utmost energy and devotedness to Christ, provided it be exhibited in subjection to Him and to His Word.

In the case of Meshullam the son of Berechiah, it is said that he repaired over against his chamber (v. 30). It would seem that he had no house, only a lodging; but though the circle of his responsibility was narrow, he was found faithful. The Apostle speaks thus of stewardship: "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." This should be a comfort to those who are tempted to long after wider spheres of service. It is fidelity in the place in which the Lord has placed us that He values and commends; and hence the work of Meshullam is singled out for notice equally with that of Shallun the son of Colhozeh, the ruler of part of Mizpah, of whom it is said, that "he repaired the gate of the fountain"; "he built it, and covered it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and the wall of the pool of Siloah by the king's garden, and unto the stairs that go down from the city of David." v. 15.

Reviewing the whole chapter, two other points of great importance may be specified. The reader will observe that some labored in companies and some alone. Some were happiest when serving in fellowship with their brethren, and some preferred, while in full communion with the object their brethren had in view, to labor in single-eyed dependence upon, and alone with, the Lord. The same thing is observed in every age of the Church. There are vessels which are adapted for lonely service, and there are others almost useless unless in association with others. There are dangers besetting the path of both. The former are often tempted to be isolated and to forget that the Lord has other servants working for the same ends, while the latter are sometimes betrayed into forgetfulness of individual dependence, as well as into the sacrifice of their own convictions as to the Lord's will in order to secure peace and union. The important thing is to receive the service from the Lord, to labor as He directs, to go where He sends, whether alone or in company with others, and ever to maintain a single eye to His glory. Happy is that servant who has learned the lesson that it is the Lord's will, and not his own, which must govern the whole of his activities.

The second noteworthy thing is the variety of the services of these children of Israel. One did one thing and one another, while all were working for the same end. It was no mean shadow of the various functions of the members of the body. Paul, speaking of this, says, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation," etc. Rom. 12:6, 7. The importance of occupying the position given us to fill, and of exercising the special gift, or function in the body, bestowed upon us, cannot

be too much pressed. Every Christian has his own place which no one else can fill, and his own work which no other can do; and the health and prosperity of the assembly depend upon the recognition and the practice of this truth.

## Labor and Conflict: Exposition on Nehemiah

### Chapter 4

In chapter 3 we have a beautiful presentation of the energy of the Spirit of God in the devoted service of His people. But whenever the people of God are active, Satan is aroused, and he seeks by every means in his power to raise up hindrances and obstacles. This is illustrated once more in the opening verses of this chapter, which give us the third form of his opposition to the work of God's builders. In chapter 2:10, the enemy was "grieved... exceedingly." Then he tried mockery and scorn (2:19), and now he assumes the weapons of anger and indignation. "It came to pass," we read, "that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." vv. 1-3. The language both of Sanballat and Tobiah was inconsistent with their feelings. It is in verse 1 that we find their real state of mind. Wrath and indignation it was that possessed their souls, for they knew full well the significance of the activity of the children of Israel. But when they spoke they concealed their anger with affected contempt. If however the "feeble Jews" were working in vain, if the wall they were building

were of such a contemptible character, wherefore the anger of Sanballat and Tobiah? Happy was it for the builders that their leader was on the watch, and, armed at every point against the devices of Satan, knew how to use the shield wherewith to quench his fiery darts. For what was Nehemiah's resource in the presence of this new form of hostility?

He said, "Hear, O our God; for we are despised." v. 4. He simply turned to God in the assurance that He cared for His people, that He would be their defense and their shield, engaged as they were in His own service. And it is ever blessed when we can take all the enemy's revilings to, and leave them with, God. In the energy and impatience of nature, we are too apt to attempt to meet the foe in our own strength, and thus we often rush into the conflict only to encounter defeat and disaster. But faith turns the eye upward and commits all to the Lord. Hezekiah furnishes us with a beautiful illustration of this when he went up into the house of the Lord and spread before Him the letter which he had received from Rabshakeh, who commanded the army of Sennacherib. In like manner Nehemiah cried, "Hear, O our God." And mark his plea - "for we are despised." God's people are precious in His sight, and to despise them is to despise Him. Nehemiah had entered into this, and thus made his appeal to the heart of God. Having cast himself in this way upon God, and placed himself and the people (for he fully identifies himself with them) under His protection, he gathers strength to pray against the enemy. "Turn," he says, "their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity; and cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before Thee: for they have provoked Thee to anger before the builders." vv. 4, 5. It may surprise the superficial reader that such a prayer could be offered. Two things should be remembered: first, the dispensation under which the people were; and second, that the

enemies of Israel were the enemies of God. Sanballat and Tobiah were deliberately setting themselves in opposition to the work of the Spirit of God. And all may learn from this prayer, as Saul afterward had to learn in another way, what a solemn thing it is to persecute God's people and to hinder His work. Thus the ground on which Nehemiah urges his petition is:

"They have provoked Thee to anger before the builders." The cause of these despised children of the captivity was the cause of God; and it was in this confidence that Nehemiah found, as all believers who are in fellowship with the mind of God in their labors may find, encouragement to invoke His aid as against their foes.

But if Nehemiah prayed (as we shall see again), it did not interfere with his or the people's labors; we might rather say that his perseverance in his work sprang from his prayers. We say his prayers, for these are his individual cries to God, and his cries in secret to God. We are permitted to view the inner life of this devoted servant, as well as his public labors. No ear but God's heard these supplications, though they are recorded to teach us that the secret of all true activity, as well as of courage in the presence of danger, is realized dependence on the Lord. Thus, after Nehemiah records his prayer, he adds: "So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work." v. 6. This is a blessed record, and one which testifies to the energy of the Spirit of God acting through Nehemiah upon the people, and producing unanimity and perseverance. For when it says, "The people had a mind to work," it means that they had God's mind. Sometimes unanimity may be seen and the fact gloried in irrespective of the consideration whether it is according to the mind of God. To be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Cor. 1:10), when the result of divine power, ensures the successful accomplishment of any service to which God calls His people, because with His Spirit ungrieved He is able to work without let or hindrance in their midst.

This spectacle of united perseverance in the work of God excited the foe to more determined opposition. Having tried many weapons without success to deter the people from building the wall, he now produces another. "It came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth, and conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it." vv. 7, 8.

Before, there were but a few individuals, but now there are numbers. Satan finding that Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem could not succeed by themselves, draws others to their help - the Arabians, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites - these last being entirely new allies. In fact, he collects an army, as force is the weapon he is now about to try. But what was it that aroused the enemy anew to attempt to hinder the work? It was the report they had heard, that "the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped." It was now evident that the children of the captivity were in earnest, and that they, under the leadership of Nehemiah, were determined to shut out evil by erecting the wall and stopping the breaches. This never suits Satan, whose desire ever is to break down all distinction between the people of God and the world, and hence it was that he marshaled his forces in order to prevent "these feeble Jews" from accomplishing their purpose.

And what had the children of Israel to meet this array of power on the part of the adversary? They had a leader whose confidence was in God, and who had learned the lesson Elisha taught his

servant when the king of Syria had sent an army to take him; namely, that "they that be with us are more than they that be with them." Nothing daunted, therefore, by the increasing numbers and rage of the enemy, he says, "Nevertheless we made our prayer unto God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them." He thus combined dependence on God, in whom alone he knew his strength and defense to be, with unceasing vigilance against the "roaring lion." These are the two invisible weapons which God puts into the hands of His people in the presence of the enemy - weapons which suffice to defeat his most powerful assaults. Hence the Lord, in the prospect of the advancing power of Satan against His disciples, said, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Matt. 26:41. The Apostle likewise writes, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance," etc. (Eph. 6:18), knowing that unless watchfulness were maintained Satan would soon decoy the soul into forgetfulness and sloth. Nehemiah, therefore, was divinely instructed in his means of defense, which, indeed, placed a rampart between him and his foes, against which, if they dashed, it would be only to encounter certain destruction. And observe that the watchfulness (day and night) was as unceasing as the prayer. In this sense there is no rest for the Christian. Having done all, he is still to stand; for as the enemy is unresting in his attacks, the believer must be unceasing in the use of his means of defense.

But a new source of danger is now discovered. Without were fightings, and now, alas! within were fears. "And 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." v. 10. As long as "the people had a mind to work," the danger from without, met as it was by watchfulness and prayer, mattered but little; but the difficulty was great when the people themselves became fainthearted and weary. The cause of Judah's despondency was twofold. First, "The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed." Judah had forgotten that the Lord was the strength of His people, and that if He places a burden of service upon the shoulders of any of His people, He gives also the needful strength for its execution. Second, they said that on account of the quantity of rubbish it was impossible to build the wall. So have many said since Judah's day. The corruptions in the Church have been so many - so much "rubbish" has been imported on every side - that, despairing of carrying out separation from evil according to the Word of God, souls have often been betrayed into acceptance of the very things they deplore. It is impossible, they say, to conform themselves now to the Word of God, to restore the authority of the Scriptures over the conduct and activities of the Church, to give the place of pre-eminence to the Lord in the midst of His gathered people, to draw the line of distinction between those who are His and those who are not; and we must, therefore, accept things as they are. Granted that there is much rubbish, it is yet clear that the Word of God never abates its claims upon His people; and 2 Timothy teaches most distinctly that the responsibility of building the wall is as binding upon the saints when the house of God is in ruins, as was that of maintaining the wall when His house was in order. The fact was, the effect of the display of the enemy's power, and the prospect of incessant warfare had discouraged the heart of Judah; and he sought to find a justification for his state of soul in the condition of the burden bearers, and in the obstacles to his work. Many of us can understand this; for to labor under constant discouragements and in the presence of active enemies is calculated to try the spirit and to tempt us to abandon our service, especially when we have ceased to derive our strength and our motives to perseverance from communion with the mind of the Lord.

Two other dangers are indicated in verses 11 and 12. The adversaries sought to keep the builders in a continual state of alarm by threatening a sudden onslaught, and thus to wear them out, as they had partially done in the case of Judah, by the strain of continual apprehension. The Jews, moreover, that "dwelt by them," those, that is, who were not inhabitants of Jerusalem, but were scattered through the land in the vicinity of their foes, these came, and assured the builders repeatedly - "ten times" - that danger was really impending, that their adversaries would certainly execute their threats. To sight, therefore, there was little, if anything, to encourage; but perils of every kind were hemming them in, threatening both the continuation of their work, and even their own lives.

If, however, the enemy was unwearying in his assaults, Nehemiah was not less untiring in his watchfulness and defense; and the rest of the chapter (vv. 13-23) gives us a most interesting and detailed account of the measures he adopted for the security of the people, for the progress of the work, and of the manner in which they builded. In the first place, he arranged for defense by setting "in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places,... the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows." These were both duly ordered and fully armed, for when Satan is in question we are powerless unless we are in the right place and equipped with divine weapons. (Compare Eph. 6:10-17.) Thereupon Nehemiah inspired the nobles, the rulers, and the rest of the people with words of exhortation. He said, "Be not afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses." v. 14. The frequency of the exhortation in the Scriptures, not to be afraid, addressed to God's people, shows how prone we are to yield to fear in the conflicts we are called upon to wage. It is both the first symptom of want of confidence in God, and the sure precursor of defeat if fear continues to possess our souls. Hence, when Israel went forth to battle in olden days, the proclamation had to be made, as in the case of Gideon's army, "What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart." Deut. 20:8. While, however, Nehemiah urged them not to fear, he supplied the antidote; "Remember the Lord," he says, "which is great and terrible." For he knew that if they but once apprehended the character and presence of God, if they brought Him in, by the exercise of faith, and measured the foe by what He was, they would be filled with courage, and be able to say, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" He sought in this way to nerve their arm for the battle; and thus he continued, "and fight for your brethren," etc. If the battle was the Lord's, it was yet for all that was dearest to them in this world that they were to fight.

Labor and Conflict: Exposition on Nehemiah

Chapter 4 continued

The effect of Nehemiah's vigilant and energetic activity and preparation for defense was to dishearten the foe. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you," if but "for a season." The enemy heard that their plans had come to the knowledge of Nehemiah, and that God had thus frustrated their counsel; and they seem to have retreated for the moment, for the Jews were able to return all of them to the wall - every one to his work. In this way God responded to the faith of His devoted servant by baffling the adversary's designs. But Nehemiah was not ignorant of Satan's devices, and did not for a minute believe the danger was over. He knew too well his restless enmity to imagine that he had given up his designs against the Lord's people and the Lord's work; and while,

therefore, the builders recommenced their labor, Nehemiah made effectual provision for defense in case of a sudden attack. His own servants, we read, he divided into two companies, the one of which builded, and the other "held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons." Then he placed the rulers behind all the house of Judah - evidently to encourage them to resistance if attacked by the foe (v. 16). Combining this with the description of the manner in which they builded - "every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded" - and with the other added details, some most interesting instruction may be gleaned.

First, and foremost, the several classes of laborers may be specified. There were some wholly devoted to the work. There were others who were entirely occupied with the weapons of warfare (v. 16). So it is in the Church of God. Some of the Lord's servants are called and specially qualified for edification. They therefore occupy themselves with souls and with the assembly, laboring to build up themselves and others on their most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, seeking to maintain the truth of the Church among the saints, and caring for the holiness of the house of God. There are others who are called to conflict, who are quick to discern the assaults of the enemy upon the truth of God, and wise in the power of the Holy Spirit to meet them with the weapons of their warfare, which are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:4, 5). The builders, the burden-bearers, and those that laded, are also distinguished (v. 17). Every one had his appointed work, and all contributed to the same end. Happy is it for the people of God, as may once more be seen when they perceive the special place for which they are qualified, and occupy it for the Lord. It is the forgetfulness of this qualified, and occupy it for the Lord. It is the forgetfulness of this truth that has in every age produced confusion in the Church, and hence too much stress cannot be laid on the importance of filling, and of being satisfied with filling, the place for which we have been divinely qualified. If burden bearers - burden bearers for others - let us not seek to be builders; and if builders, let us wait on our building. The Lord and not the servant appoints to the work and qualifies for it.

But whether builders, burden-bearers, or "those that laded," one feature characterized them all alike - "Every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon." This in itself reveals the character of the times in which they labored. They were in fact perilous times - times, as we have seen, when the power of Satan was increasingly manifested in opposition to the people of God. These times were typical of that in which Jude labored, especially when he wrote his epistle; for we find the same two things in him the sword and the trowel. He found it necessary to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, and he also exhorted those to whom he wrote to build up themselves on their most holy faith. And this is also the character of the present day - the perilous times in which our lot is cast. We may, therefore, well learn from Nehemiah's builders, that the divine way of being prepared for the assaults of the enemy is, while we have our weapons of defense in one hand, or our swords girded on our thigh, to be diligently occupied in building. The danger is, when controversies arise through Satan's attacks upon the truth, of forgetting the need of souls of ceasing to build, of being so occupied with the enemy as to overlook the necessity of diligent and persistent ministrations of Christ to sustain and nourish souls, and thus to enable them to repel the enemy's assaults. God's people cannot be fed, built up, with controversies - a warning word which cannot be too loudly sounded forth at the

present moment. Our positive work, even when expecting and on the outlook for the enemy, is building; and the more earnestly we build, the more secure we shall be when the enemy delivers his assault. The weapons must be ready, but our work is to go on with the wall.

Then there was the trumpeter. "And he," says Nehemiah, "that sounded the trumpet was by me." v. 18. The use of the holy trumpet may be gathered from Numb. 10 It was for "the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps." Moreover, in times of war, "an alarm" was to be blown an alarm which not only assembled the people, but also came up before God, called Him in, so that they might be saved from their enemies. And it was a command that only the priests should blow with the trumpets - only those who, from their nearness had intelligence of, were in communion with, the Lord's mind. So here, he who sounded the trumpet was to be with Nehemiah; and, therefore, only to sound it at his master's bidding. It was for Nehemiah to discern the moment to sound, for the trumpeter to catch the first intimation of Nehemiah's mind and will. In like manner now, only those who are living in the enjoyment of their priestly privileges, in nearness to and in communion with the mind of Christ, know how to sound an alarm. To blow at their own will, or on their own apprehensions of danger, would only be to produce confusion, to call the builders away from their labors, and thus to do the work of the enemy. To be able to sound at the right moment, they must be with, and have their eyes upon, their Lord.

Nehemiah, in the next place, gave the nobles, the rulers, and the rest of the people, directions concerning what they should do if they heard the sound of the trumpet (vv. 19, 20). Scattered, necessarily, in their labors, the moment the trumpet sounded they were to gather together around Nehemiah and the trumpeter. The Lord (if we speak of the spiritual instruction was with him who had sounded the Awn!. He had given the word, and the trumpeter had blown his trumpet; and to the testimony that had gone forth the people must gather. For the moment their labors must be suspended that they might assemble around the Lord and make common cause against the enemy. It would have been unfaithfulness, if the trumpet sounded, to continue their work; for the Lord's mind for them at that moment would be defense, conflict, and not building. Some of the builders, as often happens, might feel that it was far happier work to build than to fight; but the only question for them would be, Had the trumpet sounded? If it had, it would be for them to obey the summons. This brings out another important feature. In all these arrangements, one mind governs all. Nehemiah commands, and the part of the people, whether rulers, nobles, or the rest, was simply obedience. Thus it should ever be. The Lord - by His very title of Lord - claims the subjection of all His servants to His own will as expressed in the written Word. Last, Nehemiah tells them, "Our God shall fight for us"; falling back, doubtless, in the exercise of faith, upon God's own word, to which we have alluded, in connection with the blowing of an alarm in the time of war. For if God called the people together for the defense of His cause, He would surely deliver them from the power of the foe. And with what courage should the assurance inspire us, that, if by His grace we are associated with God as against the enemy, we may confidently count upon His succor. It is a battle cry - "Our God shall fight for us" - which will at the same time encourage His servants and strike dismay into the heart of the adversary.

The chapter then concludes with three additional particulars. "So," that is, in this manner, says Nehemiah, "we labored in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared." v. 21. They were thus ever on the alert, ready for the foe, and untiring in their service. They wrought while it was day, from early morning till late at night; for, as we have

seen, they had a mind to work. He also at the same time said unto the people, "Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labor on the day." v. 22. The day for labor, and the night for watchfulness. Satan loves the darkness; it is the element in which he lives and moves, even as his followers love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are, evil (Eph. 6:12; John 3:19). The servants of the Lord therefore should never cease to be watchful, but must make provision for the night as well as for the day, even as we read in the Song of Solomon of the threescore valiant men who were about the bed, "which is Solomon's.... They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night." Chap. 3:7, 8. We learn then,, from this instruction of Nehemiah, that the place of safety was "within Jerusalem," behind the walls that. were being built, and that those who were found within should labor in the day, and keep watch during the night.

Finally, Nehemiah says, "So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that every one put them off for washing." v. 23. This statement, it will be observed, is not made concerning all the people, only concerning Nehemiah, his brethren, and his personal following - servants, and men of the guard. He thus set a blessed example, in the circle of his own responsibility, of personal devotedness. He knew how to refuse himself, his own ease and comfort, in the Lord's service, to endure hardness as a good soldier (2 Tim. 2:3). But he is careful to inform us that they put off their clothes to wash themselves; for those who are engaged in the Lord's work must not neglect personal defilements which would grieve the Holy Spirit, limit His power, and thus mar their usefulness.

True, it is the Lord's work - His blessed work in grace - to wash His people's feet; but self judgment is the process through which He leads us, through the Spirit, to effect our cleansing; and for this purpose we must "put off our clothes," everything that might conceal our condition from ourselves, that there

may be no hindrance to the washing of water by the Word.

Labor and Conflict: Exposition on Nehemiah

## Chapter 5

Instead of continuing the narrative of building the wall, Nehemiah turns aside to describe the state of things within - among the people. And this is most instructive. If we are occupied in dealing with evil from without, we cannot afford to neglect our own moral condition or the condition of the assembly. This has been too often the case, so that it will be sometimes seen that zealous contenders for the truth are altogether neglectful of self-judgment and of discipline in the house of God. No sadder spectacle can be witnessed than an assembly, for example, which is utterly careless of its own state, of its own want of subjection to the Word of God, proclaiming the need of separation from evil-doers or from false doctrine. Vessels unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, become prepared unto every good work by being themselves purged from all that by which they might be contaminated or defiled. Such too is the lesson of these chapters. Conflict characterizes chapter 4, and now in chapter 5 the lesson must be learned that the builders and warriors must have on the breastplate of righteousness if they are to resist successfully the foe's attacks.

In verse 1, the internal difficulty is indicated --"And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews." (Compare Acts 6.) "The people and... their wives" are evidently the poor, while "their brethren the Jews" are the rich. And division had come in through oppression by the latter, taking occasion through the poverty of the former to enrich themselves. (Compare Jas. 5, and also 1 Cor. 11:17-22.) Some had sold their sons and daughters to the rich for corn, that they might eat and live. Some had, with the same object, under pressure from the dearth., mortgaged their lands, vineyards, and houses; and others had borrowed money upon the security of their lands and vineyards to pay the king's tribute. The rich had used the needs of their poorer brethren to become richer, and to bring them completely under their power. The poor, bowed to the dust under the heavy burden of their bondage and need, raised "a great cry," and said, "Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought unto bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and vineyards." v. 5.

Such was the sad condition of the returned remnant, even while they were engaged in building the walls of their holy city Jerusalem. Let us then seek to discover the root of this festering sore. It lies in a word - used twice - "their brethren," "our brethren." They were brethren as being common descendants of Abraham, and even in a deeper sense. As God's chosen people they were alike on the ground of redemption, and all therefore were on the same footing before Him - the common objects of His grace, and as such heirs together of the promises made to their fathers. It was in view of this that Malachi challenged them with the question, "Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?" Chap. 2:10. So now "the Jews" were dealing with the people as if they were not their brethren, in utter forgetfulness of the common relationship in which they stood before God, and so treating them as if they were aliens and heathen. The same evils reappear in varying forms in every age, and are especially noticed in the epistle of James. (See chapter 1:9, 10; chapters 2 and 5.)

But there was more than forgetfulness of relationship in this conduct on the part of the Jews. There was also positive disobedience. (See Exod. 22:25; Deut. 15.) We may cite one verse:

"If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth." Deut. 15:7, 8. (Read the whole chapter.) As being themselves the recipients of grace, they were to express that grace to their brethren. (Compare 2 Cor. 8:9, and the following.) But instead of this they denied, as we have pointed out, the truth of their redemptive position, and, exhibiting a spirit of rigor and oppression for the sake of gain, they violated the plainest precepts of the Word of God. There are few who, as they read this narrative, would not condemn such gross disobedience; and yet it may be asked, What did it amount to? Simply the adoption of human thoughts instead of God's, of worldly usages and practices instead of those prescribed in the Scriptures. In a word, these Jews walked as men, and as men who hastened to be rich at the expense of their brethren! And is this sin unknown in the Church of God? No, do not the usages of society and the maxims of the world often force themselves among Christians, and regulate their mutual relationships? Let our own consciences answer the question in the presence

of God, and we shall discover if the sin of these Jews has its counterpart today among the Lord's people.

This was the state of things among the returned captives - the restored remnant - a moral condition that necessarily crippled the efforts of Nehemiah to cope with the advancing tide of evil from without. He tells us, "I was very angry when I heard their cry, and these words." His faithful heart entered into the sorrowful condition of his poor brethren, and he was righteously indignant with their oppressors. So Paul of a later date, according to the truth of the dispensation in which he was, exclaimed, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" 2 Cor. 11:29. In both cases, the anger of Nehemiah and the sympathy of Paul, in their identification with the sorrows of God's people, were reflections, however feeble, of the heart of God Himself. (Compare Exod. 3:7, 8.)

But the question for Nehemiah was, How could this state of things be remedied? The answer is found in verses 7-12. Observe the remarkable expression, "Then I consulted with myself" (v. 7), for therein is contained a principle of the utmost importance. The nobles and rulers with whom, in ordinary circumstances, he might have taken counsel, were the chief offenders; and no light therefore or assistance could be expected from them. Thus it was that Nehemiah was cast on his own resources, or rather that he was shut up to God for guidance in the matter. When all have departed out of the way, and when, as a consequence, the authority of the Word of God has been °obscured, the man of faith - one who desires to walk with God - cannot afford to consult with others, or he might be fettered with their counsel; he must act alone and for himself, at whatever cost, according to the Word; and in this necessity he finds both strength and courage, because it begets confidence in the Lord, and ensures His presence. Hence the next step was that Nehemiah "rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them." v. 7. He convicted them of their sin (see Exod. 23:25); and according to the apostolic injunction, he rebuked them before all, saying, "We, after our ability, have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer," etc. (vv. 8-14).

There are several points in Nehemiah's address worthy of special remark. It will be seen, in the first place, that he is enabled to rebuke the offenders by contrasting their conduct with his own. He had redeemed his brethren from the heathen; they had brought them into bondage to themselves, lording it over God's heritage. Most blessed is it when a shepherd among the people of God can point to his own conduct as their guide. It was so with the Apostle Paul. Again and again he was led of the Holy Spirit to refer to himself as an example. (See Acts 20:34, 35; Phil. 3:17; 1 Thess. 1:5, 6, etc.) So it was with Nehemiah in this instance. And in what a light did he thus place the conduct of the nobles and rulers!

Nehemiah, from love to his brethren, and from grief for the dishonor to Jehovah's name by their condition, spent his substance in their redemption; they, from love to themselves, and from a desire to increase in riches, used the necessities of their brethren to bind the yoke of bondage about their necks. Nehemiah showed the spirit of Christ (compare 2 Cor. 8:9), and they the spirit of Satan.

Having thus exposed the nature of their conduct, he appeals to them on another ground. "Also I said, It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?" v. 9. This appeal shows how dear to Nehemiah was the honor of his God, and that it grieved him to the heart to think that the conduct of Israel should furnish a just occasion for reproach from the enemy. They claimed, and claimed rightly, to be God's chosen people, and as such to be holy, to be separated from all the rest of the nations for His service. But if in their walk they resembled the heathen, what became of their profession? They did not cease to be God's people, but by their conduct they denied that they were, and publicly profaned the holy name by which they were called. No greater damage can be done by God's people than to give the enemy just ground for taunting them with their practices. (Contrast 1 Pet. 2:11, 12; 3:15, 16; 4:15-17.) On this appeal he based his exhortation - first, to cease to do evil, and then, to learn to do well. Reminding them again that he and his brethren and servants might have acted, if they had chosen, in a similar manner, he says, "I pray you, let us leave off this usury." Remark that he says, "let us"; putting himself in grace alongside of them in their sins, acknowledging, indeed, that he was one with them before God, and seeking thus in a spirit of meekness to effect their restoration. Moreover, he urged upon them to make restitution, to give back that day "their lands," etc., "that ye exact of them" (v. 11).

The Lord was with His servant, and they consented to do as they had been urged; but Nehemiah, unwilling to leave the matter in any doubt, or fearing that they might be tempted, when they went back to their homes, to forget their promise, "called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise." Even more, to give greater solemnity to the transaction, he says, "Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labor, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the LORD. And the people did according to this promise." v. 13. In this manner Nehemiah labored for the good of the people, and corrected the abuses that had sprung up in their midst to the destruction of order, holiness, and fellowship.

From verse 14 to the end of the chapter, Nehemiah is led to give an account of his own conduct as governor. Looking at this, according to man, it might seem to be self-commendation and exaltation; but it must never be forgotten that we are reading God's Word, and that it was therefore as guided by the Holy Spirit that this description is recorded for our instruction. And, as before observed, the lesson is, that the shepherds whom the Lord raises up for His people should ever be "ensamples to the flock." (See 1 Pet. 5:1-3.) Bearing this in mind, we shall be able to profit by the presentation of Nehemiah's conduct. First, he tells us that, for the twelve years he had been governor, neither he nor his brethren had eaten the bread of the governor, as his predecessors had done; that is, he had not, as he explains, been "chargeable unto the people" (vv. 14, 15). His office entitled him to be so, but he did not use this authority in this respect. We are again reminded of the Apostle Paul, who wrote to the Corinthians: "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ." (1 Cor. 9:11-13, and following; see also Acts 20:33 Thess. 2:9.) Neither did he, like the former governors, permit his servants to bear rule over the people. No abuse is more common, even in the Church of God, than that here indicated. It is often seen, for example, to the sorrow of the saints, and the perversion of the divine order, that the relatives of

those who rightly have the place of rule assume place and authority, and expect to be acknowledged because of their relationship. As in Nehemiah's case, so also in the Church, office is personal, for qualification or gift is divinely bestowed and cannot be transmitted to another. Even Samuel failed in this respect when he made his sons judges; and it was their conduct that provoked the people of Israel to desire a king (1 Sam. 8:1-5).

Nehemiah was saved from this by walking and acting before God. "So did not I," he says, "because of the fear of God." This reveals to us a man whose conscience was tender and in lively exercise - one who was watchful over his ways and conduct, lest he might be governed by self-will or his own advantage instead of God's word - one who cherished a habitual reverence both for His presence and His authority, and, maintaining a holy fear in his soul, ever sought to commend himself to the Lord. This was the secret both of his uprightness and devotedness, for he is able to say that he had been willing to spend and be spent in the Lord's service. "Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land: and all my servants were gathered thither unto the work." He gave himself to the work, he sought no earthly possessions for himself; and his servants, as well as himself, were devoted to building the wall. A blessed example, surely, of self-denial and consecration, and one well calculated, as the fruit of the grace of God, to stimulate the godly to follow in his steps, and to rebuke the avarice and covetousness of those who were trading upon their brethren's necessities.

Nor was this all. "Moreover," he adds, "there were at my table a hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, besides those that came unto us from among the heathen that are about us"; that is, Jews who were scattered among the other peoples who at that time inhabited Palestine. And the next verse (18) tells us of the daily provision for his table, and of the store of all sorts of wine furnished once in ten days. From this we learn that Nehemiah was given to hospitality, and that he was "not forgetful to entertain strangers." He had therefore one of the qualifications which the Apostle gives as indispensable for a bishop in the Church of God (1 Tim. 3:2) - a qualification which perhaps is now not so much esteemed as in former days. But it may be questioned whether anything more tends to bind together the hearts of the saints, and thus to promote fellowship, than the exercise of hospitality according to God. The Word of God abounds in examples as well as in commendations of it. It was the special service of one beloved saint, as shown in his description by the Apostle, when he wrote, "Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you." (Rom. 16:23; see also 3 John.) The source of its exercise is the activity of grace in the heart, delighting to give and to be made happy in the happiness of others. It is therefore no mean expression of the heart of God. "Yet for all this," Nehemiah adds, "required not I the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people." v. 18. His heart was touched with their condition, and he had learned the lesson that it was more blessed to give than to receive. He thus dispensed bountifully to those that came to him, and seems to have welcomed all.

Nor did he look for any human recompense, but, turning to God in whose presence he walked and labored, he said, "Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people." v. 19. It has been often said that this prayer, as others recorded by him, is evidence that Nehemiah moved on a low spiritual platform, as it would have been a far higher thing had he not thought of any recompense at all. It may be so; and, as we have pointed out, Nehemiah certainly had not the simple faith of Ezra. On the other hand, we cannot fail to see in the sketch here given that he was distinguished, in a day of confusion and ruin, by a rare devotedness to the service of

his God, by an upright conscience, and by an utter self-forgetfulness, in his intense desire for the glory of God in the welfare of His people. All that he was and had was laid upon the altar, yielded up to God for His use and service; and while it may be admitted that there are loftier prayers than the one here recorded, we prefer to see in it the expression of an earnest desire for the blessing of God in connection with his labors for His people. The Lord Himself said: "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." It was in the spirit of this, and knowing the faithful Jehovah he had to do with, that Nehemiah turned away from all thought of selfish advantage, to God, in the confidence that He who had wrought in his heart this love to His people, would not allow him to lose his reward. Like Moses, he had "respect unto the recompense of the reward," but it was not from men, but from God.

## Labor and Conflict: Exposition on Nehemiah

### Chapter 6

In this chapter Nehemiah returns to his conflicts with the enemy, brought upon him in connection with building the wall of the city. Chapter 5 is therefore really parenthetical, although, as we have seen, it teaches, in its connection with the 6th, an important truth. In it Nehemiah was engaged in correcting abuses within, and, having been enabled to restore the relationships of the people according to the Word, he resumes his narrative of the activity of the adversary. But though the subject is the same, there is a great difference between chapters 4 and 6. In the former the enemy displayed his opposition; in the latter he practices subtlety, and seeks to decoy under the guise of friendship, rather than to deter by the exhibition of his power. We shall accordingly find traces of his presence within as well as without. If in chapter 4 he appears as a roaring lion, in chapter 6 he seeks to circumvent by his wiles - the two forms in which he ever opposes the people of God. (See Eph. 6:11; 1 Pet. 5:8, 9.)

The first two verses open out to us the first wile of the adversary. "Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;) that Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of One." The diligence and perseverance of Nehemiah, overcoming, through the blessing of God, all obstacles, had carried on the work almost to completion. "No breach" was left in the wall, and consequently there was now no covert way of entrance. The doors were still unhung, but these were open to observation, and by these only could the enemies of God's people approach. It was time therefore to put forth their final effort, and they accordingly propose a conference, as if they too were interested in the welfare of Israel! But when the servant of the Lord is walking in His presence, and with purpose of heart is pursuing the path of His will, he is never deceived by Satan's artifices. Thus it was with Nehemiah, and hence he adds, "But they thought to do me mischief." He knew that darkness could have no communion with light, that Satan could not contemplate with pleasure the progress of the Lord's work, that hating his Master, he must hate also His servant. Accordingly he penetrated at once to the heart of the object Sanballat and his companions had in view. Still he "sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" v. 3. When the Lord sent forth His disciples, He charged them to salute

no man by the way (Luke 10), that they might learn the absorbing character of His claims, that, when engaged in His service, they had no leisure to turn aside for friendly salutations, but must unwearingly pursue their mission. Nehemiah had therefore the Lord's mind in the answer he sent, apart from his knowledge of the evil nature of their designs. Doing a great work, it was his business to persevere, even if friends had solicited him to leave it; and to leave it but for a moment would cause it to cease. It was impossible - consistent with the claims of his service - for him to "come down." Many of us might with advantage be instructed by the example of this faithful servant; indeed, it would save us from many a snare. The Lord's work, if it be His work, is not to be taken up and laid down at will; but when He puts it into our hands it claims our first and constant attention, and is worthy of all our energies in its accomplishment. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do" (if of the Lord), "do it with thy might."

The enemy was not content to let the matter rest. "They sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner." v. 4. If faithfulness characterized Nehemiah in refusing to go, divine wisdom is equally apparent in the mode of his answer. It was "after the same manner." The circumstances had not changed, and hence his first answer was sufficient. But Satan was practicing upon the weakness of the human heart. He knew that souls are often betrayed by importunity. It was so with Samson. There was as much reason for his refusal to tell his secret at last as at first; but Delilah "pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death; that he told her all his heart." (Judges 16.) It is often so with ourselves, ignorant, as we are to our shame, of Satan's devices.

Failing to seduce Nehemiah by this plan, another artifice is now tried. "Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand; wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel," etc. (vv. 5-7.) Sanballat affects to be careful of Nehemiah's reputation, and to be fearful lest his proceedings should be misinterpreted! It was a most subtle mask which he assumed, for he contrives in his letter to insinuate three distinct charges which, if reported to the king, might well endanger Nehemiah's character if not his life. First, he speaks of rebellion, and even adduces a witness -Gashmu, or Geshem, the Arabian. Then he suggests what might, if indeed the first allegation were true, be connected with it; that is, that Nehemiah's object in building the wall was to make himself king. And, finally, he says that it was reported that he had appointed prophets to preach of him in Jerusalem, saying, "There is a king in Judah." It is more than likely that there was a show of truth in the last statement. A man so interested as Nehemiah was in his nation, would not forget that all their hopes were centered in the promised Messiah; and he may have sought, through the ministry of prophets, to revive the flagging energies of the people by recalling to their minds the glowing descriptions of the future kingdom under the sway of the true David, as recorded, for example, in the writings of Isaiah. A stranger could not enter into this or understand it and might well conclude that Nehemiah was sowing sedition and rebellion. The craft of Satan therefore is plainly distinguished in Sanballat's letter. But he had to do with one whose confidence was in God for wisdom as for strength; and hence it was that this attempt upon Nehemiah, like the former, completely failed. His answer is simplicity itself, a plain denial in a few words of the truth of these alleged reports, while at the same time he traced them back to their true source - Sanballat's own wicked heart. "There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart." v. 8. And this answer teaches us that we should never enter into an argument

with the tempter; repel his accusations we may, but if we once begin to reason with him, or even to explain, we shall surely be vanquished. If Nehemiah alone had been concerned, it would have been well; but though the leader, and acting for the people, he could not infuse into them his trust in God, and his courage. This will explain his statement: "For they all made us afraid" (the "us" being really the people, Nehemiah identifying himself with them), "saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done." This was Satan's object, to wear out the people by these continued harassing assaults, raining down fiery darts upon them incessantly - darts which only the shield of faith could intercept and quench, and which without this shield could only produce despondency and fear if not destruction. None knew this better than this faithful and devoted servant, or how to avail himself of the weapons of defense against his artful adversary. Hence, while he maintained untiring vigilance against the enemy. he prayed without ceasing. The enemy had said, "Their hands shall be weakened." Nehemiah prayed, "Now therefore, O God" (these words, "O God," being rightly inserted), "strengthen my hands." Nothing can be more beautiful than the spectacle of this man of God, pressed on every side, turning to God for the needed strength. What could the enemy do with such a man - a man who leaned upon the Almighty God as his defense and shelter? He was powerless, utterly powerless; and he confessed his defeat by changing his front, and proceeding with another wile.

Sanballat, finding the uselessness of these attacks from without, sought in the next place to conspire against Nehemiah from within. "Afterward," says Nehemiah, "I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee." v. 10. Nehemiah, as the reader will perceive, was the one obstacle to the enemy's success, and thus the object of all hatred. For amid general unfaithfulness he was faithful - sustained in his path by the grace of his God. And on this very account it was that he found the path a lonely one. Enemies without, he knew there were; but now he has to discover that professed friends were among his foes. He followed therefore, at however great a distance, in the way trodden by our blessed Lord, whose keen sorrow, on the side of man, was that one of His own disciples betrayed Him. And mark the spiritual subtlety of this last temptation. Nehemiah had paid, it is evident, a visit of sympathy and friendship to Shemaiah, "who was shut up"; and his friend, seeming to be under great concern for Nehemiah's life, proposed that they should meet and shut themselves up in the temple for safety, urging that his enemies would come in the night to slay him. It was an appeal to his fears, and one apparently dictated by love and friendship, and sanctified by the holy place in which he was urged to conceal himself. But the tempter again missed his mark; or rather his darts failed to penetrate the invincible faith of this upright and faithful servant. "Should," he said, "such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in." What is life to a faithful soldier? The place for a soldier to die is in the post of duty. To flee would have been to deny his true character and to have exposed his followers to the victorious power of the enemy. Through grace Nehemiah was not one to turn his back to the foe in the day of battle; and he thus met the solicitations of his "friend" by resolutely declining his proffered advice. (Compare Psa. 55:12-14.)

And it is a remarkable thing, that the moment Nehemiah refused the temptation, he perceived the whole character of the enemy's designs, and, piercing through all his disguises, discovered the evil and hypocrisy that were at work to entrap his feet. It is ever so. We are only blinded as long as the

temptation

is unresisted; when it is refused, all concealment is gone, and Satan stands out fully disclosed. Nehemiah thus says, "And lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me; for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me." vv. 12, 13. This then was the secret; the enemy's gold had corrupted the prophets of God who warned Nehemiah in the Lord's name when He had not sent them. They could not serve God and mammon; for the moment they took a bribe from the latter they were bound hand and foot at his service, besides disqualifying themselves as the Lord's messengers. And what grief of heart it must have been to the faithful Nehemiah to detect the corrupting influences of the adversary within the holy circle of God's people, among those who should have been the mouthpiece of God to His servants. What a contrast to what we read in Ezra: "And with them" (Zerubbabel and Jeshua building the house of God) "were the prophets of God helping them." These prophets - those of the time of Nehemiah - were helping the enemy's, not the Lord's work. Alas, how often has it been so since that day, that those who have occupied the place of prophets, those who profess to be the communicators of God's mind to their fellows, have been in the pay and service of Satan. Even today the most subtle opponents of the truth of God and of building the wall of separation, under the plea of the brotherhood of all men, are found in the pulpits of Christendom.

And what was the object of Shemaiah, the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets? To ruin the character of the leader of God's people. They desired to make him afraid by destroying his trust in God, and thus to lead him into sin, "that they might have the matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me." This one faithful man, as we have before remarked, was the object of all the assaults and artifices of Satan; around his feet the most subtle snares were spread, because if he could but be worsted and overcome, the victory was assured. At this moment, as far as is revealed, the cause of God in Jerusalem depended upon the courage and fidelity of Nehemiah; and hence it was that Satan sought to circumvent him in every possible way. But though wave after wave dashed against him, he stood, by the grace of God, like a rock; and, unmoved by open opposition, his feet were also kept, although pitfalls were dug for him on every hand. God sustained His servant through that uprightness, integrity, and perseverance which are produced alone by a single eye, and by the maintenance of conscious dependence upon divine power. Once again therefore the plot failed.

The secret of Nehemiah's strength is shown in the next verse (14). Having unfolded the aims of the prophets, who had been hired by the enemy, he looks upward, and says: "My God, think Thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear." Avoiding all open conflict as useless, he commits the matter to God, like Paul, who says, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works." 2 Tim. 4:14. It would be well for us to pay especial attention to these examples. There are many forms of evil which cannot be openly assailed without damage to ourselves and to others, and many evil workers in the Church of God that must be left alone. To attack them would only be to serve the cause of the enemy; but our resource in such circumstances is to cry to God against them. So also we read in Jude that "Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a

railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." v. 9. May the Lord give us more discernment that we may know how to "behave" ourselves wisely in our spiritual conflicts.

The reader will remark that, though this chapter is devoted to the exposure of the enemy's stratagems, the work of building the wall was in nowise hindered. The faith and courage of Nehemiah never faltered; and though he had been led to give, for our instruction, a detailed account of the wiles of Satan, we now find that the building must have been pressed forward with undiminished zeal; for he says, "So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days." "So" is a remarkable word in this connection. It might mean "in this manner," or "notwithstanding," or "in spite of," according as we take it in its literal or spiritual sense. The rapidity of the execution of the work is a testimony to the energy of the workmen under the guidance of Nehemiah; for "the city was large and great," and to surround it with a wall in fifty-two days was no mean accomplishment, though easily understood when it is remembered that the work was of God, and for God, and that He wrought with the builders. Even the adversaries of Israel were compelled to own this to themselves; for Nehemiah tells us: "And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God." v. 16. They had been so far utterly discomfited, and now, as they "heard" and "saw" that the wall was completed, their hopes were dashed to the ground; for this wall - the safety and security of God's people as long as they maintained it in holiness - was an invincible barrier to the foe. This they knew, and hence "they were much cast down in their own eyes." Surely this description is a shadow of the time of which the psalmist speaks: "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge. For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marveled; they were troubled, and hosted away. Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail." Psalm 48:2-6.

The last three verses of the chapter are taken up with a description of another form of evil, with which Nehemiah had to contend, in the midst of God's people. Now the action proceeded not from Tobiah, but from the nobles of Judah. Evil, shut out by the completion of the wall, now springs up within and seeks to link itself with the evil without. The nobles of Judah entered into correspondence with Tobiah; and indeed they were "sworn unto him," for he was connected with them by a double tie. "He was the son-in-law of Shecaniah the son of Arah; and his son Johanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah." v. 18. They had therefore allied themselves with an Ammonite, upon whom the curse of God rested (chap. 13:1), in direct disobedience to the word of God (Deut. 7:3), whereby they also denied the truth of the special place they occupied as the people He had chosen for and separated unto Himself. This had been the continual source of weakness and corruption among the people of God; for the moment any, like these nobles, enter into relationships with the world, they must be opposed to the ground of separation on which they have been set. Nay, more; for James says: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, 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." Jas. 4:4. Solemn but true words. These nobles of Judah were thus the enemies of God, as are all such who desire to be the friends of the world. And mark how they immediately lost all sense of the distinction between God's people and His enemies; for we read that "they reported his" (Tobiah's) "good deeds before" Nehemiah, and he

says they "uttered my words to him." As if good deeds could be done by an enemy of the people of God! They were seeking to prove, as so many do in the present day, that there is no difference after all between saints and the men of the world - that the actions of both are alike good. But what did they thereby prove? That they themselves had no conception of what was suited to a holy God, and that they in their own souls were on the ground of those who knew Him not. What wonder was it that, with such confederates inside the city, Tobiah renewed his attempts upon Nehemiah - sent letters to put him in fear?

We thus see that this devoted man of God had no rest, that he had to wage perpetual warfare against foes within and foes without; but singlehanded as he was, strengthened by his faith in God, he was superior to all the power of the foe. It is a wonderful record, and one that abundantly proves the all-sufficiency of God to sustain His servants, whatever their difficulties or perils in any service to which He calls them. To Him alone be all the praise!

Labor and Conflict: Exposition on Nehemiah

## Chapter 7

There are two things in this chapter; first, the government of Jerusalem, the city of God, together with provision for continual vigilance against the practices of the enemy (vv. 1-4); second, the reckoning of the people by genealogy (vv. 5-73).

We learn from verse 1 that the doors had now been set up "upon the gates" (see chap. 6:1), and that everything in connection with the wall had therefore been finished (chap. 6:15). Following upon this, "the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed" - a most interesting notice thus briefly indicated. The porters, it is almost needless to say, were the doorkeepers, on whom devolved the responsibility of admitting only such as had a lawful claim to enter the city, and of keeping out all who could not show the necessary qualifications to be inside; in a word, they had authority over the opening and the shutting of the doors. They held a most important post, even as do also the doorkeepers of the present day. For while it is true, and must ever be insisted on, that every believer - every member of the body of Christ - has his place, for example, at the Lord's supper, the "doorkeepers" of the assembly have the responsibility of asking for the production of the evidence that they are what they claim to be. (See Acts 9:26, 27 Pet. 3:15.) Laxity or neglect in this respect has been productive of the most serious consequences in many an assembly, amounting in some cases to the destruction of all testimony for Christ, and leading to the positive dishonor of His blessed name. It is a matter therefore of the utmost consequence that only faithful and trusted men should do the work of "doorkeepers," especially in a day of common profession, when all alike claim to be Christians.

There were also "singers." Their employment may be gathered from another place. "These are they," we read, "whom David set over the service of song in the house of the LORD, after that the ark had rest. And they ministered before the dwelling place of the tabernacle of the congregation with singing, until Solomon had built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem: and then they waited on their office according to their order." 1 Chron. 6:31, 32. The psalmist alludes to these when he says, "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will be still praising Thee." Psalm 84:4. Such was the occupation of the singers - praising the Lord "day and night" (1 Chron. 9:33); a shadow of the perpetual employment of the redeemed in heaven (Rev. 5); a blessed service (if service it may

be called) which it is the privilege of the Church to anticipate on earth while waiting for the return of our blessed Lord. (See Luke 24:52, 53.) Last, there were Levites. Of their work it is said, "Their brethren also the Levites were appointed unto all manner of service of the tabernacle of the house of God." 1 Chron. 6:48. The gates and doors having been set up, and porters set in their appointed places, the Lord's portion is first thought of in the singers; and then come the Levites to perform the necessary service in connection with His house. The very order of the mention of these three classes is thus instructive and shows, at the same time, how jealous Nehemiah was of the Lord's claims upon His people, and how carefully he sought in his devotedness to the Lord's service to acknowledge His supremacy and to yield to Him the honor due to His name.

These things having been arranged, he says: "I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many." v. 2. It is not clear from the words themselves whether this description applies to Hanani or Hananiah; but we judge it is to the former, for it will be remembered that it was this same Hanani who was used, with others, to bring the intelligence of the state of the remnant and of Jerusalem, which became, in the hands of God, the means of Nehemiah's mission (chap. 1). Understanding it so, nothing could more distinctly show Nehemiah's singleness of eye in his Master's service. Hanani was his brother, but he appointed him to this post not because he was his brother or a man of influence, but because "he was a faithful man, and feared God above many." In such ways, as well as by the divine directions furnished through the Apostle Paul, the Lord teaches us what should characterize those who take the lead among His people, and especially those who occupy places of prominence or care in government. It is not enough that they are men of gift, or position, or influence; but they should be faithful - faithful to God and to His truth - and they should be distinguished by fearing not men but God, acting as in His sight and upholding the authority of His Word.

Nehemiah himself gave instructions for the exercise of vigilance and care over the city. First, the gates were not to be opened until the sun was hot. As long as darkness reigned, or any semblance of it, the gates were to be shut against "the rulers of the darkness of this world" (Eph. 6), for the night is ever the time of their greatest activity. As a contrast, we read of the heavenly Jerusalem, that "The gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there" (Rev. 21:25); that is, they shall stand perpetually open, because evil and the powers of evil will have forever passed away. Then, "while they stand by, let them shut the doors, and bar them." The porters were not to leave their posts or delegate their duties to others, but they themselves, standing by, were to see that the doors were both shut and barred. Many a house has been rifled because the shut door has not been barred, and many a soul has permitted the enemy to gain an entrance because its several "doors" have not been made secure. It was not enough therefore, since the enemy was in question, that the doors of the gates of Jerusalem should be shut; they must also be barred if the enemy was to be kept outside. We learn from this the imperative necessity of guarding the doors, whether of the soul or of the assembly. In the last place, they were to "appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, every one in his watch, and every one to be over against his house." Two things of the greatest

moment are here indicated. The first is that not a single inhabitant of Jerusalem was exempted from the responsibility of exercising watchfulness over the interests of the city. Every one was to be in his watch. The watch was to be duly ordered, and all were to serve in their turn. Second,

every one was to maintain the watch over against his own house; that is, to sum up the two things, all were concerned in keeping watch over the whole city, but the safety of the city was ensured if each kept watch over against his own house. This is evident, for if the head of every household kept the enemy - evil - out of his house, Jerusalem would be preserved in separation to God. The whole city was necessarily what its several inhabitants made it. Would that this truth were apprehended in the Church of God! The assembly, like Jerusalem, is composed of individuals, of many heads of houses, whatever the intimate bond of union subsisting between the members of the body of Christ; and its state, its public state (if this term is permissible), is simply the state of all. If therefore discipline for God is not maintained in the home, neither can it be in the Church. Laxity in the one sphere produces laxity in the other. Worldliness in the one place will be worldliness also in the other. Hence the Apostle writes, for example, that a bishop must be "one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)" 1 Tim. 3:4, 5. It would indeed savor of the boldest presumption for one whose own house was in disorder to arrogate to himself a place of rule in the assembly, and it would at the same time introduce the very evils of which his household was the theater. If, on the other hand, the injunction of Nehemiah be attended to - each keeping watch and ward over his own house - the assembly would be the display of order, security, and holiness to the glory of God.

Next follows a note concerning the city itself. "Now the city was large and great: but the people were few therein, and the houses were not builded." This is undoubtedly a testimony of failure. The work of God for that day was building the walls of the city, and this, as we have seen, had been accomplished through the faith and perseverance of Nehemiah, in spite of difficulties of every kind. The truth of God would therefore now be bound up with the maintenance of the wall, and the first three verses reveal to us the provision made for that end. But Nehemiah now informs us that though the city was large and great, the people were few therein. Now the testimony for any given day gathers - indeed, true testimony always gathers - to Him from whom it proceeds as its center. Very few then had been gathered to that which went forth through Nehemiah. The trumpet had been blown for the calling of the assembly (Numb. 10), and through grace some had responded to its summons; but the mass of the people, as at the commencement of Haggai's ministry, were absorbed in their own things rather than the things of Jehovah. (See Phil. 2:21.) Moreover, "the houses were not builded" of those that were gathered. This first responsibility had been neglected, and would be therefore a perpetual source of mischief. When the children of the captivity first returned, they began to build their own houses to the neglect of the Lord's house; and now when the time had come to build their own houses they neglected this. Such is man and such are the people of God, for when walking as men they are never in communion with the Lord's mind. They that are in the flesh, and the principle applies to the Christian if he is governed by the flesh, cannot please God. If any inquire how in the present day their houses are to be builded, Eph. 5:22 and 6:1-9; Col. 3:18 and 4:1 will answer the question. It is to establish the Lord's authority over every member of them, and especially to bring up the children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Now that Nehemiah had given the necessary instructions for guarding the city from the intrusion of evil, he proceeds to the ordering of the people. But he is careful to relate that it was not his own thought. He says: "And my God put into mine heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers,

and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy." v. 5. This gives us a glimpse into the intimacy of his walk with God. It is "my" God, the One he knew as such in that relationship to himself, which faith and experience alone can recognize (compare 1 Chron. 28:20; 29:2, 3; Phil. 4:19); and it is the One in whose presence he so constantly dwelt, that he could instantly discern the thought which He put within his heart. And the object in view was to examine the title of the people to be in the place where they were. With the constant commerce going on between them and the enemy, and the alliances they had formed in forgetfulness that the Lord had chosen them out of all the peoples on the earth as His peculiar people, there would doubtless be many who could not show their genealogy, and hence had no claim to be numbered with Israel. Now that the wall was built, and the truth therefore of separation proclaimed, such a mixture within could no longer be tolerated. Those who occupied this holy ground and claimed the blessed privileges of God's house, must have an indefeasible title, and this is the meaning of this next step of Nehemiah. The work in his case was not difficult, for he "found a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first," etc. (vv. 5, 6 and following); and by this register it was easy to ascertain whether those within the sacred enclosure of the rebuilt walls or those who might seek admission were all of Israel.

(To be continued)

Labor and Conflict: Exposition on Nehemiah

## Chapter 8

Before entering upon this interesting chapter, it may be profitable to point out the place it occupies. Chapter 6 gives the completion of the wall; chapter 7, the provision and means for the security of the city and the reckoning of the people by genealogy; and in chapter 8 we have the establishment of the authority of the Word of God. This order is most instructive. The walls might be built, and the people duly gathered and ordered; but nothing but obedience to the Word could keep them in the place into which they had been brought; for obedience gives the Lord His place, as also the people their place - the Lord the place of pre-eminence, the people that of subjection. Obedience is, therefore, the way of holiness, exclusive as it is of everything inconsistent with the Lord's supreme claims. This furnishes a practical lesson of great moment for the Church. The testimony of God gathers souls to Christ on the ground of the one body; but as soon as they are gathered, then it is the responsibility of teachers and pastors to assert the Lord's supremacy in the authority of the written Word, to feed the flock of God with suited nourishment, to build them up on their most holy faith, and thus to fortify them against the arts and devices of the enemy.

We have seen that Nehemiah reproduces, in chapter 7, Ezra 2; and the first verse of this chapter is in exact correspondence with Ezra 3:1. There we read: "And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem"; here it is: "And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate"; and in verse 2 we find that this gathering was also "upon the first day of the seventh month." It is the date that explains, in both cases, the assembly. The first day of the seventh month was the feast of the blowing of trumpets (Lev. 23:24; Numb. 29:1), a figure of the restoration of Israel in the last days, and one that would therefore appeal mightily, where there was any understanding of its import, to the hearts of all true Israelites. Whether in this case the trumpets were blown is not recorded; but the very fact that it is not, is

significant. "They spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel." When all is in confusion, through neglect of the Word of God, the first thing to be done is not the restoration of feasts, but of the authority of the Scriptures over the conscience. Instead, therefore, of the blowing of the trumpets, there was a solemn assembly for the reading of the law - the very memory of which seems to have faded away from the people. And it is exceedingly beautiful to notice, that Ezra, of whom there is no previous mention in this book, is he to whom they have recourse in the present need. He was "a scribe of the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of His statutes to Israel" and one who delighted in and fed upon the Word he communicated to others. But in the time of almost general backsliding, confusion, and ruin, the teacher of the law was not wanted; and thus it was that Ezra had fallen out of notice, if not into obscurity. Now, however, that there was in some sort a revival, producing a desire after the Word of their God, Ezra was remembered, and his services were required. Happy the servant who, thinking nothing of himself, can retire when he is not needed, and come forth when once again desired, willing to be anything or nothing, known or unknown, if he can but serve the Lord's beloved people!

In verses 2 and 3 we have the account of the assembly for the purpose of hearing the Word. The congregation was composed of "men and women, and all that could hear with understanding"; that is, we judge, all the children who were old enough to comprehend what was read. There was, therefore, no division, but all were together as forming the congregation of the Lord. Thus gathered, Ezra read out of the book of the law "from the morning until midday" - probably not less than six hours. "And the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law." In ordinary times, it would be impossible to detain the people, then as now, so long with the simple reading of the Scriptures; but when there is a true work of the Spirit of God after a season of widespread declension, the saints always turn afresh and with avidity to the Bible, and are never weary of reading or listening to the truths which have been used to arouse their souls. Love for the Word of God, with an intense desire to search for its hidden treasures, is always a characteristic of a genuine revival. It is this fact which explains the eagerness of the people in this chapter, on the first day of the seventh month, to hear the reading of the book of the law.

The second and third verses give the general statement, and then in verses 4-8 we have the details of this remarkable assembly. In the first place, Ezra, we are told, "stood upon a pulpit" (or tower) "of wood, which they had made for the purpose," the object being, as in modern days, that he might be seen and heard by all the congregation. Six stood beside him on his right hand and seven on his left hand; and the Spirit of God has caused their names to be recorded, for it was a memorable day, and the privilege vouchsafed to them of standing by Ezra was great. In the next place "Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up." This was no mere form, for the book Ezra opened was the voice of the living God to the people, and they acknowledged it as such by reverently standing. The words it contained had been first spoken by the Lord at Sinai, "out of the midst of the fire," and Israel had trembled before the holy One who spake them, and "entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more"; and all this could not fail to be recalled by those who now stood before Ezra. They therefore stood up, as in the presence of their God; "and

Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God"; that is, he gave thanks, or in praying gave thanks to Jehovah. We find this use of the word bless in the New Testament, especially in connection with

the paschal feast and the Lord's supper. Thus in Matthew, for example, it is said that "Jesus took bread, and blessed" (26:26), whereas in Luke we read that "He took bread, and gave thanks" (22:19). It is thus clear that bless, when used in this way, has the significance of thanksgiving. (See also 1 Cor. 14:16.) It is the more necessary to point this out, and to insist upon it, from the fact that a mass of sacerdotal assumptions is founded upon the perversion of the words to bless, in the endeavor to prove that the bread and the cup in the Lord's supper must first receive a priestly blessing, or be consecrated. It is maintained, for example, that when Paul says, "The cup of blessing which we bless," it means the cup which we priests bless. The light of Scripture instantly reveals the unholy character of such priestly trifling with the simple teaching of the Word of God, whereby saints are shut out from their privileges and deprived of the place of nearness and blessing into which they have been brought on the ground of redemption. (See John 20:17; Heb. 10:19-22, etc.)

At the conclusion of Ezra's prayer, or thanksgiving, "all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground." v. 6. It is a striking scene, for the Lord was working in the hearts of His people with power, and hence it was that their very attitude expressed their hallowed reverence. They stood while Ezra prayed, and then, together with their responses of "Amen, Amen," with uplifted hands, they worshiped with their faces to the ground.

All this was preparatory to the work of the day, which was the reading of the law, of which the next two verses give the account. "Also Jeshua, and Bani,... and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. So they read in the book in the law of God, distinctly" (or with an interpretation), "and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." vv. 7, 8.

It must be remembered that the people had dwelt long in Babylon, and that many of them, under the influence of their surroundings, had adopted Babylonish habits and ways, and even the Babylonish tongue. The sacred language, the language too of their fathers, had thus fallen into disuse and had in many cases been forgotten. Then there was another source of confusion. Some of the Jews "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 Jews' language, but according to the language of each people." Chap. 13:23, 24. It became necessary therefore to cause the people to understand the law, to read it distinctly or with an interpretation, to give the sense, and to cause them to understand the reading. All this is most instructive, and in two ways: first, we learn that assimilation to the world leads to forgetfulness and ignorance of the Word of God; second, that the true function of the teacher is to give the sense of the Scriptures, to explain what they mean, and to cause their hearers to understand their import. There will be also the application of the Word to the state and needs of the people; but even in this, as in the case before us, it will be as guided of the Holy Spirit to the suited portions.

The Word of God was "quick and powerful" in the hearts of the people; it was sharper than any two-edged sword, and pierced even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and discerned the thoughts and intents of their hearts; for they "wept, when they heard the words of the law." But "Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your

God; mourn not, nor weep." v. 9.

The feast of trumpets was indeed to be "a holy convocation"; and because of its typical significance, sorrow was unsuited to its character. Hence we read; "Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbral, the pleasant harp with the

psaltery. Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day. For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob." Psalm 81:1-4. They were therefore to be joyful on this day in communion with the mind of their God; but joy cannot be contained; it of necessity overflows, and hence they were to communicate it to others. "Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength." v.10. This order is instructive-union with the heart of God and then communion with their brethren. The first thing was to have their own hearts filled with the joy of the Lord, then for that joy to well out in blessing to the poor and needy, and thus they would find that the joy of the Lord was their strength.

"So the Levites," we are told, "stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy: neither be ye grieved." The time would soon come for the expression of their sorrow (chap. 9), but now they were to rejoice according to the thoughts of the heart of God for their future blessing. Truly they had need of self-judgment and contrition; but the point is, that this holy day was not suited for these things, and the Lord would have them rise above their own state and condition, and for the moment find their joy in His joy, and in His joy would be their strength. There are many saints who will understand this; when gathered, for example, around the Lord at His table to commemorate His death, there might be many things calling for sorrow and humiliation as to our condition; but it would be losing sight altogether of the mind of the Lord to confess our sins at such a season. It is the Lord's death we there remember and announce, not ourselves or our failures; and it is only as we have His objects before our souls in our being gathered that we enter into and have communion with His own heart. So it was on this first day of the seventh month; and this will explain the action of Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites in restraining the expression of the people's grief.

The people responded to the exhortation of their leaders, and "went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them." v. 12. And in this way they celebrated the feast according to the mind of God, if without the trumpets. They were not in a right condition for testimony; and thus the first thing was to get themselves right by the application of the Word.

Labor and Conflict: Exposition on Nehemiah

Chapter 8 continued

The following day there was another gathering, composed of "the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites"; these came "unto Ezra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law." v. 13. It is beautiful to notice this increasing desire for the knowledge of the Word of God - a sure sign that God was working in their hearts, inasmuch as obedience to it is a necessary expression of the divine life. When thus assembled, they "found written in the law which

the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month: and that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written." vv. 14, 15. Then we are told that "the people went forth," etc.

But it will be seen from Lev. 23 that the day appointed for this feast of tabernacles was the fifteenth day of the seventh month, so that a 13 days' interval must be placed between verses 15 and 16, as it was on the second day of the month that they found the precept as to the feast (vv. 13, 14). This interval would be occupied with the proclamation of the coming observance of the festival (v. 15), to give the people "in all their cities" the time required to gather themselves together at Jerusalem. When assembled, they proceed to keep the feast as enjoined in the law; they fetched the branches from the mount "and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim" (v. 16); and in the next verse we read, that "since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so"; that is, not that they had not kept the feast of tabernacles, for they had done this on their return from captivity (Ezra 3), but that they had not complied with the injunction to dwell in booths during the days of the feast. It was the first time since Joshua that they had made themselves, in this manner, booths of pine, myrtle, and palm branches. This is another proof of the energetic action of the Spirit of God at this moment, leading the people to exact obedience to the Word of their God. It is thereon added, "And there was very great gladness." Joy indeed was also the significance of this feast, millennial joy; for, after the directions concerning the booths, it is written, "And ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days." And during this period they were to dwell in booths, "that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God." Lev. 23:40-43.

If the reader will consult Lev. 23, he will see that the feast of tabernacles completes the cycle of feasts, and therefore sets forth the end and result of all the ways of God with His earthly people, which will be to set them in His grace, now that they have forfeited all under responsibility, in virtue of the work of Christ, in perfect blessing in their own land, after the harvest and the vintage. Joy throughout the perfect period (seven days) will be therefore the appropriate expression of their sense of Jehovah's goodness and grace. But while "gladness" was to characterize the festival, they were to remember the past - their deliverance from Egypt and their pilgrim wanderings in the desert - and thus that redemption through the blood of the passover lamb (for that was the foundation of all God's subsequent actings on behalf of His people) and the relationship to God into which they were consequently brought (I am Jehovah your God) was the source of all the blessing and joy on which they had entered. In the case before us the gladness was but transient, for, in truth, the festival was as yet only prophetic; but, as prophetic, it might have taught them the unchangeable verity of God as to all His promises on their behalf; and wherever it did so, it would enable them to rejoice in anticipation of this joyful time of blessing which was secured to them by the infallible word of their God.

The whole time of the feast seems to have been devoted - "from the first day unto the last day" - to reading "in the book of the law of God." That was the present felt need; "and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner." (See Lev. 23:36.) In the early days of Ezra

(chap. 3) restoration of the sacrifices marked the observance of this feast, but here, the re-establishment of the law. Both observances were defective, though according to God as far as they went; for in Ezra there were no booths, and in Nehemiah, as it would seem, no sacrifices. This teaches us one of God's ways in all revivals. One forgotten truth is restored and pressed with power upon the hearts and consciences of His people, a truth necessary for their restoration and preservation in the special circumstances of the moment. Thus the efficacy of the sacrifices was brought into prominence in Ezra 3; here, the authority of the Word of God. The same thing has been seen again and again in the history of the Church. In the remarkable work of the Spirit of God through Luther and others, the truth of justification by faith alone occupied the foremost place; and in another movement, almost within our own days, it was the presence of the Holy Ghost on earth and the second advent of Christ. God has wrought in such ways, in every age, for His own glory and for the welfare of His people. But such is the feebleness and folly of the hearts of His people, that they have often turned His mercy toward them into an occasion for self-exaltation. As if unable to retain the truth in its completeness, and missing His mind in the recovery of certain truths, they have often formed themselves into sects for their preservation. There have been but few Epaphrases in the Church who could labor fervently in prayers for the saints that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God (see Col. 4:12).

The seven days of the feast having been completed, there was "a solemn assembly, according unto the manner." It was on this day, "the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this," says John, "spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" John 7:37-39. The time had not come for Jesus to show Himself to the world as He will do when the feast of tabernacles is fulfilled; but, meanwhile, having taken His place on high, He would quench the thirst of every thirsty soul that came to Him, and moreover cause, through the indwelling Spirit, to flow forth from such rivers of living water for the refreshment of those round about them. Another has said, "Observe here that Israel drank water in the wilderness before they could keep the feast of tabernacles. But they only drank. There was no well in them. The water flowed from rock." The Lord thus would teach the Jews that their feast of tabernacles (see v. 2) was but an empty rite as long as their Messiah had not come, or rather so long as He was rejected (John 1:11).

For the details of the observance of this day, as indeed for the whole feast, see Numb. 29:2-39.

Labor and Conflict: Exposition on Nehemiah

## Chapter 9

The feast of tabernacles had been observed, and there had been "very great gladness." The last day - the eighth - would fall on the twenty-third day of the month, and thus chapter 9 opens with the day following. Under the searching power of the words of the law, the people had wept; but they were told, "This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep." Now, however, that the days of the festival had run their course, the time had come for the expression of their sorrow - that sorrow, according to God, which worketh repentance - and thus it was that, on "the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and with earth upon them." v. 1. The entrance of God's word had given them light and

had shown them the character of their past ways, had set even their secret sins in the light of God's countenance; and, smitten in heart and conscience because of their transgression, they were gathered together with all these outward marks of contrition and humiliation. Blessed effect of the Word of God, and the beginning of all true recovery and blessing!

And the reality of their sorrow for their sins was proved by their acts: "And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers." There is a reason for the introduction in this place of the word seed. It is to point out that they were a holy people separated unto God, as born of His people Israel who had been redeemed to Himself on the ground of the blood of the passover lamb. They were therefore a "holy seed" (Ezra 9:2; compare 1 John 3:9), and as such were to maintain their holy character. It was therefore a denial of the place into which they had been brought, to "join affinity" with strangers, as well as to break down the barriers which God Himself had set up between them and other peoples. This they now felt, and accordingly they "separated themselves from all strangers." No doubt it was narrowness according to man's thoughts, and in so doing they would surely incur the imputation of uncharitableness; but what did this matter, as long as they were acting according to God? If God sets the feet of His people in a narrow path, it is their part to keep in it if they would be in the path of blessing.

In the next place they "stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers." And mark that separation preceded confession. Shown by the Word that they had sinned in associating themselves with strangers, they acted upon what they saw, and then confessed their guilt before God. This is ever God's order. The moment we see that anything we have allowed or are in association with is condemned by the Word of God, it behooves us to refuse it or to separate ourselves from it. No circumstances in such a case can justify delay. Like the Psalmist, we should make haste and delay not to keep God's commandments (Psalm 119:60). To confess our sin while cleaving to it is but mockery. They also confessed the iniquities of their fathers, and they did so because the Lord's hand had been upon them on this very account. It was owing to the sins of their fathers that they had suffered captivity in Babylon, and that they now, though restored through the tender mercy of God to their own land, were in bondage to a Gentile monarch. Hence they went down to the root of all the evil and told out before God their fathers' sins as well as their own. Their humiliation, therefore, on this day was no mere superficial work; but standing before Jehovah, in the light of His presence, they desired to lay bare all the sin and the iniquity on account of which they had suffered chastisement.

In verse 3 we have the details of their occupation in this solemn assembly: "They stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God one fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God." The Jewish day was composed of four periods of three hours, commencing at six in the morning. They therefore read the Scriptures three hours and confessed and worshiped three hours. And in what more blessed occupation could they be engaged? Surely they were divinely taught and divinely led in this matter; and by the very fact of its having been recorded, are we not shown the true method of recovery and restoration in seasons of declension or backsliding? Would that the Lord's people everywhere knew how to gather themselves together in a similar manner, seeking grace to separate themselves from all known iniquity, to confess their sins, to search the Word for light and guidance, and to humble themselves before God! Complaints of coldness and indifference, or insensibility to our real condition, are heard on every hand; and together with this, signs of

abounding iniquity, through the power of Satan, are everywhere apparent. Behold, then, in the example of these children of the captivity, the divine remedy, the true way of real revival. There may be in some places but two or three who feel the present evils; but let these two or three get together to test themselves and all else by the Word, and to confess their sins and the sins of their fathers and brethren, and they would soon rejoice in God's interposition and deliverance. Our want of power in this direction is but an evidence of the greatness of our failure; and even if we did but confess our want of power to pray, it would be the dawning of hope in many an assembly. May the Lord stir up the consciences of His beloved people, and may He grant that ere long there may be witnessed in many a place the spectacle of His saints assembling in true contrition of heart, and trembling at the Word of God, for humiliation and confession before Him.

The remainder of the chapter (vv. 4-38) contains the confession, or at least a portion of it, made on behalf of the people. First, the Levites, Jeshua, and Bani, etc., "stood up upon the stairs,... and cried with a loud voice unto the LORD their God. Then the Levites, Jeshua, and Kadmiel," etc., said to the people, "Stand up and bless the LORD your God forever and ever"; and then, turning from the people to God, they commenced their praise and confession. The reader will notice that this outpouring of their hearts before God is a recitation of God's ways of grace with His people, combined with the confession of their own continual sin and hardness of heart. On God's part there had been nothing but grace, mercy, and long-suffering, and on their part nothing but sinful ingratitude and rebellion; and thus they justified Him, and condemned themselves - the sure mark of a work of grace in repentance, whether in the hearts of saints or sinners. It will be instructive to examine this remarkable prayer.

They ascribe, first of all, blessing and praise to the glorious name of their God and, at the same time, acknowledge that He was exalted above it all. They own His absolute supremacy (v. 5). In the next place, they adore Him as the Creator, not merely recognizing the creatorship of God, but that Jehovah was the Creator. "Thou, even Thou, art LORD alone; Thou hast made heaven," etc. (v. 6). The difference is important. There are many, for example, who, willing to own that God was the Creator, would hesitate to confess of the Lord Jesus Christ, that "all things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made." The natural man might acknowledge the former, but only a true believer could own the latter. Then they pass on to God's action in grace in calling out Abram and in making "a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites," etc.; and they add, "Thou... hast performed Thy words; for Thou art righteous" (vv. 7, 8). What a resting place they had found for their souls, even in the faithfulness and righteousness of their God! They had learned that if they believed right, He abode faithful; He could not deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:13). Peter, in his second epistle, celebrates the same thing, writing "to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ." Chap. 1:1. There is nothing that a sinner fears more than the righteousness of God; but for the saint it is the immutable foundation on which his soul reposes in perfect peace now that, through the death and resurrection of Christ, grace reigns through righteousness; and hence it is that he can rejoice also in the faithfulness of God, knowing that what He has promised He will also perform. This utterance - "Thou... hast performed Thy words; for Thou art righteous" - is therefore most significant. (Compare Deut. 26:3.)

Redemption is their next theme (vv. 9-11). And observe how it is traced down from the heart of God, for where do they commence? It is, Thou "didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt."

These are almost the very words that God Himself employed when He first commissioned Moses. "I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt." Exod. 3:7. They thus reached the source whence the blessed streams of grace had flowed; and they proceed after adding, "and hearest their cry by the Red sea" - another manifestation of the heart of God, to narrate His wonder-working power in judgment "upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for Thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them. So didst Thou get Thee a name, as it is this day." v. 10. They then speak of the passage through the Red Sea, where God threw their persecutors "into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters." They thus recall their redemption by power out of the land of Egypt, and thereon speak of the cloudy pillar and the pillar of fire wherewith Jehovah had led them through the wilderness; for, in truth, He who had redeemed His people out of the hand of Pharaoh, led them forth in His mercy, and guided them in His strength unto His holy habitation (see Exod. 15:13). Next, they recite before the Lord His coming down upon Sinai, the giving of the law, His holy sabbath, the precepts, statutes, and laws which He commanded them by the hand of Moses; and they reminded themselves of the bread from heaven which He gave them for their hunger, of the water which He brought forth out of the rock for their thirst, and of the land which He had promised them for a possession (vv. 13-15).

So far, it is a tale of grace - of a giving God. He had chosen Abraham, redeemed His people, guided, spoken to, and sustained them. All had been given from the heart of God, in His 'own pure and sovereign grace. They turn, in the next place, to their side of the picture. And what a contrast, as it ever is, when the heart of man is put side by side with the heart of God! What then had they to tell of themselves in the presence of all this mercy and grace? Not one single good thing; for they say, "But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks," etc. (vv. 16, 17). They confessed, in a word, pride, stubbornness, willful disobedience, forgetfulness of the displays of God's power in their midst, and apostasy. On God's side there had been mercy, long-suffering, and tender care; and on theirs, ingratitude, and almost every form of evil and corruption.

And yet they have more to tell of the inexhaustible goodness of the God who had redeemed them, borne them on eagles' wings, and brought them unto Himself. "But Thou," they say, "art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not"; and, moreover, they have further to say as they magnify the grace of their God, that though their fathers had made a molten calf as their god, ascribing even to it their deliverance from Egypt, "and had wrought great provocations; yet Thou in Thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness." No; God had still guided them by His pillar of cloud by day, and His pillar of fire by night. He withheld not His manna, nor the water out of the rock; but for forty years He sustained them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing; "their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not." Moreover, He subdued kingdoms before them, multiplied their children, put them into the land which He had promised to their fathers, gave them victory over all the power of the enemy, and enabled them to take strong cities and a fat land, to possess "houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in Thy great goodness" (vv. 9-25). They celebrate in this manner the unchanging goodness of their faithful God, and measure by it the conduct of their fathers and themselves. For what response did they render to all this grace? "Nevertheless," they say, "they were disobedient, and rebelled against Thee, and cast Thy law behind their backs, and slew Thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to Thee, and they wrought great

provocations." v. 26. The reader will notice the repetition of this last clause. "They wrought great provocations" both in the wilderness (v. 18) and in the land.

This was what God found in the people He had redeemed as the answer to all His patient care and goodness; and henceforward a change is marked in God's dealings with them, for they next proceed to narrate His judgments upon His people, yet confessing that He was ever ready to interpose for their succor and deliverance. "Thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto Thee, Thou heardest them from heaven; and according to Thy manifold mercies Thou gavest them saviors, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies." Again, they tell of sin - and evil. "Yet when they returned, and cried unto Thee, Thou heardest them from heaven; and many times didst Thou deliver them according to Thy mercies." (vv. 27, 28.) To these interpositions in grace, in answer to His people's cry, were added testimony against them, forbearance and warnings by prophets, "yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto Thy commandments,... and withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear:... therefore gavest Thou them into the hand of the people of the lands." (vv. 29, 30.)

Such were the causes of their present condition; but they add to the praise of their God: "Nevertheless for Thy great mercies' sake Thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for Thou art a gracious and merciful God." Again we say, What a tale! It is, as before said, the revelation of the heart of God and of the heart of man; but, alas! it is the revelation of the heart of man under divine culture, the object of sovereign mercy and love. Jehovah had been seeking fruit from His fig tree all these centuries; and by His own people's confession He found none; and yet, with unwearying grace, He had borne with them in His infinite long-suffering and patience; and the age to come will tell out even more fully the depths of His mercy toward His beloved people when, in spite of all they have been and are, and notwithstanding they have forfeited all by their sin and apostasy, He will restore them once again to their land, and maintain them in it in the perfection of blessing under the reign of their Messiah. Such are the counsels of His grace already disclosed in and through the death of Christ - counsels which Christ Himself will accomplish in power when He appears in glory to take the kingdom of His father David, and to wield His scepter from the river to the ends of the earth.

Having then passed in review the history of God's ways with them since the call of Abram, they now present their prayer. Indeed their rehearsal of the past may be said to be the foundation of their special petition, for they have grounded themselves upon the immutable character of their God, as "gracious and merciful," according to the revelation He had made of Himself after the sin of the golden calf (Exod. 34:6). They had owned that they deserved nothing but judgment, and had therefore confessed that they had no hope but in God Himself. They had thus reached an immovable foundation on which to rest their plea - the heart of their God.

And what was their petition? They say: "Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before Thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings,... and on all Thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day." v. 32. Such was their prayer. It was the presentation of their own sorrowful condition under the chastising hand of their God, leaving it, as it were, to Him (for they knew that they deserved nothing but judgment) to deal with them according to His own character as "a gracious

and merciful God." For they proceed to say, "Howbeit Thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for Thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly." v. 33. And again, in their utter abasement before God at this moment, they confess the sins of their kings, their princes, their priests, and their fathers, owning that they had not kept the law, that they had not hearkened unto His commandments and His testimonies, and that, even in the kingdom which He had given them, as well as the large and fat land, they had not served Him, nor turned from their wicked works (v. 35). They describe, furthermore, their present position in the land; and surely, in contrast with the past, it is a touching picture, and one, as delineated by the Holy Spirit, that could not fail to awaken a response in the heart of Him to whom it was presented. They are servants, they say, and instead of eating the fruit and the good of the land which God had given their fathers, they were servants in it, and its increase went to the kings whom God had set over them because of their sins; and these also had dominion over their bodies and their cattle "at their pleasure, and we are in great distress."

Such is the way in which these children of the captivity poured out their sorrows before Jehovah. They justify God in all His dealings with them, and they magnify His grace, mercy, and long-suffering toward them. They take also the place of true self-judgment, for they vindicate God against themselves, not seeking in any one thing to extenuate their own conduct. No, He was just in all that was brought upon them; He had done right, and they had done wickedly. In such a place - a place which it ever behooves sinners, and saints too, when they have sinned, to take - and in such a dispensation, their only refuge was in the mercy of their God. And it was upon this that they cast themselves - unreservedly cast themselves - admitting again and again that they had no claim except indeed upon what God was toward them. And well would it have been if they had left themselves there, if they had rested alone upon their merciful and gracious God. But they went further, and they said: "Because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it." v. 38. The question, however, of the covenant which they made really belongs to the next chapter; for it is there we find its terms and what the people with their leaders solemnly engaged to perform.

Labor and Conflict: Exposition on Nehemiah

## Chapter 10

At the close of the last chapter a covenant is made, and at the commencement of this the names are given of those who sealed it; that is, of those who bound themselves to its observance by their signatures, but subscribing their names, it would seem, not only for themselves, but also on behalf of the people. Nehemiah, as the governor, was the first to put his name to this solemn document; he was followed by twenty-two priests (vv. 1-8), then came seventeen Levites (vv. 9-13), after whom there were forty-four chiefs of the people, probably heads of families.

The nature of the covenant is seen in what follows: "And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinim, and all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one having knowledge, and having understanding; they slave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, and His judgments and His statutes." vv. 28, 29. There can be no doubt that there was a general movement in the

hearts of the people, and that this covenant-making was no mere formal act; for while the "nobles" had signed it on behalf of all, there was an evident concurrence in their deed from the fact of all classes coming spontaneously forth to ratify what was done. Even the wives and children, at least those who had knowledge and understanding, participated in the act and deed.

And what was it, let us inquire more particularly, that they engaged to do? The very thing that Israel had undertaken when standing before Sinai, where, under the sanction of the sprinkled blood, they solemnly said, "All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient." (Exod. 24) Up to that time, since their redemption from the land of Egypt, they had been under grace. God had borne them on eagles' wings and brought them unto Himself. Grace had set them free; they were to stand still and see the salvation of God; and grace had sustained, provided for, borne with, and guided them until that moment. But when they came to Sinai, to bring out what was in their heart, the Lord sent through Moses this message to His people, "If ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people." (Exod. 19:3-5.) They accepted the proposed condition, with the penalty of death, as proclaimed by the sprinkled blood, attached to transgression (Exod. 19 and 24); and henceforward they were on a new footing and relationship with God.

Already they were God's people by redemption; and now, in utter forgetfulness of the history of the three months which had elapsed since they crossed the Red Sea, of their continual sins, they expressed themselves ready to abandon the ground of grace, and to accept that of responsibility. They had sinned at Marah, in the wilderness of Sin, and at Rephidim; and God had borne with them in long-suffering mercy, according to the ground on which He had set them, meeting their murmurings with new displays of His grace, and ever bestrewing their path with fresh blessings. What folly then to enter into the covenant of law which was proposed to them at Sinai! Had they known themselves, had they understood the past, had they but reflected, they would have said, "Thou in Thy mercy, Lord, hast led forth Thy redeemed people; Thou hast hitherto undertaken all for us, while we have been continually guilty of sin and hardness of heart. We are Thine, and Thou must keep us; for if we are left to ourselves, or if anything is made dependent on us and on our doings, we shall lose everything. No, Lord, we are debtors only to Thy grace, and to Thy grace we must be debtors still." But in their ignorance of their own hearts, in the folly of the flesh, they accepted the covenant with all its solemn sanctions and penalties. And what happened? Before even the tables of the law had reached the camp, they had apostatized from Jehovah, and had made the golden calf, before which they fell down, saying, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." (Ex. 32:1-4.) Thus having received all under grace, they forfeited everything under responsibility.

Take yet another example. After the reign of wicked Manasseh, who filled Jerusalem with innocent blood "from one end to another," and who seduced the people "to do more evil than did the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel," Josiah succeeded to the throne. He was characterized by obedience to the Word; and, in his desire to reclaim the people from their evil ways, he "made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant." 2 Kings 23:3. But even while with their lips they "stood to the covenant," they did it "in falsehood" (Jer. 3:10; margin), and soon even outwardly were worse than ever.

These examples will enable us to estimate the value of the covenant which Nehemiah, with the people, made at this time. They were not ignorant of the past (chap. 9:13, 14), and they had confessed the former transgressions of their people; and yet they now make another covenant, blinded by the enthusiasm of the moment to the fact that as their fathers were, so were they, that there was no more probability of their observing these solemn engagements than in the case of their ancestors. And yet they were doubtlessly sincere, fully purposing to be faithful to the obligations they were undertaking. There are few indeed who cannot understand this transaction, for the flesh is naturally legal; and it seems an easy method of providing against failure to make a covenant. God's people have often resorted to this expedient, only to discover their own utter impotence; and thus they have been, in many cases, taught to look to Another for the power they needed instead of to themselves. It is easy to pass condemnation, whether upon Nehemiah or others; but it is better to learn from their example, for it is a necessary stage in the history of souls; and blessed are they who, whether by this or any other process, have come to the end of themselves, have ceased to expect anything from their own promises or efforts, and have learned that in their flesh there dwelleth no good thing, and that while to will is present with them, how to perform that which is good they find not.

There were three main articles in the covenant to which they bound themselves by a curse and an oath. First, they engaged to keep the whole law as given to their fathers at Sinai, as well as all the Lord's commandments, judgments, and statutes. Second, they declared that they would contract no more marriages with the heathen; and last, that the sabbath, the holy days, and the seventh year (see Deut. 15), with its accompanying conditions, should be faithfully observed. (See Exod. 21; 23 etc.) In addition to this, they made obligatory ordinances to secure provision for the service of the house of God, for the sacrifices, and for all that appertained to their religious observances. Though in weakness, and in bondage to the Gentiles, they desired to order everything connected with Jehovah and His claims according to what had been enjoined upon them in the law of Moses. Every one was, in the first place, to contribute the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of God. As far as can be discovered from the Scriptures, there was no legal precedent for this voluntary assessment. In connection with the erection of the tabernacle, it was ordained that whenever the children of Israel should be numbered, "every one that passeth among them that are numbered" should give half a shekel, "to make an atonement for your souls"; and this money was to be appointed "for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls." (Exod. 30:11-16.) This no doubt suggested the annual contribution before us, lessened probably to a third of a shekel on account of their poverty (chap. 9:37). In after years it was raised to half a shekel and became a tax upon every Jew. It was concerning this that the collectors asked Peter, "Doth not your master pay tribute?" (Matt. 17:24-27.)

It is beautiful, whatever the after failure, to see the hearts of these poor returned captives flow out in love to the house of their God, that He might be honored, and that they might have their standing before Him through His own ordinances in the sanctuary. Thus the money contributed was to be expended in the provision for the continual showbread which, composed as it was of twelve loaves, represented the twelve tribes of Israel in association with Christ and before God - God Himself revealed in Christ in association with Israel in the perfection of governmental administration. From this fund was to be defrayed also the cost of the continual meat offering, the

continual burnt offering in their appointed seasons, "and for the sin offerings to make an atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God." v. 33. Every kind of offering - representing Christ in His devotedness of His life, His perfect humanity, Christ in His devotedness unto death for the glory of God, and Christ as the sin bearer - was to be provided and offered for Israel. The children of the captivity were but few, but they were on the ground of the whole nation before God; and hence they included in their thoughts the whole of Israel, and they showed by caring for the sacrifices that it was only in and by the efficacy of these that this ground could be secured and maintained. This is evidence of divine intelligence, revealing a true appreciation of Jehovah's claims as well as of the only possible ground on which they themselves could stand before Him.

They proceeded, in the next place, to "cast the lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for the wood offering, to bring it into the house of our God, after the houses of our fathers, at times appointed year by year, to burn upon the altar of the LORD our God, as it is written in the law." v. 34. It was necessary that this provision should be made, for the fire on the altar was never to go out. (See Lev. 6:8-13.) On this account, they selected priests to attend to the altar, Levites to wait upon the priests in this service, and some of the people to bring the needful supplies of wood for the holy fire. All was to be duly ordered and cared for, "as it is written in the law." They had begun to understand that God's thoughts must govern in God's things. The first fruits of their ground, and the first fruits of all fruit of all trees, were also to be annually brought to the Lord's house. They desired, therefore, in accordance with the precepts of the law, to honor the Lord with their substance and with the first fruits of all their increase, in recognition of Him from whom the increase of the field proceeded, and to whom all belonged. They could not enter, as we can, into the blessed typical teachings of the first fruits; but Christ as the first fruits (1 Cor. 15:23) was before the eye of God, and invested the offerings of His people with all His value and preciousness. (Lev. 23:9-21; see also Jas. 1:18.)

They promised, furthermore, to bring the first-born of their sons, of their cattle, of their herds and flocks to the house of their God, unto the priests that minister in the house of their God (see Exod. 13; Luke 2:22-24). In this they acknowledged themselves as a redeemed people; for when "the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast," He commanded His people to sacrifice to Him "all that openeth the matrix, being males," but enjoined them to redeem the first-born of their children. We thus read: "All the firstborn of the children of Israel are Mine, both man and beast: on the day that I smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for Myself." Numb. 8:17. The restored remnant reverted to this ordinance in the grateful recollection that they had been brought up out of the land of Egypt, and in recognition of what was due to Jehovah their redeemer.

The last three verses concern the first fruits and the tithes. The Levites were given unto Aaron, in the place of the firstborn, to be offered "before the LORD for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the LORD." Numb. 8:11. All the work of the house of God, except the strictly priestly duties, devolved upon them; and provision was made for their support in the tithes imposed upon the people. Both the priests and the Levites were to be sustained by the offerings of the people, the character of which had all been duly prescribed (see Numb. 18). All this is now remembered; and the people, in their zeal for the restoration of the law, charge themselves with the observance of their responsibilities in this matter that the service of the house

of their God might be duly established. The first fruits for the priests, as well as the tithes for the Levites, were to be stored in the chambers of the house.

(1 Chron. 9:26-33.)

It will thus be perceived that the covenant, embracing in its terms all that the people on this day engaged to do, included what was due to God and to His house. They put themselves under the solemn obligation to meet all God's claims upon them personally, to maintain a holy separation from the nations around, to keep the sabbath - the sign of God's covenant with them, etc. - and in addition to this, they undertook the burden of caring for all that appertained to the establishment and support of the service of the Lord's house. They concluded the latter part of the covenant therefore with the words, "And we will not forsake the house of our God." Nor can we doubt the sincerity of their intentions. Assembled together, they were for the time one in heart and aim, and their common desire and purpose found expression in this covenant. But it is one thing, as all know, to vow, and another to perform. When wrought upon by some mighty influence which isolates us from everything but the one thing then presented to our souls, it is easy to bind ourselves to pursue that one object forever. The influence passes away and, while the object which had been before us seems as desirable as ever, the impulse to its attainment is no longer felt. Together with this loss of power, the flesh reasserts itself; and finally the "covenant" which, at the time we made it, seemed so easy to keep, becomes impossible and adds another burden to an already bad conscience. All this the Jews will discover in time. Meanwhile they sketched a beautiful covenant which, if duly observed, would produce a perfect state; and they added an attractive resolution not to forsake the house of their God.

## Led Captivity Captive

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Judg. 5:12

The history of the expression, "lead thy captivity captive," first found in this scripture, strikingly illustrates the remark of a well-known writer, that "he who does not see Christ everywhere in the Old Testament, sees Him nowhere." The above expression is here addressed to Barak. "Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam." After the victory over Sisera, the Holy Spirit put a song of celebration into the lips of Deborah and Barak, in which they are made to recall the former state of Israel, the gathering of the people, and the circumstances of the conflict. The words occupying our attention take the form of an exhortation in the prospect of the struggle, urging Barak to grapple with, and to bring into captivity, the power which had been holding Israel captive.

Passing on to Psalm 68, we read: "Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts for men [or rather, as in the margin, in the man]; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them." v. 18. Here the conflict is over (see vv. 1, 2, 12); but the words are not, as in Judges, an exhortation, but a description - a description of the victorious issue of the conflict in the ascension and exaltation of Christ as man. But there is more, as another has remarked, for "He has led captive the power of the enemy who ruined all - conferred blessing, and as man, and in His human nature, He has received gifts even for rebellious Israel, that Jehovah Elohim might dwell among them."

We learn, therefore, that the divine energy of the Spirit, that wrought in and through Deborah and Barak for the overthrow of the enemies of Israel, was but a foreshadowing of that divine power which was displayed in and through Christ in His conflict with the power of Satan in His death on the cross (compare Col. 2:15), and which will be exhibited through Him when He returns for the deliverance of His people Israel in a later day. Psalm 68, though all is based upon and flows out from the virtue of His death, refers to Israel and the future; but if we now turn to Ephesians - the last place where the expression is found - the reference is to His past conflict and victory - His overcoming the whole power of Satan. "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men," etc. Chap. 4:8. That is, He brought to naught the power that held us captive; and Satan, as the enemy who has been overcome, now only waits for the execution of his sentence. (See Rev. 20:1, 2, 10.) Not only so; but we, freed from our captivity (compare Heb. 2:14, 15), are brought into the enjoyment of the present fruits of the victory in the gifts bestowed by the victorious and ascended Christ (Eph. 4:7-14).

The effect for Israel will be that their Lord God will once more dwell among them in power and blessing, while believers now have already entered upon the blessings won for them in the provision made "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ," and can joyfully anticipate the full result, in the future glory, of the victory.

## Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled

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### John 14

It is of importance that we should note the cause of the sorrow to which the Lord Jesus addresses Himself in these precious words for the comfort of the troubled ones; for, as I am persuaded, they will lose their deepest significance and blessing for any who have not known as their own the sorrow that is the occasion of them. For it is no ordinary sorrow that is here, such as abounds for every child of God in his path through this evil world. It is not any and every sorrow that here finds itself in the presence of the Lord for sympathy, whose heart has still upon the throne of God its kindred throb for every throb of ours, and comfort too to the full; but it is the very special sorrow of any who know Jesus well enough to miss Him in a scene out of which He has been cast by the unanimous consent of man. Brighter and more blessed things, it is true, have resulted to us from the cross of Christ, in the wondrous grace of God, that could make this culminating point of man's hatred the moment and place of the brightest display of that grace. But this does not lessen the guilt of the world in putting Him there, nor the sense of His rejection by it in our hearts as we pass through it. And so it is that Paul can say, By "the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

Beloved, let us put it to our hearts - Do we miss Him? We have known His work for salvation, but have we gone on to know Himself for love? Has His work, with all its known results in our blessing, served in any feeble measure to attach us to Him who has accomplished it, do we not miss Him in this world? Impossible that it should not be so! For us, as for Mary, if He is gone, then all is gone that was of any value for our hearts here; and henceforth, in all this world's scene, there is a blank that nothing can fill. The world is stained with the blood of our murdered Lord; His cross blights it in our eyes; our hearts can never dissociate the world from His cross that judged it, and we only live to show forth His death in it, while, as strangers and pilgrims, we pass on to our home above. Beloved, do our hearts know enough of Jesus to be desolate in a place where He is not? Ah, then, we know the disciples' sorrow, and to us as well as them belongs the comfort of the words of Jesus.

And see how He counts upon the disciples' love and consequent sorrow; for He has no sooner broken it to them in gentle words, that only "yet a little while" He can be with them, than He adds, "Let not your heart be troubled." Precious fruit of His own love that, wherever it is known, detaches hearts from the world without Him, by attaching them to Himself. Yes; He whom they had known and loved and followed on earth, in such precious intimacy, was about to return to the Father; and they would now no longer know Him after the flesh. Yet He was only going to take the same place as the unseen God, where He would still be known by faith, and in all the deeper revelations of the glory of His Person that would result from that place. So that He will even prove that it is expedient for them that He go away: "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." And as we shall see, these deeper revelations of Himself will form the very staple of the comfort ministered to us in His words. Where else could comfort be found for hearts that have known Him ever so feebly? All joy is

treasured up for us in the knowledge of Christ. There can be no different joy, but only deeper measures of the same joy; and this is just what He brings us into by going away.

But will He enter alone into His joy, and leave us in our wilderness desolation? No; He only goes to prepare a place for us there too, and to wait for the moment when He can come and fetch us into it. Beloved, He speaks to us of home; and if you say it is of His home, I answer, Not more His than yours with Him now; for He has never left us until He has accomplished a work in the world on the ground of which He has introduced us into the very same relationship that He Himself stands in to God. "Go to My brethren," says He, from the mouth of His open and empty grave, "and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." Henceforth, His Father is our Father - His God, our God - His home, our home.

But observe well where it is He gives us our home - "In My Father's house." Oh, beloved, have our hearts entered into the blessedness of this? The Jewish hopes of the disciples were filled with the displayed glory of the kingdom, as was natural, from prophecy; but the time for that display, depending as it did upon the presence of the Messiah, was not come yet, as was evident from Jesus' words, "Yet a little while I am with you." And when all seemed lost to their disappointed expectations in His going away, He unfolds to their faith what prophecy never thought of - the Father's house - and gives them and us our home there, in a love that is beyond all the glory, for the glory can be displayed - the love, never. What rich comfort for our hearts, troubled in this world at the absence of Jesus!

But there is more; and more there must be to meet the necessities of those to whom, by these very revelations, Jesus is becoming more precious every day. Is this separation to last forever? No; He could not bear it any more than we. And, coupled with the home presented to our faith to enjoy,

He gives us just what He knows hearts that truly love Him could not do without - the promise, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself"; precious hope for us, beloved, till hope shall be lost in the consummation of it, and we shall see Him face to face. Nor is it only that we shall all be with Him; for "to be absent from the body" is "to be present with the Lord," and thus in death we go to Him (but this is not His coming for us). His word is, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself," and the promise is as sure today for our hearts as when first He gave it to us. Beloved brethren, is the coming of our Lord more than a doctrine among us? Is it a deep spring of joy even in hope? Is it a living power in our souls? But the promise goes on, "that where I am, there ye may be also"; and this tells us that the necessity of our hearts is His own; that, not for our joy only, but for His, we must be where He is. And, beloved, that is the heaven of the Christian's hope. Man's imagination has a heaven of its own, well suited to it, no doubt, but not the least suited to the desires of Christ for us. Scripture has but little about heaven, for all desire, all joy, all hope, is summed up for any who know Jesus ever so feebly, in that "where / am" of His. His presence is the very heaven of heaven to us.

## Light Shining Forth

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Isa. 60:1

At the end of Isa. 59, it is said that the redeemer shall come to Zion, and upon that is based the exhortation given, "Arise, shine; for thy light" (the Redeemer) "is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee." The light now possessed in the Person of the Redeemer, dwelling in Zion, is to be displayed. Note, moreover, that this is in contrast to the state of the whole earth. "For, behold the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee." Jerusalem, irradiated with the light of the glory of the Lord, shines in the midst of the dense moral darkness around. It was so with the Lord Himself at His first coming. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." John 1:4, 5. So also with the believer, as the Apostle writes: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light" (or, "for the shining forth") "of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. 4:6.

Another thing may be observed. When the light shines, whether through Jerusalem or through the believer (as indeed it was also through our blessed Lord and Savior), it is for a testimony - a powerful testimony - to Him who has enkindled it, yea, to Him whose glory is the light. We thus read in our chapter, "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and the kings to the brightness of thy rising." v. 3. (Compare Rev. 21:23, 24.) The Gentiles behold and are attracted to the glory that has dawned upon the earth; and "The city of the LORD, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel," becomes thus the center of universal blessing, the source of all being indicated in the words, "The LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." v. 19. In dwelling upon this blessed scene, it is well to remind ourselves that God in His grace has set believers, in anticipation of that day, as lights in the midst of the darkness; and if this treasure - the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ - is possessed in earthen vessels, it is that the excellency of the power which causes it to shine forth may be of God, and not of us. Christ in glory is ever the light in the New Testament; and when our light shines, it is simply the exhibition of Christ in the life.

## Real, Living Christianity

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The Apostle Paul's life, his whole conduct, confirmed the testimony which he bore - formed a part of it. Accordingly (it is always the case) the fruit of his labors answered in character to him who labored; the Christianity of the Thessalonians resembled that of Paul. It was like the walk of the

Lord Himself whom Paul followed so closely. It was "in much affliction," for the enemy could not bear so plain a testimony, and God granted this grace to such a testimony, and "with joy of the Holy Ghost."

Happy testimony to the power of the Spirit working in the heart! When this is so, everything becomes testimony to others. They see that there is in Christians a power of which they are ignorant, motives which they have not experienced, a joy which they may scoff at but which they do not possess; a conduct which strikes them, and which they admire, although they do not follow it; a patience which shows the impotence of the enemy in striving against a power that endures everything, and that rejoices in spite of all his efforts. The world may have said, What can we do with those who allow themselves to be killed without becoming less joyful, nay, whom it makes more so; who are above all our motives when left to themselves, and who, if oppressed, possess their souls in perfect joy in spite of all our opposition; and who are unconquered by torments, finding in these only an occasion for bearing a stronger testimony that Christians are beyond our power? At peace, life is all of it a testimony; death, even in torture, is still more so. Such is the Christian where Christianity exists in its true power, in its normal condition according to God - the Word (of the gospel) and the presence of the Spirit, reproduced in the life, in a world estranged from God.

Thus it was with the Thessalonians; and the world, in spite of itself, became an additional witness to the power of the gospel. An ensample to believers in other places, they were the subject of report and conversation to the world, which was never weary of discussing this phenomenon, so new and so strange, of people who had given up all that governed the human heart, all to which it was subject, and worshiped one only living and true God, to whom even the natural conscience bore testimony. The gods of the heathen were the gods of the passions, not of the conscience. And this gave a living reality, an actuality, to the position of Christians and to their religion. They waited for His Son from heaven.

Happy indeed are those Christians whose walk and whole existence made of the world itself a witness for the truth, who were so distinct in their confession, so consistent in their life, that an apostle did not need to speak of that which he had preached, of that which he had been among them. The world spoke of it for him and for them.

## The Lord's Coming and the Revived Roman Empire: the Editor's Column

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" 'Tis not far off - the hour

When Christ will claim His own!

We soon shall hear that voice of power -

The Lord Himself shall come!

"The days are passing by,

The years flow on apace,

Lord Jesus, Thy return draws nigh,

We long to see Thy face!"

Another year has run its course, and its events have become history. 1958 dawns; what will it bring? Will the Lord Jesus come into the clouds of heaven and shout the shout that will raise those who have died in faith, and change the living saints? Will 1958 be the year of the great event? It is not only possible, but probable.

On that memorable night, the night before His death, the Lord Jesus told His disciples, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself." John 14:3. That was a definite promise without equivocation. It is as good and as sure as it was at the moment in which it was spoken. He has said that He will come for us, and He will surely do it. Then the epistles tell us more about His coming and the order of it, but nothing has been set before the Christians as something that must take place first. It is not with us as it will be with the faithful Jewish remnant in the days after we are gone; they will have certain signs to watch for before they are to flee from Jerusalem (see Matt. 24:14-21). The Christian is always to watch for his Lord.

God has, however, given to us the lamp of prophecy to enlighten us in this dark place, and we do well to take heed to it (2 Pet. 1:19). It has been His good pleasure to tell us what He is about to do, and surely He who gave the word can give us the proper understanding of it, if we seek it in dependence on Him. The Lord Jesus reproved the Jews in His day for not being able to discern the signs of the times. They had the Old Testament scriptures which foretold His first coming, and He was there in fulfillment of them, but they did not discern the time (see Matt. 16:1-3; Luke 12:54-56). Can we, therefore, who have the promise of His coming and the light of the prophetic word, be indifferent to the general character of the days in which we live? Are any Christians so blind that they cannot discern that we are now in the "last days"? The moral character of those days is here (2 Tim. 3:1-5). And while there is no sign set before us as something to precede His coming for us, yet there are ominous signs of the events that the Word of God says will take place on earth after we are gone. God has written prophecy with more certainty than man can write

history.

In the days of the great Nebuchadnezzar, God foretold the time in which the Babylonian Empire would flourish (Jer. 27:6, 7); and so it came to pass. He gave His servants, the prophets, information regarding the succession of great world powers - Medo-Persian, Alexander the Great and his successors, and the mighty Roman Empire. All without exception was fulfilled to the letter, saving that which is still future. And what part of those prophecies is still future? Just this: there will be a revival of the Roman Empire of the West in a form different from any previous one. It will be composed of ten separate kingdoms subject to a federal head. The Roman Empire did not exist as such in any past condition.

The ten kingdoms are foretold in the "ten toes" of the image, in Dan. 2; in the "ten horns" of that dreadful beast, in Dan. 7 and Rev. 13 and 17. The head of this revived Empire of the West is prefigured in the little horn that came up last on the beast, in Dan. 7 (who completely dominates the beast and disposes of three of the first ten kings), and in the beast of Rev. 13 and 17; he is also spoken of as "the prince that shall come," in Dan. 9:27. These kings and this head are referred to prophetically in other places, but we shall not look at them now. In him and his wicked supporter in Palestine, wickedness will rise to its consummate arrogance.

We are aware that there is a line of teaching that makes of these future events nothing but now fulfilled history. They see in these ten kings only ten parts of a broken empire of the past, and in the federal head nothing else than the Pope of Rome. All such reasonings are wrong and are based upon false premises. A few questions will show the falsity of such interpretations:

When did the Roman Empire achieve such unity after its breakup as these prophecies depict?

When did the Lord Jesus come in judgment and fall upon a Roman Empire and smash it to dust?-for this is how it will end according to Dan. 2:45.

When did the Lord Jesus set up a visible earthly kingdom that will supersede these kingdoms, and stand forever? (See v. 44.)

When did the Pope open his mouth to "blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven"? (See Rev. 13:6.)

When did all the world "wonder after the" Pope?

When did the Pope rally the armies of earth to actually make war with Christ coming with the armies of heaven? (See Rev. 19:19, 20.)

The solution is easily obvious: no fulfillment of the prophetic scriptures regarding the last state of the Roman Empire has been accomplished; this is yet future. To properly understand many prophecies, one must see that there is a gap in the prophetic outline; the account runs on regularly to a certain point and then it jumps on down to the time of the end. We may call the interval a parenthesis in the prophecy - this present period of the call of the Church fits into the prophetic gap. After the Church has been translated to heaven, the parenthesis will be closed; then the remaining prophecies will be fulfilled.

Such climactic events as the revival of the Roman Empire do not come about instantaneously; they take time to develop. God allows man in his sin to go on in his own way, but He has predetermined what the end will be. He rules providentially, while man forgets Him. His Word speaks of His allowing certain winds to act on the great sea of human confusion to bring about His purposes (see Dan. 7:2; Revelation

7:1; 13:1).

Who would have thought that out of the cold ashes of the old Roman Empire a new all-powerful empire would arise? Or who would have supposed that the small nations of Western Europe with their intense individual nationalism would ever come close together? or would ever submit to a superimposed-government? Charlemagne,. Napoleon, Hitler, and lesser lights dreamed of a united Europe, but that was reserved by God for the very last days before His Son would come back to make His enemies His footstool, and "dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

It has taken the last fifty years with two world wars and constantly recurring crises to bring Europe to where it stands today - 1958. The threat of hydrogen warfare, and economic strangulation (in view of Russia's sudden rise to power) have forced the nations of Western Europe closer and closer together. They have finally realized that they must unite to survive, or die separately. These are the horns of the dilemma, and the bare facts behind them make only one decision practicable - unite.

Many attempts were made to hold Europe together after both world wars, but when tensions lessened, the bonds tended to break. But the ever recurring fear of Russia in recent years has kept the statesmen of Europe and North America striving for some workable solution to the grave problem. Today there is some very real joint military cooperation between the nations of Western Europe and the United States (whose people are descendants of the peoples of the old Roman Empire). They have recently held joint maneuvers in the Eastern Mediterranean and in Northern European waters. The basic outline is all in readiness, and the filling in of the details only requires a circumstance; this, Russia is apt to furnish without notice at any time. The way is now ready for the formation of the revived Roman Empire militarily, and there is an ever-present threat to keep it from being given up.

It does not matter that present plans call for more or less than ten nations to participate, for the final roster will be as God has said.

Economically, several important steps have already

been taken. In 1952 a joint project was launched which linked the coal and iron mines and the steel mills of France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg into a common pool known as the European Coal and Steel Community. This has now been in successful operation for five years, and it has been a great spur to European development. Such a scheme was unthinkable just a few short years back, but common necessity has brought it about.

Now on January 1, 1958, a very bold step is being taken. It is being heralded as the introduction of a "Golden Age" for Europe. These same six countries are now effecting "an economic constitution for the United States of Europe." It will put nuclear resources and skills together into a common pool in an attempt to develop nuclear power to replace much coal and oil as sources of energy.

They are also discarding artificial trade barriers, such as tariffs, and planning for a free movement of labor between these six nations. In short, these nations have taken the lead in forming a practical, working supranational economic union. Thus the necessary adjunct to a military federation is already functioning. Removal of trade barriers and the free flow of men and products from one to another of the nations of the new United States of Europe, would be a prerequisite to a revived Roman Empire. These are now out of the talking and planning stages and are operating realities. The inclusion or exclusion of certain nations to bring the final operating unit into the form of a "ten kingdom" power with a bold uniting head is only a matter of addition or subtraction.

One more point that might be considered is the preliminary work to prepare the people for the acceptance of a despotic Caesar to head up these Western nations. It might have been thought that peoples used to democratic rule would refuse to bow and do obeisance to such a man, but here again, the strain of hot wars and cold wars has made the people, even of the United States, ready to entrust their lives and their destinies to a man who promises to bring peace to the troubled world. They will welcome with loud acclaim a strong leader who seems to know where he is leading them.

They will not hesitate to render hero-worship to "the beast." From then on, the downward steps will be taken with accelerated speed. They will not only worship the beast, but they will also worship the devil, who will give this man his full support.

O Christendom of Christ rejecters, you are heading for the great destruction as those swine did when they, impelled by the devil, ran violently down the steep place into the sea.

But, fellow-Christian, we who have the lamp of prophecy should discern the time, "that now it is high time to awake out of sleep" (Rom. 13:11). The coming of the Lord is near, even at the door. "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.... But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation." 1 Thess. 5:6, 8.

## A Man of God

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In the New Testament "the man of God" supposes one faithful in the service of souls; but the term is by no means confined to Christianity, being rather in itself a familiar Old Testament expression. By it we may understand a believer who has the moral courage and the spiritual power to identify himself with the Lord's interests, and to maintain the good fight of faith in the midst of perils and obstacles of every sort. Such a testimony is incompatible with yielding to human principles and the spirit of the age.

We must not suppose however that fidelity in such a day as ours wears an imposing garb. An appearance of strength is out of course when declension has come in and judgment is approaching. God will have a state of ruin felt, and His testimony must be in keeping. When He calls to sackcloth and ashes, He does not give such a character of power as has price in the world's eyes. Thus one of the truest signs of practical communion with the mind of the Lord is that at such a moment one is heartily content to be little. This is reality, but it is only a little strength. It is according to the mind of God. But that which attracts the world must please and pander to the self-importance of man. The world itself is a vain show, and likes its own. Consequently there is nothing which so carries the mass of men along with it as that which flatters the vanity of the human mind. It may assume the lowliest air, but sinful man seeks his own honor and present exaltation. But when a servant of God is thus drawn into the spirit of men, he naturally shrinks back from fairly facing the solemn call of God addressed to His own, loses his bright confidence, and gets either hardened or stands in dread of the judgment of God.

When Christians lose the power and reproach of the cross, philanthropy has been taken up, which gives influence among men, and general activity in what men call doing good replaces the life of faith with the vain hope of staving off the evil day in their time at any rate. One need not deny zeal and earnest pursuit of what is good morally; self-denial too one sees in spending for purposes religious or benevolent; but the man of God, now that ruin has entered the field of Christ's confession, is more urgently than ever called to be true to a crucified (that is, rejected) Christ. And as surely as He is soon coming to take us on high, He will in due time appear for the judgment of every high thought and the fairest looking enterprises of men which will all be swallowed up in the yawning gulf of the apostasy.

## A Man of the Pharisees: John 3:1

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### John 3:1

This expression is singular; it is not "a certain Pharisee," but "a man of the Pharisees," throwing the emphasis on man, and defining what kind of man Nicodemus was, by adding "of the Pharisees." This will more clearly appear from the context: "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for He knew what was in man. There was a man of the Pharisees." The prominent point is "man," and what is "in man." Man can appreciate miracles and be forced by them to acknowledge the power and superiority of Him by whom they are wrought, and to render Him homage; and in human estimation this would be accredited as faith. But He who knew what was in man, did not so accredit it. The faith which is an inference of the human mind is not the faith in God which subjects man to God; but, on the contrary, it subjects God to human caprice - at one time acknowledging Him, at another, questioning either His being, presence, or perfection. He who knew what was in man was the same Jehovah who had been with Israel of old as their deliverer, sustainer, and guide, proving Himself to be the only God by a constant succession of miracles. But this is His complaint against Israel: "Because all those men which have seen My glory, and My miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted Me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to My voice; surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked Me see it." Numb. 14:22, 23.

Miracles demonstrating to Israel the presence of God, left Israel indeed without excuse for not trusting in Him. But at the same time, the history of this generation in the wilderness who were witnesses of miracle upon miracle, serves to demonstrate to us that, however the understanding may be convinced, if the heart be not touched, there never is confidence in God. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." It is "an evil heart of unbelief" which leads to departure "from the living God." God can call heaven and earth to witness that He has left nothing undone to reclaim man; and of this Israel's history is the convincing proof. "Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD'S controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with His people, and He will plead with Israel. O My people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against Me. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I set before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O My people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD." Mic. 6:2-5.

The Scriptures are commended by the most substantial and convincing proofs of their divine authority to the understanding of men; yet it is very questionable whether \$ an instance can be found of one who has been brought to peace with God by the evidences of Christianity. The mind may be satisfied with conviction arising from such evidences, but it is still culpably ignorant of God

as a being to be loved and confided in. "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." Eph. 4:17, 18.

The heart needs to be touched and the conscience reached, as well as the understanding informed, before a person will confide in God. When many "believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did... Jesus did not commit Himself unto them." John 2:23, 24. The conviction arising from miracles would be as transient as it had been in the days of old. "The waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left. Then believed they His words; they sang His praise. They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel; but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert." Psalm 106:11-14.

The Lord knew that it was not confidence in Him, but confidence in their present convictions, which might speedily pass away, and therefore, "Jesus did not commit Himself unto them." But when one of character and pretensions (Nicodemus) came to Him on this ground, He confounds him by proposing to him the fundamental doctrine which resulted from His knowledge of what was in man.

"There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews."

Nicodemus may be regarded by us as a specimen man. He was not an ordinary person, but a religious leader, for so we understand "a ruler of the Jews." He was, moreover, of the orthodox sect of the Pharisees, holding many important truths in theory, which were denied by the Sadducees, or modernists, although the Pharisees practically denied the truths they held by overlaying them with tradition.

He came to Jesus at least with respect and as an inquirer, although, from fear of his coreligionists, he came by night. He addressed Jesus not in the contemptuous language used ordinarily by the Pharisees toward Him, but by the conventional title usually given to accredited religious teachers - "Rabbi."

All this was fair and promising; but he goes much beyond this; he acknowledges Jesus to be "a teacher come from God." This acknowledgment set Jesus above the ordinary teachers, and was in itself most emphatically true; for Jesus is the Prophet of whom Moses wrote, whose teaching had this solemn sanction: "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto My words which He shall speak in My name, I will require it of him." Deut. 18:19.

But Nicodemus did not at the moment recognize the spiritual glory of Jesus as one who had come forth from the Father and had come into the world (John 16:25). He accredited the mission of Jesus as divine, because he saw the miracles He did. "No man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him." But this acknowledgment would place Jesus no higher than Elijah or Elisha, whose mission was attested by extraordinary miracles. The Lord, therefore, tests this acknowledgment of Him as a teacher by propounding to Nicodemus an elementary doctrine, which, although at first received upon His authority as a teacher, would gather abundant proof from those scriptures of which Nicodemus himself was an accredited teacher. (The word rendered "master" in verse 10 is the same as that rendered "teacher" in verse 2.) "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus was stumbled at this authoritative announcement. But the Lord Jesus demands

to be heard on His own authority - "Verily, verily, I say unto you." Such an authority a man of the Pharisees is not prepared to recognize, unless the doctrine propounded corroborates the doctrines which he has already received on the authority of tradition. But this is not to own the authority of the Teacher come from God. Men readily recognize traditional doctrines and support them, too, on the authority of Jesus, when they are capable of such support; but they equally insist on them to resist the authority of Jesus when His word is brought against them, making the Word of God of none effect through their tradition. At this day, many are the doctrines received on the authority of the so-called Church, which nullify the plainest teaching of the Lord and His apostles. So the complaint of Jesus of the men of the Pharisees of His day is equally applicable to men of a like stamp of our own day - "And because I tell you the truth, ye believe Me not." John 8:45.

The first step of emancipation from Pharisaism is the acknowledging the authority of Jesus as a teacher, however unsupported His teaching may be by traditional authority. Such authority was demanded of Jesus by the Pharisees - "By what authority doest Thou these things?" And Jesus, by referring them for an answer to the authority of the baptism of John, plainly showed that He refused all human credentials, and demanded to be received on the authority of God alone. Nothing is more difficult than to act on the authority of God, unsupported by human credentials; such acting is the acting of faith. "Have faith in God." It appeals to the conscience of men; and wherever it is recognized, it carries with it far greater weight than the authority which is backed by every attestation which man can give to it. Jesus taught as one "having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:29); and it is a turning point when one acknowledges Jesus as the authoritative teacher and receives His word on His own authority.

This prepares the way for the second great act of emancipation from Pharisaism. A man of the Pharisees sees not, with all his pretensions, a present power of deliverance and a present blessing. His religion has attainment in view, always sought but never possessed. This draws an essential distinction between a man of the Pharisees and a Christian. A Christian is and has what the other is seeking to be and to have. A Christian receives every blessing in the way of a gift; a Pharisee is seeking it under some form or other in the way of doing. A Christian, by faith, enters into present salvation; a Pharisee can only eye salvation as a contingent future. It is thus the authoritative teacher announces His primary doctrine to "a man of the Pharisees" - "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"; and if he cannot see it, he cannot enter into it. This primary truth was announced by the Lord to a candid and well-instructed teacher of Israel, whose study and occupation was religion.

The line between a man of the Pharisees and a believer in Christ is one of essential separation. No progress in Pharisaism of the most promising kind ever traverses this line. No religion whatever which proceeds from man, or consists in ordinances, ever leads even to the threshold of the entrance into the kingdom of God. The best specimen of Pharisaism is presented to us in proof that unless God positively works by His own power, so as to communicate to man that which he could never attain, he must remain a stranger to the kingdom of God. A man must be born again in order to see the kingdom of God. This is the elementary doctrine pro-

pounded by Jesus as an authoritative teacher, easily corroborated by the ancient oracles of God, as Nicodemus, a teacher of Israel, ought to have known. But it is a doctrine of far more difficult reception by modern than by ancient Pharisees, because it has been the effort of the many to set

aside, supersede, or obliterate this doctrine by a system of ordinances, so that it has perhaps never been a question of affecting the conscience of the vast majority of nominal Christians around us, whether or not they have been born again.

God grant that the essential difference between flesh and spirit, divine and human righteousness, Pharisaism and faith in Christ, may be made known not by words of human wisdom, but by the powerful demonstration of the Spirit. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the LORD." Zech. 4:6.

## The Meal Offering

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In the meat offering [or meal offering], we have the personal, human perfection of Christ, fully tried up to the fire of death, proving by God's holy nature and sweet savor, the result - not leaven, not honey or nature in its sweetness, but perfect unleavened humanity, begotten sinless by the power of the Holy Ghost, anointed with it, sinless humanity moved by the Holy Ghost absolutely toward God, and never swerving till the last cup was drunk, which could test its perfection of nature, motive, and objects, and then His soul remitted into Father's hands. The burnt offering was devoted humanity. the meat offering, tested humanity - the one with sin in view about it, the other proving there was none in it, perfectly tried and every grace absolute in its perfection as offered to God.

## The Meaning of Being Crafty

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The expression, "Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile" (2 Cor. 12:16), is the low insult which "deceitful workers" insinuated among the Corinthian saints, to defame the Apostle and exalt themselves. They dared to say that if the Apostle did not burden them directly, he all the more craftily reaped what he could through Titus and others. None fall into such depths of baseness as self-seeking Christian professors. In short then this expression is the language not of the Apostle, but of his adversaries, whom he exposes for our admonition; and he calls speaking about himself, "folly," because it was not about Christ but himself; but for the brethren's sake he was compelled to.

## Naaman the Syrian: a Mighty Man of Valor and a Leper

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Evangelists have ever delighted to expatiate upon this striking story of grace. There is not therefore a more familiar incident in all the range of Scripture. It would, however, be a great mistake to conclude on this account that we have learned all the lessons it was intended to convey; indeed, the danger is ever to be avoided of supposing that we fully comprehend any portion of the Word of God.

Touching Naaman himself, it is evident that he is a type of man at his best estate; or, to speak more exactly, he is presented first according to the estimate of man, and then according to that of God. Three personal particulars are emphasized. He was a "great man"; he was also a successful man, and "honorable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria." And he enjoyed a good repute from his own personal qualities - "He was also a mighty man of valor" (v. 1). These three things in combination give a perfect human picture, and would make their possessor the object of admiration or envy in any worldly circle. Naaman in the eyes of his fellows would have attained the summit of human ambition. The world had nothing left to give to this valiant, successful, and rewarded soldier. He ought therefore, if it were possible, to have been a supremely happy man.

But looking at Naaman from God's point of view, judging him according to God's estimate, what is the result? It is summed up in one word—he was a leper. Ah, how sad the contrast between God's thoughts and man's! The one whom men admire and envy is pronounced by God to be a poor leper: "For there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Rom. 3:22, 23. The leprosy is the type of the evil in the flesh, which has broken out and covered the whole man with the pollution and guilt of sin. Naaman thus, as seen of God, is nothing but a poor, guilty sinner; and just because he is such, he is the fitting object of God's sovereign grace and mercy.

It is evident, it may be remarked in passing, that we have in the whole narrative a foreshadowing of this dispensation. One sentence, indeed, in the first verse reveals it. It says that the Lord had been working by Naaman on behalf of Syria - Syria, the open enemy of the people of God. This shows the awful condition into which Israel had fallen, and doubtless prefigures the times of the Gentiles. This fact gives a special character to the dealings of God with Naaman, as recorded in this chapter.

First then, we have man as a sinner, and thereon we have the messenger with the glad tidings of salvation. Two remarks may be made upon the second point. First, the messenger of blessing to Naaman. It was a little maid, brought away captive from the land of Israel, and she waited on Naaman's wife. She was therefore, as to her position, humble, and if not despised, yet of no account in the esteem of the world. Thus it ever is in the day of grace. The preacher of the gospel, if he occupies his true place, must ever be lowly and mean in the presence of the pride of man. An apostle could say, "We are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." 1 Cor. 4:13. That this maiden was of the chosen people, may well prefigure Israel's

mission to the Gentiles in a future day. Then, second, there is the message. If but simple and brief, it is yet the announcement made by our Lord to the woman of Samaria. The little maid says, "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy." v. 3. The Lord said, "Salvation is of the Jews." John 4:22. The message is one and the same. Nay, it is even Paul's also; for he speaks of the "gospel of God... concerning His Son... which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh," etc. (Rom. 1:1-4).

The message was not in vain. Naaman went in and told his lord; and from this point we have traced out the path of a soul from darkness to light. The first effect of the gospel he had heard was seen in his desire to possess the proffered blessing. It met his need in that it held out to him the promise of being cured of his leprosy. But immediately, as is the case with numberless

souls, he falls into the error of supposing that he could earn, or purchase, the coveted blessing. Grace is never understood by the natural man. Naaman prepares himself with a letter from the king, ten talents of silver, six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment. Surely, with the influence of a king at his back, and with so much money, he will be successful in his quest. Ah! do we not all remember when we acted on the same principle, only to find ourselves in a worse plight than ever.

The next mistake he makes is in applying to the king of Israel. The king, as the responsible head of God's people, ought to have been the channel of blessing. That he was not, only reveals the nation's state; and that the king did not know where blessing is to be found, showed his own apostate condition. But neither the state of the nation nor the ignorance of the king can prevent the outflow of grace to this poor Gentile. God will glorify Himself in spite, yea, in the midst, of His people's failure.

When Elisha, the man of God, "heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel." v. 8. Elisha in his ministry is a type, in one aspect, of the power of Christ in resurrection. Anointed to be prophet in the room of Elijah (1 Kings 19:16), the mantle of Elijah, with a "double portion" of his spirit, fell upon him from his master when ascending to heaven in a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2:9-11). He therefore, in his ministry, became the sole channel of blessing to those whose hearts grace might open in the midst of idolatrous Israel.

In response to the message of the prophet, "Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha." The leper is bent upon obtaining the blessing; but it is evident that he is not yet in a condition to receive it. Horses and chariots are ever in Scripture the symbols of pomp and pride. Naaman, therefore, will have to go down, down much lower, ere he can be healed. He has learned that the influence of the king was of no avail, and now he must be taught that his own rank and grandeur are obstacles rather than aids; for there is no respect of persons with God. But since he has come to the door of Elisha, whatever the state of his soul, the message of salvation cannot be withheld. He was a seeking soul, and such are never repelled. "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." The prophet could not go out to Naaman, for that would have been to falsify their respective positions; but he sends out to him this gracious announcement of the means of healing and cure.

Mark the effect - "Naaman was wroth." And why? First, because Elisha had not treated him with greater personal consideration. Sitting outside in his chariot, he thought that the prophet would have come out to him, and then and there called upon the name of the Lord his God, and moved his hand up and down (see margin) over the place, and recovered the leper (v. 11). Naaman, as the leper, would have Elisha cure him as his servant. Ah, no! The sinner must take the place of the suppliant - yea, as having nothing and deserving nothing - before he can be a recipient of grace. Besides, who was Naaman to dictate to the prophet the method in which he should proceed? It is ever the same; the sinner expects to be saved in his way.

But Naaman is offended in another respect. Why should he be required to go to the Jordan? Abana, Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, his own country, were far "better than all the waters of Israel" in his estimation; might he not wash in them and be clean? These rivers represent the sources of earth, and thus teach us that Naaman was willing to be cured in a human rather than in a divine way. In other words, like many a poor sinner since, he would be reformed rather than be born again. How many fall into this snare! They will accept the necessity of a moral change, but not of the new birth; for the first makes everything of man, while the last makes everything of God. So Naaman will not be healed on such terms, and he "went away in a rage" (v. 12).

His servants now step upon the scene. Who they were, we know not; but whoever they were, they had divine intelligence. "My father," say they, "if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?" v. 13. These words - words which need to be used again and again wherever the gospel is preached - were carried home with power. The strong, proud man is now humbled, and he went down "and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God." v. 14.

Jordan signifies death; and the meaning of Naaman's act is simply this: he bowed under the just judgment of God against man's sin - he accepted death as the expression of God's righteous judgment upon the sinner, and, in that he dipped himself seven times, we are taught that he did it without reserve - perfectly, if you will - acknowledging to the full, God's claims upon him, and bowing before the sentence of death which He had passed upon the sinner. It was the submission of the sinner to the rights of a holy God. As a consequence - for it will be remembered that Elisha acts in the power of Christ in resurrection, and therefore in the efficacy of His death before God - grace flows out without let or hindrance. Naaman's flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. He was, as it were, born again through the water of the Word (which brings death to all that we were as men in the flesh) and by the power of the Holy Ghost. God had met and blessed Naaman in the exercise of His sovereign grace (see Luke 4:27); for the moment Naaman dipped himself under the water of death, God was free to act according to His own heart of love and compassion.

There follow several distinct evidences of the change which Naaman had undergone. A brief indication of these will suffice. First, "He returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him." v. 15. Formerly, as we have noticed, he remained at the door of the prophet; now the horses and chariot have disappeared, and he stands before Elisha. In other words, he took a low place - for to stand in the presence of another is, in the East, to take the place of a servant. The humility of Naaman thus revealed the change. Second, he confessed with

his mouth. Having believed with

his heart, he now confessed with his mouth the God of Israel. Third, he desired to express his gratitude to Elisha, though the prophet could not, without falsifying grace, receive the blessing at Naaman's hands. Fourth, he purposes - whatever his ignorance - to be a worshiper; or rather, he is constrained by the sense of what he has received to say that henceforth he would only sacrifice unto the Lord. Last, he has an exercised heart. The worship of the true God and of idols cannot coexist. Naaman at once feels this - that the knowledge and worship of the true God must of necessity exclude all recognition of false gods. Hence he speaks to Elisha of his difficulty in regard to his attendance upon his master in the house of Rimmon. That which makes everything manifest is light; and the true character of the worship of Rimmon thus stands now revealed to Naaman's soul. What can he do? He must go with his master; so much would be his duty. He therefore seeks to pacify his conscience, to soothe his exercised soul, by saying, "The LORD pardon thy servant in this thing."

It has occasioned surprise to many that the reply of Elisha should be, "Go in peace." But not for one moment must it be supposed that this contains an implied sanction upon Naaman's entering the house of Rimmon. By no means. The prophet, with divine wisdom which we would do well to imitate, refuses to anticipate the difficulty. He saw that Naaman was exercised; and he knew that if Naaman felt the difficulty before he left his presence, he would feel it more by the time he arrived in Syria. This answer meant, Depart in peace; He who has so graciously met you will still be with you and will give you grace and strength when the need arises. In other words, he committed and commended him to the Lord; and we may feel quite sure that Naaman never entered the house of Rimmon.

The incident closes with the sad and lamentable conduct of Gehazi. With a heart untouched by the exhibition of God's grace and power toward this stranger, he only thought how he might use him to his own selfish ends. Covetous, he by deceit and falsehood obtained what he sought, without concern that by his wicked conduct he might be confusing Naaman's conceptions of grace, and thus be dishonoring the God of Israel. His sinful act might make the Syrian think that after all the gift of God could be paid for, if not purchased. Hence the severity of the punishment which fell upon him. "The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed forever."

## The Nature and Pathway of the Lord Jesus

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In all things Jesus was perfect, and in nothing more than this, that He, knowing all things, the end from the beginning, came down into a scene where He tasted rejection at every step - rejection not merely as a babe when He was carried into Egypt, but rejection all through a life of the most blameless yet divinely ordered obscurity. Then His ministry excited growing hatred on man's part. There is nothing a man more dreads than to be nothing at all. Even to be spoken against is not so dreadful to the poor proud spirit of man as to be absolutely unnoticed; and yet the very much greater part of the life of Jesus was spent in this entire obscurity. We have but a single incident recorded of Jesus from His earliest years until He emerges for the ministry of the Word of God and the gospel of the kingdom. But then He lived in Nazareth, proverbially the lowest of poor despised Galilee - so much so that even a godly Galilean wondered if any good thing could come out of Nazareth. Such was Jesus; but more than this.

When Jesus did enter on the publicity of divine testimony, there too He met opposition, though at first there was a welcome which would have gratified most men; yea, servants of God. But He the Son, the divine Person who was pleased to serve in this world, saw through that which would have been sweet to others when they, astonished and attracted, hung on the gracious words that fell from His lips. And how soon a dark cloud passed over it! For even that selfsame day in which men heard such words as had never fallen on the ears of man, miserable and infatuated, they could not endure the grace of God; and had they been left to themselves, they would have cast Him down headlong from the precipice outside their city (Luke 4:29). Such man was and is. How truly all that was fair was but as the morning cloud and early dew. But Jesus, we see, accepts a ministry of which He knew from the first the character, course, and results, perfectly aware that the more divine grace and truth were brought out by Him, the sterner rejection He should meet among men.

## No Confidence in the Flesh

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The history of Saul shows how far one can go on with God and in favor of His people by an energy which after all is fleshly. The history shows how Saul was put to the test and how God was with him in a certain sense, for He gave him another heart - not conversion, of course - so that he became another man; and yet all that is brought out in result is, how far flesh can go in pursuing the objects of God and where it all ends! It is a very solemn account, but it is what is presented in the history of Saul. It shows how far the flesh can act even under the direction of God, which Saul did until his own will began to act, and then he could despise even Samuel himself.

## Our Nothingness

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We often own our nothingness to God in strong language; but when we have done praying we are apt to forget it, and to depend entirely on ourselves.

## The Path of Faith

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It is written, "Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird"; yet such is the folly of men that we often walk into snares when we see them plainly before us in our path. We are so infatuated that we run into our favorite snares with our eyes open, though perhaps determining not to be held, but to struggle out of them. Our present weakness is not sufficiently realized to keep us from confidence in future strength. Then our feet become entangled, our race impeded, and we discover too late that the God of strength has refused to accompany us into the snare - He has been left behind, and we stand alone against the enemy. Oh! that we were wise! Oh! that we had grace to be resolute, to turn aside from pits into which our weakness has caused us to fall again and again.

The wise man, speaking of temptation (which is true of all temptations), says, "Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." How wise not to parley with the old serpent, for its arguments are most ingenious; we should resist him "steadfast in the faith" (1 Pet. 5:9) - resist him as Christ did, by the Word of God as the sole guide for our conduct. May we examine ourselves in this. May we see to it that nothing impedes our race, weakens our faith, or prevents our obedience. Let us be honest with ourselves, and in earnest with God. Let us treasure no Babylonish garment (Josh. 7:21), however goodly. Let us sanctify ourselves; for if there be an accursed thing (Josh. 7:1) hid in our hearts, we shall not be able to stand in the day of trial. We lose much time in our progress by needing such repeated lessons on each truth. When we should have been wise, we were often found foolish.

## The Path of Faith: Hebrews 11

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Heb. 11

We must remember that faith begins with God, and he who is walking really in a path of faith always brings God in, and this is the difference between it and unbelief; unbelief always leaves Him out. Again, faith is the individual soul alone with God, and any intervention of a third party destroys it. Any acting from secondary motives is not faith. It must be God and His Word alone before the soul for the act to be an act of faith.

Faith grows. This can be learned in the history of the children of God, and as detailed in Heb. 11 To bring God into everything is the privilege now of His children. There is nothing too small in our daily path for Him to notice who has numbered even the hairs of our head. It is this bringing God into all our matters that produces the walk, the life of faith, and which is the subject of the chapter I have referred to.

And it is just this bringing God into our matters that reveals to us the true character of them; for "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." Thus this, by becoming the continual habit of the soul, becomes at once a preserving power for it in the midst of all the darkness and unbelief of our natural hearts.

The principle for the Christian now is found in the words, "He endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." We must see God in everything.

In the examples of Heb. 11, we see they reckoned on God. This is faith and this characterizes each one. In Abel's act, God's claim is admitted, and in the sacrifice, Abel confesses that he merited death as the sinner. He comes in the provided way and is accepted, "God testifying of his gifts." So God is before Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and Moses, and the others. This settled everything for each in his day.

It is important just simply to grasp what real faith is, that it begins with God, and continues to have to do with God, and that it is intensely individual. We are glad and thankful to find others in the path of faith with us; but this having always to do with God now individually is the power to sustain us still going on in the path if others fail us, and still produces the works seen in a life of faith. When a trial comes, if there has not been this individual intercourse with God, it is often found that we have been merely imitators of others. We then, like Ephraim, "being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle" (Psalm 78:9). But if we have been in the habit of bringing God in, we shall turn to Him in the day of battle, and turning to Him is not turning our back to the enemy.

"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." 1 John 5:4.

## Patient Waiting on God

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Waiting on God is the subject of this psalm. It implies dependence and confidence, and both in such sort that we abide God's time: dependence, because we cannot do anything without Him, and ought not, because what He does is what the soul alone desires, because action without Him, even in self-defense, is only the action of our own will, and so our being without God so far. Saul did not wait upon God. He waited nearly seven days; but if he had felt he was dependent, and nothing could be done without God, he would have done nothing till Samuel came. He did not; he acted for himself and lost the kingdom. Deliverance from God is sweet; it is love; it is righteous, holy deliverance; it becomes the revelation of the favor and grace of God. It is perfect in time, way, and place. So where the soul waits for it, the will not being at work, it meets and enjoys the deliverance in this perfection; and we are perfect and complete in the will of God. But it implies confidence too; for why should we wait if God would not come in? The soul is thus sustained meanwhile. And this confidence is such that we tarry the Lord's leisure. Patience has its perfect work, so that we should be perfect and complete in all the will of God. There is too an active reckoning upon God. But this leaves the soul absolutely and exclusively waiting on Him. It is not active for itself; it waits only upon God. ("Truly" in verse 1, and "only" in verses 2, 4, 5, and 6 is the same word in Hebrew.)

The two points connected with it show the state of soul: "From Him cometh my salvation"; "My expectation is from Him." He only is the rock and salvation; so the confiding soul waits for Him, and seeks no other refuge - looks for deliverance only from Him. Hence, in principle (in fact, in Christ), the heart is perfect in its confidence, and meets in dependence the perfection of God; it accepts nothing but that, because it is assured that God is perfect and will act perfectly in the right time. Faith corresponds thus to the perfection of God. On the other hand, there is no working of self-will at all, no acceptance or saving of self by an intervention inferior in its nature to God Himself. This makes patient waiting on God a principle of immense moment. It characterizes faith in the Psalms, and so Christ Himself.

But there are a few points yet to remark. "Trust in Him at all times." There is constancy in this confidence, and constancy in all circumstances. If I look morally to Him, He is always competent, always the same; He does not change. I cannot act without Him, if I believe that He is only perfect in His ways. But, note, this does not suppose there is not exercise and trial of heart; or indeed waiting upon God would not have to be called for. But if God is faithful and awaits the time suited to the truth and His own character, so that His ways should be perfect, He is full of goodness and tender love to those who wait upon Him. He calls upon them to pour out their hearts before Him. How truly was this the case with Christ too! How in John 12, and above all in Gethsemane, He poured out His heart before God! God is always a refuge; He acts in the right time. He is always a refuge for the heart; and the heart realizes what He is when the deliverance is not come; and in some respects this is more precious than the deliverance itself. But it supposes integrity.

But yet another point. The effect of thus waiting upon God's deliverance is to make us know that it will be perfect and complete when it does come. "I shall not be moved." He had to wait, indeed, till God came in in perfection; but then His power secured from all. Man may think there is a resource in man, or in what man possesses, or in man's strength of will; but power, faith knows, belongs to God. The last verse shows that the soul is looking to the perfect divine righteousness of God's ways, but in the sense of integrity. The final intervention of God, the judgment He executes, will be the deliverance of the righteous. He has identified himself with God's ways on earth in heart, and waited till God makes them good, perfectly good, in power. But this will be the end of evil, and mercy to those who have sought good, and waited for God to avenge them. It will be a righteous reward to the expecting righteous man; his waiting will be met, and the power of evil set aside. In this path we have to walk. God deals so now in government, though not in its final accomplishment; but we have thus to count and wait upon Him.

## Paul As a Pattern

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The Apostle Paul is the pattern of all who are called and converted now, though they may not come up to the pattern. All the feebleness of Christian life is traceable to want of perfection of foundation - it is not according to the pattern. A great many saints who are wishing to get on and do not, would find out why if they would compare their foundation with the pattern. They are satisfied with an acquisition that meets their own necessities. That is a poor thing. I want to reach that which it is the mind and purpose of the living God to give me. Paul and Paul's gospel are the pattern of that. You become partakers of the grace that would make you up to the pattern, or you are not a Christian at all. That grace, if you do not hinder it, will bring you up to it.

Turn to Acts and you will see what Paul was appointed to do - to be a minister and witness of those things which he had seen. On his way to Damascus, a light shone suddenly round about him, and Jesus was revealed to him in the glory. That is what he saw - Jesus in the glory. Simple it was, but its reception involves the most wondrous consequences. We all admit that man is naturally at a distance from God, not on terms of intimacy, and that he ought to be. Nothing is so condemnatory to man.

An awakened conscience wants that distance removed, and the first thought is that of Cain - "I must repair it." Of course the offender is the one who ought to do so, but man cannot. It must be done by one not under the penalty which is on him. God can do it through the intervention of Christ; but the intervention, even of Christ must be from God's side, not man's. Do you understand the nature and object of God? Christ came out to declare it. Satan has been trying to darken the knowledge of God from the beginning. Until you know what God is in His own essential nature, you are not on the right foundation. Having to do with God in His own nature is the only solid, unshifting foundation for the soul. "The only begotten Son,... He hath declared Him," disclosed an unknown subject, the heart of God. God in His own nature is essentially love. Who knew it? No one but His own Son, and He came to do His will, and He knew His heart toward poor, lost sinners in the world; and what was His will? That His heart should be set free to take His prodigals to His arms, to express itself in its own mighty love. He was found in fashion as a man; and as the exponent of the heart of God, He carried out His love, which was a love forever. Like the certain Samaritan, he to whom he became a neighbor needed no other neighbor after; he took the whole charge of him. Now God is free in the strength of righteousness to open His heart.

God gives me the gift of eternal life. Not merely does He bring me to heaven, but that gift is the expression of the love of God. The glory is opened, and the One who has accomplished the purpose of God in redemption is seen in it. God's satisfaction for sin is thus revealed to Paul, and the glory shone out on Paul, and not a word was said of the sort of man he had been. In another place he says that the more he looked into it the more like it he grew. Remember, Paul is the pattern, and we have to look at Jesus as Paul saw Him. Every one of you who knows Him at all, knows Him in the glory, for it is there He is. There is not a particle of light that reaches the soul that is not the light of the glory of God. We ought to have the sense of it; but whether we know it or not

does not change the wondrous fact. What is the gospel? Why, that you have a Savior in the glory. Where will you get rest to your soul? Go to the glory. Where get full satisfaction for your soul? Go to the glory, for you have a Savior there, and only there. If Christ had done only all that was required of me, it would have been but human righteousness. But He did the Father's whole will and finished His work. (See John 4.)

It was God's work that Paul should be saved. We have such a low idea of what the gospel is, that we think it is merely that Christ has come to save from judgment. That is not it; but God desired to have such as I am in the very nearest circle of glory to Himself, and none but Christ could bring it about; and He was ready to do it. After conversion, Paul was a pattern still (Phil. 3). He wanted to get back to the sphere of what he had seen - "I press toward the mark for the prize," etc. Where my history began, there it ends. The Lord grant that our hearts may be exercised to know what God is in Himself. His heart has been satisfied to the full by His own Son. It is easy for me to travel into all the regions of the glory of God if I have entered it from the right side - the love of God. All Christian truth is compromised if we have not the full foundation. The Lord rests in the magnitude of His love.

## The Philippian Jailer's Salvation: Abridged

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"What must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Acts 16:30, 31.

There was a time in the life of every Christian when he was unconverted, for we were all "by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2:3). What an awful condition it is to be unsaved! and yet how many are careless about it! The jailer at Philippi was unsaved; but when he felt the reality of the state he was in, he cried out for salvation and found it, to the joy and rejoicing of his heart.

Many persons are really ignorant of the terrible danger they are in; they see not the precipice on which they stand; they perceive not the brittle thread by which they are suspended; they know not that they live on the very threshold of eternity; they feel not that they are distant from God, rebellious against God, guilty before God; therefore they are not anxious about salvation. They may think of outward propriety before men, of religious forms, ordinances, and the like; but they are not concerned about salvation from the wrath to come. The Bible, however, speaks to us of salvation. The grace of God brings salvation. The gospel is a message from God to men about salvation. Jesus Himself preached salvation. He said to a weeping woman at His feet, "Thy faith hath saved thee"; and to a repentant publican, "This day is salvation come to this house." Paul exultingly exclaimed, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Rom. 1:16. Those who received the gospel in apostolic times knew that they were saved; they realized a present salvation; they regarded themselves and their fellow believers as saved.

With regard to the Philippian jailer, we know little of his former history. From the few materials we have, we may gather that he was diligent in his calling. It is very likely that he had heard something of Paul's ways, if he had not heard of the conversion and baptism of Lydia and others. He knew also why Paul and Silas were imprisoned, and appears not only to have acquiesced in the propriety of punishing and restraining such men, but also of preventing, as far as possible, a recurrence of their preaching. They were brought to the prison with a charge that he would "keep them safely"; but that we might know that they had then no favor in the jailer's eyes, we are told that he "thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks." This is enough to show us the condition of his heart. Like a thorough man of the world, he appears to have retired to bed that night with as much unconcern as on any other occasion. All that he heard and saw of the servants of the Lord Jesus was insufficient to awaken his dark mind and arouse his conscience. But God had a purpose of blessing in store for him. God's eye was upon him for good. God's good pleasure was to glorify His own name, in making the wrath of man to praise Him, and hiding pride from man. The holy, godly testimony of faithful ministers had not impressed his heart; therefore other means must be used to alarm his benighted soul. That jailer, who had so cruelly thrust them into the dungeon and chained them to the stocks, must yet be brought to fall before them and acknowledge them as the servants of the Most High; and Paul and Silas, who appeared to be

interrupted in the faithful discharge of their gospel ministry, were also to prove that, like their Master, each step of cruelty and oppression turned out for the furtherance of God's purposes of grace, and only led them forward in the path of true service, and not out of it. Their midnight prayer and praise, too, seem to indicate that they were in the lively attitude of faith, and in full expectation of the blessing of the Lord.

But there is something very solemn in this period of the jailer's history, for it seems to tell us that if men reject the quiet, holy testimony of the servants of Christ, God has other means of bringing down man's lofty looks. God's power is unlimited, both in mercy and judgment. In this case it was to be made bare in grace. He who smote Saul of Tarsus with blindness, and brought him to the Savior's feet, could also bring the jailer there. That all-powerful arm might justly have been lifted up with the sword of vengeance and, piercing the heart of that man who had dared to chain the feet of His dear servants, have at once hurled him to the pit of destruction; but mercy rejoiced against judgment.

In the darkness and stillness of the night, without any warning whatever, a tremendous convulsion threatened to raze the whole building to the ground, and to bury every inmate in its ruins. We are told that "suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken:.. and every one's bands were loosed." This was God's way of showing that He is greater than man. This was Mercy's way of bringing salvation to that house, and of honoring the Lord's faithful, suffering servants. This was the very weapon that would arouse the hard and unfeeling jailer. He awoke out of sleep; his conscience owned it as God's dispensation. His first feeling was of despair and self-destruction. When he saw the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had all fled, he drew his sword and would have killed himself. His heart sank; terror filled his mind; his imagination drew the most hopeless conclusion, and Satan's last effort with him was the foul suggestion, "Kill thyself." A loud voice, however, suddenly altered his judgment and produced an instantaneous revolution in his mind. Are not all the prisoners gone? No. "Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." This was the sweet and heavenly way that Paul took with his jailer. It was returning good for evil, and kindness to one who had treated him cruelly.

But there was more than this. The jailer's conscience was awakened; a crowd of solemn thoughts pressed upon his mind. The convulsion of an earthquake might have consigned him at once to a dark eternity; another shock and he might be called to give account of himself to God. He is assured that Paul and Silas have that peace and joy to which he is a stranger, and that they are the servants of God. He feels now that he is an unsaved man, that if he die, he must go where hope and mercy never can come. His case is urgent, his danger imminent, his position most perilous; for he now knows that he has been sleeping on the edge of a fearful precipice. Not a moment then can be lost. A light! a light! he cried. His very joints are loose, and every fiber of his body seems to quiver. Salvation, salvation is the longing of his whole soul. He springs at once into the inner prison and, falling down before these servants of the Lord Jesus, cries out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

It was salvation that occupied the jailer's whole soul - nothing less than salvation - not religious ceremonies, but salvation. What must I do to be saved? This, too, is the anxious inquiry of every truly enlightened soul; and we need not go to commentators or learned doctors for a correct

answer to the question, for the Scriptures plainly tell us. The apostolic reply was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." This was the gospel that Paul and Silas preached, and it was an echo of their Master's voice; for when He was asked the question, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." John 6:28, 29.

The gospel then preached to this awakened sinner of the Gentiles Was salvation 'by faith. The jailer's thought, like many others, was that salvation was by works; what must I do? But Paul and Silas assured him that he could be saved only in the way of faith. They presented the Lord Jesus Christ to him as the object of faith - and His finished work, and God's acceptance of it, as the ground of salvation and the warrant for perfect peace - "thou shalt be saved." This is very simple and commends itself to the confidence of an anxious enquirer. The gospel really excludes all idea of creature-doing for salvation, because it testifies that Jesus, the Son of God, has so completely finished the work of our redemption, so thoroughly purged our sins, that He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, the rightful Lord of heaven and earth, and that all who believe on Him have at once an eternal interest in that blessed work.

What could man do for salvation? Nothing; it is done already, and we have the warrant of God's word to receive and enjoy it by faith - "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Faith reads the lessons of redeeming love in the death of the Son of God upon the cross; and those who can say, "We have known and believed the love that God bath to us," have peace; they see that God's love has brought salvation to them, even when sinners, in the cross of His Son; and, knowing He is now risen from the dead, they approach God with confidence. And who so thoroughly reject the gospel, display self-ignorance, and despise the unsearchable riches of divine love as those who talk of doing for salvation? "Where is boasting?" said the Apostle. "It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Rom. 3:27, 28. Blessed gospel for a sin-convicted, heavy-laden sinner!

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation and, when received into the heart, it brings forth fruit. This we should expect when a sinner is brought to know that he is saved. Who is so grateful, so dutiful, so happy, so free! Some hear the truth of the gospel, and the only apparent effect is, that it hardens them. This was not the case with Lydia, for her heart was opened, that she attended to the word ministered by Paul; and so the jailer, for his whole soul was filled with anxiety; he therefore received the truth at once in the love of it, and its effects were most manifest.

With what intense interest the trembling jailer must have listened to those servants of the Lord while they declared to him the way of salvation! and what grateful surprise must have filled his heart at hearing that the way was so simple, so free, so full of blessing, and so suited to a lost, helpless sinner! It at once engaged his attention and made him long to hear more about such glorious tidings; and soon all his household was brought together, though at midnight, and became attentive listeners to Paul and Silas while they further opened up to them the riches of divine grace. The energetic, determined jailer who only a few hours before had so rudely thrust them into the inner prison, regardless of their lacerated backs, now sat like a little child as an anxious enquirer at their feet, and gathered others to partake also of the blessings of the gospel

"They spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house."

Among the first effects, then, of the jailer's reception of the gospel of Christ, was his love for the truth, in a child-like inquiring mind, and concern for the spiritual welfare of others. The good news of salvation by Christ had been so applied to his conscience by the Holy Spirit, that it came to him as cold water to a thirsty soul, and he was immediately like a dead man raised to life. He had an ear -to hear, a mind to understand, a heart to receive and love and desire more and more the sincere milk of the Word, and such a sense of its value, that he wished others to receive the same blessed gospel.

The next thing we may notice among the fruits of faith is his love to the Lord's servants. He is begotten by the word of truth, and is thoroughly changed in his ways; he has passed from death to life - therefore he loves the brethren. A few hours before, he saw nothing more in Paul and Silas to call forth affection and sympathy than in the other prisoners; but now he views everything with new eyes. Having received the word of truth, the gospel of the grace of God, he loves not only Him that begat, but them also that are begotten of Him; hence we are told that he took Paul and Silas "the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes... and... brought them into his house," and "set meat before them." This was blessed. This was a fine example of the fruit of the Spirit, and it proved the sincerity of his profession; for it was not love in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth. Love is a vital point. Religious profession without a loving heart toward Christ and His members is like a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. The Apostle John declares that, whatever any man may profess, "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." 1 John 3:14. But in the jailer's case, the entrance of God's word had given light; it had given understanding to the simple; it had by the Spirit quickened him when dead in sins. He thus had divine life; therefore there was divine love, fruit in season, and self-denial for the sake of Christ's servants.

But more than this, he carried out the mind of the Lord - he "was baptized." This Paul and Silas perhaps set before him, and it came with authority to his conscience, because the love of Christ constrained him. His heart was full. His whole soul was influenced by the atoning death of Christ, and the power of His resurrection. Faith does not argue; it simply believes and acts on God's word. Nor was the jailer alone in this; the whole congregation, even all his household, were also baptized. Hence we see that there was not merely a confession of faith, but the obedience of faith - not only an attentive ear to listen to the word of the Lord, but a grateful response in doing the will of the Lord. There was not only love and peace now animating the jailer's soul, there was joy also - he "rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." This seems to complete the picture.

## Pius XII Will - Apostolic Succession: the Editor's Column

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A news item in a Jewish weekly paper (B'nai B'rith, Los Angeles, October 28, 1958) concerning the death of Pope Pius XII is worthy of note: "Students of theology in Protestant and other seminaries, in appraising the last will and testament of Pope Pius XII, have expressed amazement at the fact that the late Pope never once referred to the founder of Christianity or mentioned any of his numerous titles. Instead, he opened his will with this Old Testament Davidic plea": "Miserere mei, Deus, secundum miseri-cordiam tuam." This is translated as "Have pity on me, God, according to thy mercy" - Time, October 20, 1958. Perhaps Psalm 51:1 is the verse that the quotation was from.

What a sad commentary on Christendom when the lofty ruler of the largest segment of the profession of Christianity should at such a time neglect any mention of the Lord Jesus Christ and revert to the dismal cry for mercy which is found in the Psalm before the great work of atonement for sins was accomplished! If the supreme head of that vast system dies in such darkness, what is there for the poor communicant? Another evidence of the darkness of the papal system was found in the action of Eugene Tisserant, dean of the College of Cardinals, who sprinkled "holy water" over the mortal remains of the late Pontiff and besought the Lord to grant peace to his soul. The simplest believer is entitled to have now and ever "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." A prayer that a dead man might have it in death is a denial of the whole fabric of Christianity as revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

When the new Pope was elected by the cardinals, Nicola Cardinal Canali, prodean of the college, made a public announcement to the assembled throng, "I announce to you tidings of great joy. We have a Pope." Is this a paraphrase of those "tidings of great joy" which were announced to the shepherds on that night long ago in the plains of Judea? If so, there is no comparison, but a desecration of that which by right belongs to One only - the Son of God who came into this world.

The confusion regarding the line of popes (as mentioned last month) was emphasized when various publications referred to the new Pope as the 262nd, and others the 263rd. No doubt it is hard to tell.

Then when Angelo Cardinal Roncali became Pope and assumed the title of John XXIII more confusion ensued. It was widely publicized that not since 1334 had the Catholic Church had a Pope John, but they did have another John XXIII; he was consecrated Pope in May 1410 and died in May 1415. Evidently the Roman hierarchy has recently decided he was not a legitimate Pope, so must have been an "antipope." But the Catholic Encyclopedia, available in public libraries in the United States, lists this John XXIII as the 207th Pope and gives the date of his reign from 1410 to 1415. This encyclopedia had for its "Imprimatur" John Cardinal Farley of New York, and for its censor, Remy Lafort, S.T.D. Other lists also give this Pope John XXIII as a legitimate Pope; and John Milner, a noted Roman ecclesiastic and historian (1752-1826), said of the 15th century, "The succession of popes continued through this century, though, among numerous difficulties and dissensions, in the following order: Innocent VII., Gregory XII., Alexander V., John XXIII., Martin

V.," etc. So, is the present Pope the 23rd or 24th John? or what number?

Surely there is nothing more certain than that apostolic succession is not a fact, but the merest fable. There was no descent from Peter or any other apostle, nor was one ever needed. The fundamental claims of Roman Catholicism will not stand scrutiny. And when we read of all the pomp and ceremony of making a supposed successor to Peter, with three crowns on his head and people down in humble obeisance to a man, we are amazed at the departure from the Christianity of Peter, Paul, and John. What would they say to all this? It all savors of Judaism and not of the simple Christianity at the beginning. Is it any wonder if the peace and joy believers then knew is gone and the darkness of the day of Judaistic foreshadows prevalent?

For us, however, who know the Lord Jesus Christ as our own personal Savior and can say with Scripture, "We know," in answer to all matters of our eternal destiny, we should have much compassion on those who have not "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." O that many may have their eyes opened to the finished work of the Lord Jesus and thus pass out of darkness into the full light of day! But how many there are who are blinded to eternal verities by the dazzle and splendor of religion! Was this not even so in Jerusalem in the days of the Lord Jesus? Religion had such a magnificent marble temple that even the disciples were awed by it. There was also impressive ritual in the religion of the day, while those few disciples in an upper room presented a striking contrast. So slow were even true Christians to appreciate a rejected Christ and forsake the earthly system that the Apostle Paul wrote by the Spirit,

"Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." Heb. 13:13. May we not hanker after the glitter of religion, but "rejoice in Christ Jesus" who is now on the throne of God.

The article, beginning on page 313 of this issue, entitled, "Did Christ Build His Church Upon Peter?" is a further examination of the dogma of the Roman Catholic Church. It will soon be available in tract form.

A continuation of our examination of dispensationalism from page 280 -October issue.

Utter confusion is indicated in Dr. Ladd's book when the subject of the "first resurrection" is mentioned. Its author will not allow that there are different parts to the first resurrection, that the first resurrection is one of character rather than of a single instance of time. But to begin with, the whole point of Christ's resurrection as the firstfruits is overlooked - "Christ the firstfruits." Did He not rise first, and then did not a sample of the saints come forth out of their graves as visible evidence of the power of His resurrection? This is entirely overlooked. Did not this also have to do with the first resurrection? Then the resurrection of the believers at His call from the air, according to 1 Cor. 15 and 1 Thess. 4, is surely the major portion of the first resurrection; but this is summarily rejected. In its place, Rev. 20:4-6 is brought forward as the one and only installment of the first resurrection. But let us examine this portion: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them." Who are these? Not those about to be raised! To understand who they are, we need to go back into the previous chapter; the ones mentioned there are the armies that follow the Son of Man out of heaven. These are now seen occupying thrones. In Dan. 7:9, the prophet saw the thrones placed, but not yet occupied. Here, the Apostle sees them occupied, and we know that the Lord will be the supreme center and will be the One to act in judgment; but when that time comes, the resurrected saints of all ages and the changed and

translated saints of this age will reign with Him. The saints previously seen in heaven will have come forth with Him to judge.

But let us look at the next statement of the verse: "and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God." Now mark it clearly, John did not say he saw the souls that were beheaded, for that might mean that he saw the persons in their bodies; but he plainly states he saw "the souls of them that were beheaded." These are souls separate from the bodies. Compare this group with those mentioned in Rev. 6:9: "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." Here is the same group. Their bodies were in the graves, and their souls were in heaven; they had been martyred during the tribulation because of their testimony. These were most likely martyred by the false and oppressing church during the first 3 1/2 years - they were Jews, in all probability. They had the testimony of the book of Revelation - "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Now John also sees the souls of another martyr group - those who had "not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark." When John saw the souls under the altar, in chapter 6, they were told that they would have to wait a little season until their fellow servants and brethren should be killed. Now the second group of martyrs is revealed; their souls too are in heaven. The careful distinction between the two groups is lost in the King James Version, but the A.R.V. and J.N.D. translations, besides many others, make the matter plain by adding after the first group of martyrs are seen in the disembodied state, "and such as worshipped not the beast," etc. They are the ones mentioned in chapter 13:15, those who were put to death during the 3 1/2 years of the great tribulation for refusal to do homage to the image of the beast. Now the two groups of those martyred after the rapture are complete, and they are raised from the dead, and share in the reigning with Christ along with those who were already seated on judgment thrones, and to whom judgment was committed. Of these two martyr groups it is said, "And they lived," which might be translated, "and they were raised to life." They had not lost out on heavenly glory and reigning with Christ because their testimony during the fateful 7 years had been cut short by martyrdom; they will be raised and complement those raised at the rapture. Thus these very verses which Dr. Ladd uses to prove there is only one part to the first resurrection, destroy his whole plan when carefully considered and understood.

Even in the types, the distinction is maintained. In Lev. 23, the next thing after the feast of Pentecost (which prefigures the formation of the Church on earth) is the harvest, for which no time was specified - the ingathering of saints into the heavenly barn - then there follows an allowance for resurrected tribulation saints, as the grain left in the corners of the field for "the poor and the stranger." And this precedes the feast of trumpets which prefigures the calling back of Israel. But this notable chapter can only be understood in the light of dispensational truth.

The Old Testament closes with the earthly saints looking for Christ to rise as the sun shining in its strength, while the New Testament closes with the Church called to look for Him as the morning star. Why should we ignore this definite distinction? Is the morning star the same as the sun? Do they appear at the same instant? Of course not! Neither will the Lord come for the Church at the same time He appears with all the effulgence as the ruler of the day for the world. But anti-dispensationalism is maintained by its adherents at any cost. May God preserve many to hold fast His faithful promise, "Surely I come quickly," without any intervening event mentioned, so that

we may in heart reply, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Nothing will compensate for the loss of expecting that we may see HIM today.

Dr. Ladd has missed the point of Rev. 3:10 altogether. The verse reads: "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." It is a promise to the overcomer (in general, to all the Christians) to be kept out of the great tribulation which is coming. Dr. Ladd dwells on the Greek for the word "out" and connects it with the Lord's prayer in John 17:15, desiring that the Christians be kept out of evil. He then reasons that it does not involve a removal from the scene, but being kept from evil and the tribulation while in it. But his basic error is in not seeing that the Lord's promise is that of being kept from "the hour" of tribulation; that is, altogether from the time of it - not being preserved from danger during the time, but delivered from the time in which it will take place. The Greek word for hour is *Nora* and means an hour, a period, or a season. It is from the entire period of the tribulation that the Christians are to be delivered by the coming of the Lord to take them to Himself first - not by some special preservation in it.

Time and space will not permit an exhaustive review of all the errors of the book entitled, "The Blessed Hope"; but we feel there is at least one more point that should be mentioned. Dr. Ladd takes up the old cry that "the gospel of the kingdom," which according to Matt. 24:14 must be preached "in all the world" before the end, is the same as the gospel of the grace of God. But as we have before noted, this statement in Matt. 24 is connected with the Jews, Judea, and an idol in the holy place of the temple, and a sabbath day's journey, etc. Now how does it happen that he can bring this age and the gospel of the grace of God into such a Jewish setting? He says: "Christ is tarrying until the Church has completed its task. When Matt. 24:14 has been fulfilled, then Christ will come." p. 148. The Apostle Paul did not believe this, for he taught the saints to expect the Lord in his day.

Dr. Ladd further says: "The world is nearly evangelized; any generation which is really dedicated to the task can complete the mission. The Lord can come in our own generation, in our life-time - if we stir ourselves and finish our task." (*Italics his.*) Our hearts would utterly sink if we believed this statement, for the fact is that there are more unevangelised people on earth today than there were last year, ten years ago, or further back. Christianity is losing the race with the explosive population growth, and with the spread of communistic ideology, and plain infidelity. Furthermore, a large percentage of the so-called missionaries in the world are not preaching either the gospel of the grace of God, or the gospel of the kingdom which John the Baptist preached. Dr. Ladd himself refers to the frightful anti-Christian heresy of a prominent missionary, Albert Schweitzer, to whom "Jesus... is an offense, not a Savior." No, there is, and there can be, only one explanation of Matt. 24:14; it is a gospel that the King is coming back, which was first preached by John the Baptist, and will be resumed by a Jewish remnant whose hearts God will touch after the Church age has closed. To assume Dr. Ladd's premise would be to put off the Lord's coming *ad infinitum*.

This review of Dr. Ladd's book has not been undertaken out of any personal animus, but for the reason that he has placed himself out in the forefront of the challengers of dispensationalism and of the pretribulation coming of the Lord for His own. Furthermore, he is now in the position of leading others along the same course he has followed, which we consider will lead the saints of God to settle down and sleep like the wise virgins among the foolish. He has used the names of

opponents of these truths with considerable skill, and used their arguments to bolster his position. He speaks of many who have given up the dispensational teaching, and of others who, while they have remained silent on the issue, simply do not believe it. But none of these things move us, nor do they prove anything more than the position of these individuals - not that they were right or wrong. We would also warn Christians who hold these truths dear not to relax and be unmindful of the attacks that are being made on them, lest we lose them by default. Let us "hold fast" the precious deposit that has been committed to us.

We have wondered why the growing tendency to discard that which has been such a hope and cheer to the saints of God. Perhaps the answer lies in a reported interview of Christian Life magazine with Dr. E. Schuyler English, who is him-self a dispensationalist and pretribulationist. He was asked: "You have already said that in your opinion many do not accept the dispensational interpretation of Scripture because they do not understand what dispensational means. Are there other reasons?" Dr. English replied: "There are several principal reasons, in my judgment, for the critical attitude that some evangelicals show toward dispensationalism. One of them is that it is not considered scholarly to follow the dispensational method of interpreting the Scriptures since modern dispensationalism stems, in part at least, from the writings of the so-called Plymouth Brethren."

Perhaps this is the underlying cause, for Dr. English states that "most theologians credit J. N. Darby... with first systematizing dispensational theology in the middle of the 19th century." And Dr. Ladd mentions Mr. J. N. Darby and "Darbyism" time and time again, as the root cause of this teaching, although in one place he says that "Darbyism in fact restored something precious which had long been lost." He indicated that in spite of what he considers errors of "Darbyism," it was helpful in awakening Christians to the reality of the Lord's coming (p. 43). How strange that what he calls error should be so beneficial spiritually! May spiritual perception be the guiding power in searching the Scriptures, rather than some assumption to superior scholarship.

We feel we must now notice a few remarks of Dr. Donald G. Barnhouse in his Eternity magazine. In the September, 1957, issue we read: "Before I go further, let me affirm that I believe firmly in the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, that He will overthrow the antichrist, and will establish His rule on earth. Premillennarian? yes; dispensationalist? no." But then he expresses the difference between one who says the Lord will come before the Millennium but after the tribulation, and one who is a dispensationalist and looks for the Lord at any moment before the tribulation. Thus: the premillennialist believes "that the Lord might not come for another century or another thousand years. The dispensationalist is forced into the awkward position (which is not biblical) of believing that we are now in the end of the end times" (italics his). He then misrepresents the truth held by most dispensationalists by saying that we are looking for the apostasy more than for the Lord. This is a sad misstatement of purpose and intent of those who hold the pretribulation coming of the Lord. This may be true in a few instances, but it is basically false. We are not acquainted with believers who are looking for the apostasy or the antichrist, rather than looking for Him whom our souls love. Perhaps spiritual lethargy has dimmed the hope in some Christians, but that is not the fault of dispensationalism. Many Christians have lost the joy of their salvation through worldly entanglements, but is salvation false because of that?

Dr. Barnhouse further states that the dispensationalist's hope causes him to turn away from "social service." Just what does he mean by this? Would he take what is left of true Christianity down the slippery road of the "social gospel" that ruined much of Christendom some years ago? We fear he would, for this can be a natural result of the giving up the hope of our Lord's imminent return. It was the loss of this hope that carried the early church down. The giving up of "the blessed hope" is helping to prepare the way for the ecumenicalist's dream of one world and one church -in other words, "BABYLON THE GREAT." But the drowsy Christian will be of no more help to this world than Lot was to Sodom. The only way for a Christian to be a help in the world is to live for Christ, in the constant expectation of His return, and witnessing for Him as God may give opportunity. He will have to walk in separation from its schemes, its aims, its hopes, its all. Abraham walking with God was of more value to Sodom than Lot who was probably seeking to do social service in it. Abraham's intercessions would have availed if the wicked city had not passed the point where immediate judgment was inevitable.

But social service, ecumenicalism, and worldly principles would be the natural product of putting off the Lord's coming for perhaps "another century or another thousand years." Is not this the principle of the unfaithful servant who said in his heart, "My lord delays his coming"? We were saddened to read such comments from the editor of Eternity, although we should not have been surprised; for he wrote in his May, 1950 issue, "I shall hope to publish a paper on why I am not a dispensationalist and never have been." In the same issue he added,

"Those who know my preaching well know that I seldom speak about the second coming of Christ." In this he differs from that venerable servant of the Lord, the Apostle Paul, for he connected his gospel preaching with telling his hearers of the Lord's coming back. He preached it to the unsaved, and did not hold it back from the youngest converts.

We earnestly hope that the Lord's soon return will prevent a wholesale departure from this separating and encouraging hope. While we are not looking for the apostasy or any world developments, we see them shaping very fast for the days to come after we are ushered home. Christians who cannot discern the character of these days must be spiritually blind.

"Lord Jesus, Come!

Thine absence here we mourn;

No joy we know apart from Thee,

No sorrow in Thy presence see.

Come, Jesus, Come.

"Lord Jesus, Come!

And claim us as Thine own;

With longing hearts the path we tread,

Which Thee on high to glory led.

Come, Savior, Come.

"Lord Jesus, Come!  
And take Thy people home;  
That all Thy flock, so scattered here,  
With Thee in glory may appear.  
Lord Jesus, Come!"

## Power of Faith: Hannah's Song

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1 Sam. 1:24-28; 2:1-10

It is only as we enter into the future that we have power to walk firmly in the right path in the present. It is what is beyond the present scene that must take possession of the heart, and must form the basis of our spiritual power here in the midst of this scene; but it is wonderful what power that gives if the heart is in it.

There are almost similar words used here in Hannah's song as in Mary's in Luke 1. There is the greatest possible human weakness in both these cases, but we also have what gives mighty power, and that is faith. We have need to go on into what is before us, if we are to go rightly in the present. Those who shone in this way were generally those who had a large grasp of God's purposes with His people. Hannah's is a remarkable utterance, such a burst of praise and intelligence. It brings out the full force of that word, "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant." Psalm 25:14. The glory was about to depart from Israel; but in the midst of it all we have a woman of faith, and it was her own faith, for neither Elkanah nor Eli entered into it. Hannah's faith went far beyond all the ruin. It was not merely the birth of a little child, but it was that God was about to bring in a deliverance for Israel and the whole creation of God. "My heart rejoiceth in the LORD"; she is outside the immediate circumstances. The last notes of her psalm go on to the extremity of time, and God's purposes as regards creation.

It is important for us not to border our thoughts by the little circumstances by which we are surrounded; God has counsels concerning the Church, the world, the creation, and we can take up these things in spirit.

There is not a single promise that God has made in His Word that is not ours in Jesus Christ. Every promise of God is ours in Him. What enables us to keep the word of His patience but the certainty that all these things are ours already? We are not here merely as those who are hoping for an uncertain thing; we have the confirmation of the promise in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Six or seven times over Samuel is spoken of as the one who is in the house of the Lord, ministering there, and growing there. How few in Israel thought anything about Samuel then, or connected him with the overthrow of the Philistines, or with the establishment of God's counsel. And when Simeon took the Lord up in his arms, who connected the coming day of glory with that little Child? Faith only. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and a wonderful secret it is - a wonderful thing to be in His secret counsels - and the Lord give us to know these counsels and to cherish them. We might be disheartened if we looked at things around us; but look at Hannah's faith and Mary's faith - hearts bursting forth in praise, and looking on to the end of time. Only hold all the simple principles, and let the circumstances be what they may, we have Christ at the right hand of God - the anchor of the soul - and we have the secret of the Lord, His thoughts

and counsels. And do not let us get narrowed into our little circumstances, but remember that we are bound up with all the interests of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## A Prerequisite for Spiritual Perception

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Quickness of moral perception depends on the maintenance of a Nazarite separation from all and everything that might cloud our souls. Take the sons of Aaron for example. They were commanded not to drink wine or strong drink when they went into the tabernacle of the congregation lest they should die, and that they might put difference between holy and unholy, and between clean and unclean, etc. (Lev. 10.) This is an abiding principle; and hence when a believer forgets his heavenly calling, and yields to the indulgence of earthly joys, is "drunk and wine" (or, is exhilarated by earthly things) instead of being "filled with the Spirit," it is impossible for him to discern between things that differ, or to perceive what is suitable, morally suitable, to God. No greater mistake can thus be made than to expect a right judgment upon moral questions from worldly Christians. They may be perfectly sincere and upright, and may at the same time desire to see the truth, but they have lost their spiritual discernment; and where this is the case, truth will soon fail; and he that departs from evil will be accounted mad.

## A Present Hope

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To me the Lord's coming is not a question of prophecy, but my present hope. Events before His judging the quick are the subject of prophecy; His coming to receive the Church is our present, heavenly hope. There is no event between me and heaven. There are between this time and Christ's judgment of the earth. Now we are blessed with Christ; as His bride and His body, we appear with Him, reign with Him; the great peculiar blessing of the Church is being associated with Christ Himself. The government of the world is another thing; prophecy lights up that as a candle in a dark place, but I am of the day. It is this especially Christians have to learn, that they are one with Christ, blessed with Him. And this applies to everything. "My peace I give unto you" - "That they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves" - "The glory which Thou hast given Me I have given them" - "That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them" - "I have given them the words which Thou gavest unto Me" - "I go to My Father and your Father; My God and your God." This brings perfect love so close to our hearts that it is very precious; and thus we nourish ourselves with that love.

## Proper Service

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"Martha was cumbered about much serving." Luke 10:40. There is a tendency to distraction in all service, blessed though it be in its place. All of us have some service given us to do for Christ - it would be sad indeed if we were in a position that we had nothing to do for Him - the great point is the way it is done. What is needed is the quietness of communion so as to go out from Himself, and then return to Himself. There are those who work, thinking thereby to get into communion. They can never know or enjoy it this way. All real service must flow from communion; then we are occupied with Christ, and have His thoughts.

## Resurrection Power

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How little do we as saints realize that a new power has already entered this world of death! Man has a vague thought of resurrection at a future day. We too may often speak of it as a doctrine, but there is more - the power has been actually manifested here.

We are well acquainted with another power working all around us - the power of death. It is a power dreaded by man, but familiar to him; it oftentimes compels his attention. The flowers and wreaths that are strewn upon the bier and the grave are tokens of the attention which death receives. It is only knowledge of the new power which can divert our attention; but we are often as really ignorant as the poor affectionate women who went with their spices and ointment to the sepulcher. In chapter 23:55, 56, we see them occupied with death - death in no ordinary form, but still with death - they "beheld the sepulcher, and how His body was laid." Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments; but the rest of the Sabbath day prevents their doing what would have been wholly out of character. God had ordered that the Lord should not be anointed for His burial in the tomb, but in the house at Bethany, where the presence of Lazarus attested the power of resurrection, and where the odor of the ointment which Mary poured on Him who is the resurrection and the life filled the house.

These dear women are still occupied with the adverse power as they go early in the morning of the first day of the week to the sepulcher. There they find that this new power had been in exercise the stone is rolled away, and they find not the body of the Lord Jesus. But they are not yet acquainted with it; on the contrary, they "were much perplexed thereabout." And surely we may ask ourselves whether, in the midst of the perplexity caused by the adverse power working here, we know what it is to have confidence in the God of resurrection. How could the power of death hold the living One? And yet these devoted women were seeking the living One among the dead. They need not have been ignorant, for the angels remind them of the words He had spoken in Galilee, "The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."

The women remember His words, and retrace their steps from the sepulcher to tell the tidings to the eleven and the rest. With what unbelief are they received! "Their words seemed to them as idle tales"; for not yet were they conscious of the power that had already wrought in this scene of death. There is a strange unbelief in man's heart as to the working of the God of resurrection; and yet, without rising up in thought to the counsels of God secured therein, how fruitful has it already been to us. It has given back Jesus to us, a living, blessed Man, as the disciples had known Him in the days of His flesh - in resurrection life, it is true, but the same Jesus, no more to die. This is portrayed to us in what follows.

Two disciples are going to Emmaus, talking together of all that had happened, when "Jesus... drew near, and went with them." As at the beginning of this Gospel it was said to the shepherds, "Unto you is born this day... a Savior" - and the sign to them was "the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger,"

"Once cradled in a manger, That Thou mightest with us be" - so at the close of the narrative, He whom wicked hands had taken from those sorrowing disciples is given back to them by resurrection power. He walks and talks with the downcast travelers until their hearts burn within them, though as yet they know Him not, for questionings still had hold of their minds. A vision of angels had been seen, who said that He was alive. Had these two believed the report, it would have detained them at Jerusalem in the attitude of expectation. As it is, another motive leads them elsewhere. What tenderness of love that drew near and went with them! He has to call them senseless and unbelieving; and we may take His words home to our own hearts when we fail to comprehend in any way the pathway He has trodden. As in Galilee, so now, He has to speak of the necessity of His sufferings. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" But He tarries on the way (ere He enters into glory) to walk and talk and eat and drink with them after His resurrection - the same Jesus, known to them in the familiar act of breaking bread. What a power has already entered this scene! What fresh companionship with Jesus it gave, though of a new order! What a pledge we have of what is to be enjoyed forever with Himself. May He interpret it to our hearts.

## Russia's Sputnik: the Editor's Column

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When Russia placed the first man-made moons in orbit around the earth, she boastfully claimed the credit for her atheistic science. A poem from her magazine Krokodil said:

And here we have our Sputnik  
No Secret: the newborn planet  
Is modest about its size,  
But this symbol of intellect and light  
Is made by us, and not by the God  
Of the Old Testament.

Some of her spokesmen twitted the Western nations for their lagging behind Russia in this field by suggesting that perhaps they needed to pray more; and East Germany's Communist newspaper Neues Deutschland proclaimed that their satellites proved that the earth is not at God's mercy. And a Russian magazine stated that the Communist Party is working to create conditions that will cause religion to vanish. Nor is this defiance of God, and self-deification, confined to Russia; it is becoming prevalent around the world and shows a distinct trend. Joseph Lewis, president of the Free-thinkers of America said that the new satellites had not broadcast any discovery of God and that man's science was making a mockery of the religions of earth. What egregious folly to think that they might locate God a few miles up, while distances in the heavens are measured in hundreds, thousands, and even millions of light years, only one of which is 6,000,000,000,000 miles.

Later, the United States Army placed two Explorer satellites in orbit; but the United States Navy had difficulty in shooting a Vanguard into space. After some unsuccessful attempts, their contractor, the Martin Company, made preparations for another launching. (And here another trend becomes evident.) This time, says the New York Times, "The gyroscopic guidance system in the Vanguard vehicle was supplemented by a specially installed device invoking Divine guidance. A St. Christopher medal was wired with great precision to the base of a gyroscope package in the second stage." In order to make such a change, a regular form had to be executed and signed by all of the engineers in charge of the various departments involved, and then sent higher for approval. The request for the change originated with an engineer, F. Paul Lipinski, a Roman Catholic, and was signed by eleven others, among them Catholics, Protestants, and Jews.

This event is in its way just as significant as the boastfulness of the Russians over their atheistic accomplishments. It marks another trend in the world today; it indicates the growth of religious superstition. This is to be seen in many places in the Western world. People flock to do homage to statues of the Virgin Mary, some of which are supposed to do cures, or have special powers, or shed tears at certain times. Thinking men would never have supposed that superstition would gain

such a foothold in a Protestant United States as it has today. Since the Papal See decreed the dogma of Mary's bodily assumption into heaven, where they say she is now "the Queen of Heaven," the adoration of Mary has been widely accepted; and with it has been the rapid growth of many fantastic superstitions.

Take, for instance, this case of the affixing a medal of St. Christopher to a Vanguard vehicle for the "Addition of Divine Guidance." "What utter folly! what blind superstition! what influence of Roman Catholicism (which claims an increase of about a million members a year in this country)! Who is this said St. Christopher? Any encyclopedia will give some information about him. Let us notice one of them:

"CHRISTOPHER, Saint (probably 3rd cent.), saint of the Roman Catholic and Greek churches, said to have lived in Syria and suffered martyrdom under the Emperor Decius (249-251). According to tradition he was 12 ft. tall and of prodigious strength. In the pride of his strength he would serve only the mightiest upon earth. While in the service of a king, seeing his master's dread of the devil, he became the devil's servant. One day, however, he saw the devil trembling before the image of Christ, and he resolved to serve Christ only, undertaking to carry Christian pilgrims across a river. One day Christ Himself came to him in the form of a child to be carried over, but the burden grew heavier and heavier, until it was almost too much for Christopher to reach the farther shore. 'Marvel not, Christopher,' said the child, 'for with me thou hast borne the sins of all the world.' St. Christopher (Gr. Christophorus, 'Christ-bearer') is usually represented carrying the infant Christ and leaning on a great staff. The Greek Church celebrates his festival on May 9, the Roman Catholic on July 25." - Funk and Wagnalls Encyclopedia.

What pathetic nonsense! And yet otherwise sensible men and women invoke his help and guidance on journeys. He is the patron saint of travelers, and many automobile owners attach St. Christopher medals to their cars.

The Roman Catholic Book of Saints says of this "saint" that "around his memory have grown up many legends, the most beautiful of which" is the one of his carrying Christ as an infant across a river. And the Council of Trent (1545-63) of the Catholic Church affirmed that it is useful to invoke the saints on account of the benefits to be obtained from God through their intercession. Where is there any scriptural authority for praying to departed souls who at some time subsequent to their deaths were created saints by human canonization? Or where are we led by God to believe that we need the intercession of the soul of some departed man? Rather, we go direct to God by the Lord Jesus Christ. No human intermediary is required to gain access for us into the presence of God. Not any angel, or any man-made saint, or even the Virgin Mary, helps to gain a favorable hearing for us, for the Lord Himself said, "The Father Himself loveth you."

But superstition is on the rapid rise in the Western world, and this is a distinct sign that we are approaching the end of this dispensation. The Church of Rome is going to dominate the soon-to-be-revived Roman Empire, and Protestantism is fast going down the road to join hand in-hand with Rome. The ecumenicalists in Protestantism are leading the way back to Rome. Soon the Lord will call saved ones from the vast profession of Christianity to be with Himself; and the great bodies of Catholicism and Protestantism which are left will quickly join hands to create "Babylon the Great," the "woman" who will ride the beast of the Roman Empire. (See Rev. 17.)

Side by side with this increasing tide of superstition, another thing is also growing; it is that which is symbolized in the Russian atheistic self glorification of man. Man is on the march to climax his greatness. Intellectual genius is not bringing him closer to God, but is making for his own deification. He is as Adam in the Garden of Eden, aspiring to be as God (Gen. 3); and, as man at the "tower of Babel," nothing seems to be restrained from him which he imagines to do (Gen. 10). Infidelity, agnosticism, and atheism flourish side by side with maturing superstition. Eventually the two will come into conflict, and what a sad spectacle it will be for this poor world! During those seven years after the Lord calls His people home to be with Himself, and before He comes back with them to reign, these two opposing forces will meet head-on.

At that time the ten united kings of the Roman Empire with their violent and wicked head will turn against the amalgamated apostate church and "shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put it in their hearts to fulfill His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled." Rev. 17:16, 17. Not that conditions on earth will improve when the false profession (left after the true believers are called home) is destroyed by man, for then wickedness will fully ripen. Man will be deified and actually rise up in rebellion against God. The crowning act of this defiance will take place when the Western apostate world will actually try to use implements of war to fight against Christ when He comes in glory to the earth. He will destroy those rebels with the sword of His mouth and with the brightness of His coming.

Little do people today sense where the advance of superstition is leading the Western world (to the overthrow of even the outward form of religion), nor where atheistic science, which is thriving side by side with hollow superstition, will end - in the consuming judgments when the Lord comes to take vengeance on His rejecters - "on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thess. 1:8.

The information on the St. Christopher medal came to us from New York; and the following information, which points up the working of the same two principles, came to us from Canada:

(Translated extracts from "Objectif" which is edited by the Commissariat General of the Government for the World Exhibition in Brussels in 1958.)

" 'And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name.' These words, spoken by the builders of the Tower of Babel, could well serve as a motto for all who are preparing for the Brussels Universal and International Exhibition. We also are building a city, a city with pavilions; we are raising a tower, whose design is unique and of great height; we too, are seeking to make us a name. So it was in the Bible. But we shall be careful not to pursue the comparison, for it is certain that we shall finish our work, and it shall be crowned with success. It is concentrated on MAN, the essence of all things" (p. 11).

Here it is in their own words - MAN is their center essence of all things. They fully believe that nothing which they have imagined will be beyond their attainment. Little do they realize that the time is not far off when all "the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low." God hates pride, and the pride of the creature would lift itself up above its Creator. God will smash all the proud works of men, and "the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day." (Isa. 2:17.) But as the end approaches, God is allowing man's independence and

wickedness to rise to unprecedented heights. That is a principle with God. He bears long with evil, but there comes a point beyond which His patience cannot go; He must and will judge men's wickedness and haughtiness.

Men need only read ancient history to see that all the great cities of the past ages fell; but infidelity, which rejects God's firm decree about this world, now thinks that men are building something enduring.

Another paragraph from "Objectif" sets forth the place which religion with superstition has alongside of man's pride and self-exaltation. On page 15, we read:

"Then, there is the support of a thousand year old state like the Holy See, which has never before in the whole course of its history taken part as a Sovereign State in an International Exhibition. The Brussels 1958 Exhibition owes this victory to the very spirit that moves it, to its special theme which is also unique in the annals of International Exhibitions. Under the sign of MAN in the search for international understanding, and with the desire to the spreading of a new humanism of a new age. The Vatican pavilion will be situated in the very heart of the Foreign Sections. It is called: 'The City of God.' The whole Catholic Church is participating - 47 countries collaborating."

Here they are side by side again - Communism, infidelity, atheism, secularism, humanism, and man's self-exaltation, in the same exhibit with the very essence of superstition - that which is heading up for "Babylon the Great" on the one hand, and that which will utterly destroy her, on the other. Rev. 17 and 18 tell the same story. The two philosophies are going to meet head-on in the not-too-distant future. The one will destroy the other, with the survivor of the two (the secular, God-defying power) to be dashed "in pieces like a potter's vessel." (Psalm 2 and Rev. 19:11-21.)

Well may we bewail this poor world in the plaintive words of Scripture: "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their later end!" Deut. 32:29. And the second Psalm, which describes how the Lord Jesus will break the whole world system to pieces, closes with this voice of wisdom: "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little."

Here are two more extracts from the Belgian Exhibition bulletin:

"The building of the new world in which MAN is the keystone of the Arch." p. 21. "To embellish the life of MAN

- We aim at humanization with conditions worthy of MAN." p. 23. What must God think as He looks down and beholds estranged man getting ready for his own deification? Surely "the end of all things

is at hand." May we watch and be sober. May we keep a clear perspective and not be deceived by men's claims or their present achievements.

We would recommend that the readers secure copies of our pamphlet, "Toward the Man or Toward the Woman," by C. H. Brown, which outlines these two trends we have mentioned. And with the principles of the Word of God before us, we shall be able to trace these trends and stand aloof from both the one and the other. The consciousness of such pronounced trends should

cause us to look up with daily anticipation of hearing His shout and being called to meet Him in the air.

"He is coming as the Bridegroom,

Coming to unfold at last

The great secret of His purpose, Mystery of ages past.

And the Bride, to her is granted,

In His beauty then to shine,

As in rapture she exclaimeth,

'I am His and He is mine.'

Oh, what joy that marriage union,

Mystery of love divine!

Sweet to sing in all its fullness,

'I am His, and He is mine.' "

## Self-Occupation and Self-Judgment

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Many confound self-occupation with self-judgment; and, seeing self-judgment to be right (when we fail), are found asking themselves where the one ends and where the other begins. And self-occupation they question. A word or two on these may help, if the Lord permit.

Self-occupation is the bane of the soul. Man makes himself the center, and himself the chief object upon earth. This is self occupation.

Self-judgment is the work of the Spirit of God. It is not His proper, but it is often, from our want of watchfulness, His necessary work. There is no way of return to the joy of communion without it. Self-judgment, though right in its place, is not communion; on the contrary, it is the confession that communion is lost. But it is the only way back; it is medicine, not food.

For me to live daily with self ignored is the highest Christian condition. Here the Spirit of God is free to carry on His proper work in my soul, to take Christ and put Him before me as my food. Here the soul is free to be occupied by and for Christ alone. The Apostle says, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." It is the only right state for food. And food is the soul's appropriation of Christ, and feeding upon Him as ministered by the Spirit. He alone is the "bread of life which came down from heaven"; as John 6:56 says, "He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me and I in him." It is not the having done so once by faith. That is in verse 51, and is of the first importance. Food is the daily need

of the man, and it is here his daily habit to feed. But how important to see that self-occupation is not food, and that self judgment is not food; and how can I live or grow without food?

## Simeon's Faith Rewarded

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God knew pious old Simeon's attitude of waiting in faith for the Messiah and in due time honored it. The Holy Spirit made known to him that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. His was this unspeakable privilege, surpassing that of all the distinguished saints and prophets who had before spoken of the coming Messiah - not only to know the fact of His birth, but that He should be really seen, known, and possessed. The temple is the favored and divinely ordered place where Simeon and Messiah would meet. There Joseph and Mary brought Israel's King and Savior, to do to Him according to the law. There, by the blessed Holy Spirit, was Simeon given to know that the Babe on Mary's knees was no less than Jehovah's Christ. Then, the indescribable ecstasy when he received Him into his arms, and now possessed the everlasting Blessor and Redeemer, our Lord and Savior, and their King.

What a fact and voice for today, that Jesus has come, has been seen, and been possessed by a just and pious Jew, in himself but a poor sinner needing a Savior as others, but who could say, "Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation"! The mere religious professor may own that Christ did indeed come, yet deny that He, and He only, is the Savior; nevertheless the truth remains that there is salvation in no other name than His, the woman's Seed, the Son of God, the holy Sin bearer. The first fruit of Simeon's possessing the Christ was to bless God in the holy and happy and grateful acknowledgment of His salvation now seen, gladdening the heart of God by the reception of His Anointed. Not only this, but Simeon declares in his

song and testimony marvelous things about the Child, the Gentiles, and His people (and in this order), with the blessed effect upon himself in a satisfied heart, a peaceful spirit, and readiness to depart out of the world.

The Lord has changed His place and position. No longer the Babe of the temple, He is seated at the right hand of God in all the value of an accomplished redemption, and because He lives we shall live also. And He is coming to receive us to Himself, that where He is, we may be also. Simeon, then, having blessed God, expressed his desire to depart in peace according to Jehovah's word, because his eyes had beheld His salvation. Precious testimony with all its sufficiency then! How much more for today, when the Holy Spirit has come, the witness to the shed blood of Calvary, to the One now exalted in heaven, "a light for revelation of the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel." Luke 2:32; J.N.D. Trans. This is what the faith of Simeon declared, that the whole range and extent of blessing and glory depended upon the Babe he was leaving behind. If more than nineteen centuries have since rolled away, yet shall Jew, Gentile, and the earth be blessed in and by Him who is "King of kings IF and Lord of lords." Then Israel and the nations shall own and call Him blessed. He who was the wondrous Babe of Bethlehem is the Lion of Judah's tribe; and He who "emptied Himself" shall sit on the throne of His glory. In that day "shall the righteous flourish" and there shall be abundance of peace.

## Sin in the Flesh

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Someone asked, What is the flesh? What is there more in man than body, soul, and spirit? As the Apostle tells Christians to whom he is writing, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thess. 5:23. The reply given was, that Adam before the fall had body, soul, and spirit, but that after the fall there was in him, in addition, a will in rebellion against God - sin (that which the Word of God calls "the flesh"), a something which "lusteth [or struggleth] against the Spirit" in the man in whom the Spirit of God dwells, and which "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Rom. 8) It is certain that there are few words more frequently employed in the Word of God than "the flesh," and no subject more often and carefully treated, bound up as it is with the whole doctrine of the "new man."

## The Spirit and the Word

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God has a way in the world where Satan cannot touch us. This is the path where Jesus walked. Satan is the prince of this world; but there is a divine path through it, but no other, and there God's power is. The Word is the revelation of it. So the Lord bound the strong man. He acted by the power of the Spirit, and used the Word. The Spirit and the Word cannot be separated without falling into fanaticism on the one hand, or into rationalism on the other - without putting oneself outside the place of dependence upon God, and of His guidance. Mere reason would become the master of some, imagination, of others.

## Spiritual Understanding

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There is no advantage greater for the enemy, short of destroying the foundations, than the mixing up of the saints of God with the world, and the consequent darkening of all spiritual intelligence in those who ought to be its light. God would have us in practical communion with Himself; in His light we see light. If we see the end of all the plots of Satan to thwart the work of God, it separates us from what leads thereto, and joins us with all that is dear to Him. Then "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." So walking, we shall understand the Word of God. It is not a question of intellectual capacity and learning. I am confident that human erudition in the things of God is only so much rubbish, wherever it is made to be anything more than a servant. Unless Christians can keep what they know under their feet, they are incapable of profiting fully by the Word of God. Otherwise, whether a man knows much or little, he becomes its slave, and it usurps the place of the Spirit of God. Faith is the sole means and power of spiritual understanding; and faith puts and keeps us in subjection to the Lord, and in separation from this evil age.

## The Transfiguration

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In the midst of His service of humiliation, our Lord was for a little transfigured. It was not like Moses whose face shone from his nearness to the divine Presence. Our Lord was with His own here below. A week before, He prepared them for seeing the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. After it, He takes with Him Peter, James, and John, and brings them up into a high mountain apart "And His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment

was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him." It is a miniature of His kingdom wherein will be the risen and changed saints, with others in their natural bodies, and the Lord the center of all.

It would seem that the divine aim of having Moses and Elijah there was to mark the surpassing glory of the Lord before whom the chief representative of the law and the most honored of the prophets gave place and vanished away. The personal glory of Jesus is most conspicuous, as elsewhere in this Gospel. He is Son of God and Son of Man.

Peter counted it a great thing to see his Master with saints so renowned and glorious. "Lord," said he to Jesus, "it is good for us to be here: if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." He made the natural but grave mistake of equalizing all three. Yet he who had only so short a time before confessed his Master to be not only the Messiah, but the Son of the living God, ought not to have so erred. So easy is it to forget what flesh and blood never truly knows, what is revealed by the Father; then too he could not bear to think of His going to Jerusalem, suffering many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and being killed, but raised the third day.

Here it was not the withering rebuke of the Lord who knew that all blessing for man and glory for God, in a ruined world, hung on His rejection (Matt. 16:21-23). It was the Father's voice out of the excellent glory. "While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." The Father then displayed His jealousy for the honor of His Son. He would not allow the lawgiver or the law restorer to be put on such a level. They were servants and to be honored in the place He set them. But His beloved Son! - there were His delights. And if Christ went down in love to suffer as man, and as man to be exalted, the glory of the eternal Son was precious beyond all thought of man in His Father's eyes.

It is the Son whom we are to hear. See how the great truth is attested in the epistle to the Hebrews, both in chapter 1:2, and in chapter 12:25. Equally explicit is John 5:25 for quickening, and John 10 for every day - and not only for the sheep led out of the Jewish fold, but for other sheep, Gentiles, not of this fold.

When the disciples heard, the Father's voice, they fell on their faces and were sore afraid. They were far from knowing yet His love; but He, who brought it in His own Person, was at hand to strengthen their hearts. "And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid."

Not less now but more does Jesus cause His word to come home in the power of redemption to those that believe. And the God who sent Him would fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope in the power of the Holy Spirit.

## Transformed - Transfigured - Changed

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The word translated "transformed" is found only four times in the New Testament. It is used both in Matthew and Mark to describe the change in the appearance of our blessed Lord on the mountain when "His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." In these places it is rendered "transfigured." It is met with finally in 2 Cor. 3:18, where it is given as "changed." Who can doubt that there is an intended connection between these scriptures? When the Lord was "transfigured" on the mount, God showed out, in anticipation, the glorified state on which His beloved Son would enter after His death and resurrection. (See John 17:5.) But we - believers - shall by His grace be glorified together with Him (John 17:22; Rom. 8:17; etc.); and we learn from the above scriptures how this will be accomplished. Rom. 12:2 teaches that it is, first of all, a moral work within - a spiritual change effected by the renewing of our mind. From 2 Cor. 3:18 we gather that while Christ in glory is the model to which we are to be conformed (compare John 17:19; Rom. 8:29), it is by beholding His glory that we are gradually "transfigured" - from glory to glory - into the same image. God thus uses by the Holy Spirit the glory of the Lord to change us morally into the likeness of His beloved Son. But, as 1 John 3:2 tells us, we shall not be like Him until we see Him as He is. We wait, therefore, until His coming, for the full accomplishment of the counsels of God, when our bodies as well as our souls will be conformed to the image of His Son (see Phil. 3:21). In the meantime our moral growth in His likeness will be in proportion to our present occupation with Him in the place where He is.

"And is it so? I shall be like Thy Son;

Is this the grace which He for me hath won?

Father of glory, thought beyond all thought,

In glory, to His own blest likeness brought."

## **Trial Proved to Be a Blessing: Jacob and Joseph**

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When God allowed Joseph to be removed from his father Jacob, the latter said, "All these things are against me." But it turned out quite otherwise in the end; for at the time of famine, he and his children, and his children's children, and his flocks and his herds, and all that he had, were brought near to Joseph, had a dwelling place in the land of Goshen, and were tenderly nourished all the years of famine by Joseph (Gen. 45:10, 11). This proved that Jacob's greatest trial was in the end his greatest blessing. How often we have been made to prove that the clouds we so dreaded have been big with richest blessings. (Rom. 8:28.)

## Trusting God for Tomorrow

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We find it much easier to trust the Lord in all questions that arise between Him and ourselves, than it is to bring Him in, and use Him, and trust Him, in questions that arise between us and others - easier to trust Him for eternity than for tomorrow, because eternity is entirely in His hand. Tomorrow, as we judge, is more or less divided between Him and others - in the power of circumstances as well as of God. Abraham in his day betrayed this. He came forth at the bidding of the God of glory, leaving country, kindred, and father's house; but as soon as a famine came, his faith failed, and instead of trusting the Lord in the face of circumstances, he goes down to Egypt.

Jacob, at Mahanaim, betrays the same, easy common way of nature. He is unable to trust God in the face of Esau. Esau's 400 men frighten him, and he will interpose, first, his messengers with words of peace and friendliness, and then, his presents, that by one or the other he may allay the heat of his brother's anger. He has no faith in God, so as to bring Him in between himself and Esau. He trembles, and prays, and calculates, and marshals his household. Circumstances have proved too much for him. But immediately afterward, when the Lord Himself withstands him, when it becomes a question between him and God, then he is bold and prevails. He faints not, though rebuked sharply by the Lord. He behaves himself like a champion of faith, and obtains a good report. He carries himself like a prince, and gains new honors. This is a common experience, and this moment in Jacob's history at the brook Jabbok expresses it.

## United Nations - Balance of Power: the Editor's Column

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Man's history from the beginning has been one long chronicle of wars and destruction. The first battle ever recorded was one between four confederated kings on the one side, and five on the other, with the nephew of Abraham being caught between them (Gen. 14). The issue was decided when Abraham who lived outside of and above the fray entered the scene and delivered Lot. Thus will it be at the close of this age; confederated kings of East (Arab world) and West will be engaged in combat, with the Jews in the center. At that time the Lord Jesus will appear from heaven to put down His enemies and deliver His earthly people (the godly remnant of the Jews) from their enemies.

The loss of life and property down through the ages as a result of wars is incalculable. And James, in giving the reason for wars and strife between individuals, gives the underlying cause of all wars: "Come they not... even of your lusts?" Man's lust, avarice, and greed have impelled him on from war to war. About the only times of tranquility have been when some great power subjugated most peoples under its iron rule, such as at the zenith of the Roman Empire. But as the conquerors relaxed to enjoy the fruits of their conquests, new elements from beyond, such as the Goths and Vandals, came in to upset the peace. Restive, subjugated peoples usually seized any opportunity to rebel.

But men have wearied of war with all of its tragic consequences, and from time to time have sought by various and sundry means to attain an enduring peace. Apart from the solution of one nation's achieving general mastery, another expedient has been military alliances which were supposed to create a "balance of power," so that neither side would dare engage in warlike acts against the other for fear of being itself destroyed. Then right after the turn of the century there was the illusion that man had learned the futility of war, so from henceforth an age of reason would prevail. They vainly imagined that all international disputes would be settled at conference tables rather than on fields of battle. But even as such predictions were being voiced, the seeds of the first worldwide conflict were being planted. Soon an assassin's bullet would precipitate the greatest war up to that time. As it progressed in scope and ferocity, predictions were freely made that it was a "war to end all wars."

At the conclusion of the first world war, there was a real desire for stable peace, out of which was born the League of Nations. This great international body was supposed to implement the craving for peace by adjudicating all strife between nations before it broke into open conflict. It was not long, however, before the League of Nations was found wanting; it was impotent to prevent the Japanese aggression in Manchuria and the Italian conquest of Ethiopia. Again the stage was all set for a world-wide conflict - this time of greater magnitude than before, with unprecedented loss of life and property. When the second world war began, the implements of war had not changed greatly since the previous international conflict, but as it progressed man's ingenuity was shown in bringing into play greater and greater weapons of destruction, climaxing with the awful devastation of two cities in Japan as the era of the atom began.

In view of these latest lethal weapons, the urge for peace was again dominant, and the United Nations was formed. This time the supposed weaknesses of the League of Nations were to be avoided, and so real peace was to be achieved. But alas, the United Nations was also doomed to failure, for God and His Christ were still rejected, and the heart of man was unchanged. God was entirely left out of the new effort, as was evidenced at the inaugural sessions by omitting prayers to God in deference to atheistic Russia. Formal prayers, however, would not have altered matters, for only by repentance and true turning to God would there be any real work in the souls of men. Without "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," pious prayers for peace are unavailing. God's Christ, "the Prince of Peace," is still unwanted in this world, and, by and large, men would rather have strife and conflict than have God and His Christ in their lives so as to interfere with their pleasures and mundane affairs.

The world with the League of Nations and the United Nations is like the demoniac of Mark 5 who "had been often bound with fetters and chains," only to have the chains "plucked asunder" and "the fetters broken." No restraints will suffice to subdue the passions and lusts of men in their lost and alienated condition.

In the 13 years since the founding of the United Nations, there has been much strife in the world. In a few instances, this international body has been a restraining influence, but its impotence has also become evident. Nations have not been content to rely solely on the offices of the United Nations, but have created various regional alliances, notably NATO and SEATO, to build bulwarks in Europe and Southeast Asia against Russian Communist encroachments. Plainly, the United Nations is not trusted, and the world has returned to the old "balance-of-power" theory, while it teeters precariously over the greatest war caldron of all time. These regional organizations require continual bulwarking to keep them from falling apart.

At this time of frantic efforts to secure peace, the implements of war get worse and worse until their potential for destruction staggers the imagination. We hear much of the power of the atom and hydrogen bombs carried by manned fighters traveling much faster than the speed of sound, and of intercontinental ballistic missiles, but the lurking destructive power of bacteriological and chemical agents is even more frightening. Man has truly progressed from the age of using a club against his fellow man to the time when he can visualize the destruction of what he calls civilization. Now that the stark realities of the awfulness of any future war and the incapability of man's controlling the forces at work are being better understood, it is hoped that peace may be at least prolonged by the fact that both East and West possess the same stupendous potentials of destruction; that is, that there may be the realization that a military stalemate exists (which a European statesman recently called a "balance of terror").

Thus it is hoped that Russia and China with their satellites on the one hand, and the Western powers on the other, will be restrained by the mutual fear of annihilation from starting any conflict. This is approximately where things stand in early 1958.

But through the years, Christians who have known their Bibles have not been fooled by the siren songs of wishful thinkers who predicted peace, nor have they been alarmed at the cries of consternation by realistic statesmen who see no way out of the impasse but a fearful holocaust which will probably destroy most of the human race. A child of God who has a fair understanding of the Word of God in his native tongue is not in doubt of the final outcome. He knows where it all

tends and what the end will be, and he is "always confident," knowing that the supreme and all-powerful God who is his Father rules behind the scenes. Not one thing can happen to one of His children without His overruling hand permitting it.

While the world has gone through many cycles of hopes and fears during the past 80 years, some of the writings of a man of God, William Kelly, written about the year 1870, tell the sober judgment of world politics and world strife as understood then from a knowledge of the Word of Truth. We shall reproduce here some excerpts from his writings on the prophet Joel, for they still stand true today:

"Instead of peace being brought before the day of Jehovah comes, such a widespread gathering for war is to be as the world will have never yet seen. The desire to do great things, impatience of obligations, lust of conquest and military glory, will bring on men such a taste for war ere long that no restraints will suffice to keep them within bounds, especially as jealousy of each other will have led to the accumulation of vast stores for military purposes. So the closing scenes of this age will be found to be described in Scripture. I repeat, if one's conclusion were drawn from the thoughts of men, much might be said for the contrary. Some might think the age had gained better sense, that they had too deep a conviction of their forefathers' sin and folly in this respect, and that henceforth remonstrance and arbitration would gradually supersede the more savage diplomacy of 'blood and iron.' But in vain is it hoped thus to control the passions and will of man. The time of peace is not yet. Men may think they are going to succeed, but it will be with the Gentiles as of old with Israel....

"Hence, before that day comes, the utter failure of philanthropic and other schemes of improving the world will be clearly proved. It will be seen that all such efforts of men, or even of Christians, in ignorance of His mind, and false hopes, must come to worse than naught. At best they are but nostrums that serve in no way the purpose intended, but keep up the delusion for a little while."

The truth of God does not change with the changing fashions and modes of the times. It remains in its enduring character. And so the child of God may know with assurance how this age will end, and how the Lord Jesus will come to claim His own and then return with them in power and great glory to reign triumphantly; and he will know this long before there is any outward indication of its fulfillment. The Lord's disciples could be just as sure of the tumbling down of the stones of that marble temple which Herod built, even when it stood in all its grandeur without any sign of decay or destruction, as when the city was being sacked by the Roman legions in the year A.D. 70. He had told them there would not be left one stone upon another (Matt. 24:1, 2). We need nothing to confirm "the more sure word of prophecy," and the saints of God of a previous century could have had as good an understanding of what will come to pass as we who live on the verge of the coming of the Lord. We who can discern distinct shadows of events that are to take place after we are gone, cannot be more positive than those who lived 100 years ago. (We are not speaking now of the many strange and false interpretations which men have made of the Scriptures. The vagaries of human speculation are too numerous to mention, but the truth was there all the time and could have been known by the true Christian who searched the Scriptures in dependence on the Holy Spirit for light.)

In the 19th century, Miss H. K. Burlingham wrote:

"Thou art coming, mighty Savior,

`King of kings,' Thy written name,  
Thou art coming, royal Savior!  
Coming for Thy promised reign.  
Oh the joy, when sin's confusion  
Ends beneath Thy righteous sway!  
Oh the peace, when all delusion  
At Thy presence dies away.  
"Thou art coming, loving Savior;  
Coming first to claim Thine own.  
Thou art coming, faithful Savior,  
Thou couldst not abide alone.  
In Thy Father's house in glory,  
Sinners saved shall dwell with Thee;  
Oh the sweetness of the story;  
Love's own record we shall be.  
"Thou art coming, gracious Savior,  
Ah, to see Thy face we long;  
Thou art coming, blessed Savior,  
Righting all creation's wrong.  
Nation rises against nation,  
Trouble spreads from shore to shore.  
Thou art God's supreme salvation,  
Come, and chaos shall be o'er."

## Walking in the Truth

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The truth spreads, but it is another thing to take up one's cross. And I observe that, when one does not act according to the truth, there is no solidity; one trifles with religious views. When one follows the truth, difficulties are there and the opposition of the world; that renders us serious. We must know how to give an account of our convictions; then this does not suit the flesh, and the truth must reign in the heart in order for the victory to be won. Grace does not lend itself to levity and license in the doctrine itself. It is not bursts of steam; the engine must move onward, and move on with a good deal to be drawn. There is responsibility with respect to oneself, to the Lord's name and His work.

We must take into account this tendency in the present day. We find not a few who like to hear new truth, but who have no idea of walking in the truth in a practical way. We must have patience, we must have a large heart, but a heart which acknowledges nothing but Christ for its end, and follows Him, or, at least, seeks to do so. There is real dignity in the truth, which demands one to respect it in a practical way.

In these last days we need firmness and a large heart which knows how to take forth the precious from the vile. Obedience is firm and humble; grace, meekness, love ought to be there. But the truth needs not man; man needs the truth. Love feels the need of seeking souls; but souls should submit to Christ and acknowledge His grace.

## Warnings and Instructions in 1 Timothy

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### Warnings and Instructions in 1 Timothy

It is before me tonight to consider certain things in 1 Timothy, but we will turn first to Psalm 19, verses 7-11.

We have brought before us in this Psalm the law, the testimony, the statutes, the commandments, the fear, and judgments of the Lord; and in verse 11 we are told, "Moreover by them is Thy servant warned." Do we appreciate the warnings given in the Scriptures? We do appreciate the warnings which are given to us in the affairs of life. They are generally given to us concerning our safety, whether as to our health, business, pleasure, or in our traveling along the highways. In this latter case, we have warnings about speed, curves, grades, etc. We do well to take heed to them, which we are inclined to do, as generally the effect of disregarding them will soon be apparent. But those warnings where the results are at a considerable distance in the future, we are apt to neglect. We are inclined to regard the warnings of Scripture in this latter class, but, though the results may not soon be apparent, we should bear in mind that He who gave them makes no mistakes, and not one jot or tittle of them shall fail.

Let us now turn to 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 18-20. The setting of this epistle is built around the affairs of the church at Ephesus. The Apostle Paul had besought Timothy to remain there and "charge [or enjoin] some that they teach no other doctrine."

The Apostle Paul had spent considerable time at Ephesus, and there had been much blessing as the result of his labors. Then, when he wrote the epistle to them a few years later, as another has said, "His heart was full of the immensity of grace; and nothing in the state of the Ephesian Christians required any particular remarks adapted to that state."

But now reports had reached him that caused him to give us the warnings found in this epistle. In this first epistle to Timothy the Church is seen as in order, as to its outward form. There are certain trends of declension, as shown in verse 3 and later; but the Church, or assembly, is looked at as being able to deal with these problems; and so we have here instructions to the man of God, how to behave or conduct himself within the house of God.

If we turn to Revelation 2 and the address to the church at Ephesus, which was given a few years later, we hear the Lord's comments on their declension. There seems to be still an outward form of order, but what is put forth or done does not spring from that motive which He can value - love. They had left their first love.

In the epistle to the Ephesians, love is quite prominent. In chapter 1, verse 4, we learn we have been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, "that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." In chapter 2:4, 5, we have His great love brought before us, that when we were dead in sins He "quickened us together with Christ, . . . and . . . raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

Then in chapter 3, his prayer is that we be rooted and grounded in love, and that we

may know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. In chapter 4:15, 16, it says, "speaking the truth in love": then we have, "that which every joint supplieth . . . maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Then in chapter 5, we are exhorted to "walk in love" (v. 2), and in verse 25, we have that wonderful expression, "Christ . . . loved the church, and gave Himself for it." Chapter 6 closes with, "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Getting back to our chapter in 1 Timothy, I believe verse 5 stands out prominently and has a peculiar attraction. You read it and meditate upon it, and then as you feel constrained to come back to it again and again, you realize something of its depth. It seems to be a grand summing up of all that the Apostle has taught before. This epistle is one of his last, evidently coming after the letters to the various churches, or assemblies. So, on account of this, it demands our especial attention and consideration.

Verse 5 refers to "the end of the commandment." It is perhaps better translated, "the end of what is enjoined." We do not have specific commandments in the New Testament, but it is simply as in John 15, abiding in Him, and His words abiding in us.

This grand summing up specifies three things which are to claim our attention. Let us look at them in the order given. "Charity [love] out of a pure heart." Perhaps it may be asked, What is a pure heart in the light of Scripture? We have instruction in 2 Timothy 2:22, "Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." Then in 1 Peter 1:22 we are exhorted, "See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." I believe that the mind and heart of the new man are closely connected, and the exhortations as to each are similar in character. The heart is looked at as the seat of the affections and the mind, where the intelligence of the new man is stored.

In Philippians 2:5 we are told, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Then we have in Romans 12:2, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

We have already referred to the prayer of Ephesians 3, where the desire is that "Christ may dwell in your hearts." Then in chapter 4 we read: "If ye have heard Him and been instructed in Him according as the truth is in Jesus; namely your having put off according to the former conversation the old man . . . and being renewed in the spirit of your mind; and your having put on the new man, which according to God is created in truthful righteousness and holiness." J.N.D. Trans.

It seems from these scriptures then that "love out of a pure heart" can only spring from one who is born again, and that all thoughts and desires of the old man are put in the place of death, so that it is only the thoughts and desires of the new man that are in evidence, and hence it comes from a pure heart. All the selfishness and ambition which characterize this present age are not given a place in the heart and mind of the new man. It is not a state reached once and for all practically, but it is a matter of being before the Lord constantly in self-judgment.

The Lord passes us through a school of training here in our wilderness journey, similar to Israel of old as brought before us in Deuteronomy 8: "To humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was

in thine heart, ... that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD."

This "love out of a pure heart" would be that love which Christ ever manifested down here, proceeding out of the hearts of His people. One is reminded of what is said in John 13: "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

The second thing brought before us, in 1 Timothy 1:5, is "a good conscience." Again we might ask, Just what is a good conscience? Perhaps we might get some light on the operations of the conscience from Romans 2:13-15, which is really a parenthesis in the chapter. It describes the Gentiles before the cross, not having God's law; they were thrown entirely upon their consciences in relation to the

witness of God in creation which was manifested to them. They could show the work of the law written in their hearts. This testimony of God, which they had, depending on their submission to it, could produce the work of the law (or , what the law should produce ) in their hearts. How did it operate? Well, their thoughts the meanwhile were accusing or else excusing one another. If our thoughts accuse us or excuse us, we have not a good conscience. When we find this going on, we need to get before the Lord in self-judgment and own our state before Him. Then, and only then, can we have a good conscience. When in our thoughts we are excusing ourselves, we are virtually saying, If conditions had been different, we would not have failed. The Lord never had to excuse Himself, and neither would we if we were in communion with Him.

The Apostle Paul says in Acts 24:16, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men." He did not want a conscience where his thoughts were continually accusing or else excusing. There cannot be real spiritual progress where there is this accusing or excusing.

We now arrive at the third thing, in verse 5 - "faith unfeigned." It refers, I believe, to the manner in which I hold that which has been revealed, which I hold by faith. Where something is feigned, there is a pretense to something which is not real. When such is the case, we are simply deceiving ourselves, and under such conditions could hardly be a channel which the Lord can use. See 2 Timothy 3:13 and James 1:22.

A writer of a former generation used the expression, "Too much sail will upset the ballastless boat."

These three things are followed by the statement in verses 6 and 7: "From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm," or, as in another translation, "or concerning what they so strenuously affirm."

Where there is a lack of any of these three necessary things, we are swerving from the course; and though there be "good words and fair speeches," there is not the power of the Spirit of God. "For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ."

In the latter part of this chapter - 1 Timothy 1:18-20 - we have an illustration of the result of such a course "shipwreck."

"Holding faith" refers, I believe, to what has been committed to the Church, as in the latter part of verse 4. It is a little clearer in the J.N.D. Translation: "Which bring questionings rather than further God's dispensation, which is in faith."

In verse 20 we have two men brought before us, Hymeneus and Alexander, who, evidently allowing their minds to work in connection with what had been revealed, made shipwreck. From what is said of them here, we could gather that they were those who truly had been born again, as we are told that the discipline was for the purpose of their learning not to blaspheme. Their course was the very opposite of girding up the loins of the mind according to 1 Peter 1:13, and also 2 Corinthians 10:5, "Casting down imaginations [ or reasonings], ... and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." These two men then had evidently gone

on in a way that ruined them for being vessels suited for the public testimony of the Lord. They possibly could be salvaged, but for the present they were a hindrance and as such to be avoided.

The mention of "shipwreck" brings to mind very vividly a scene off the coast of England, in the Strait of Dover. There were several wrecks of small war vessels, with parts of their superstructures above the water, even at high tide. Some of them were German vessels, some English, and some United States. Their positions were shown on the map at that point, and their names given, so that they were well known. It was necessary then in steering a vessel in those waters to avoid them and steer one's course around them, as in Romans 16:17. There was the danger of the tide sweeping one into them, with damage resulting not only from collision with them, but a hidden danger of possible explosions from unexploded shells, bombs, or torpedoes still on board. We are told in 2 Timothy 3:5 that there are some from which we are to turn away. So we are to steer our courses around those who have made shipwreck of the faith.

Getting back to 1 Timothy 1:18, we have mentioned, "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy." I believe that the expression "this charge" is the same as in verse 3, and also the same as "commandment" in verse 5. It is rendered "enjoin" and is used seven times in this epistle - chapter 4:11 and chapter 6:13, 17. When we see the different ways in which it is used, we begin to realize something of the solemnity of what is here brought before us.

What we have just been considering in 1 Timothy 1 as to the pathway has been connected more with the doctrine and the manner of behavior which should accompany it. In chapter 6, however, we have exhortations that are more connected with the material things of life. In verse 5 we have men spoken of as "destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself." This line of things, supposing that gain is godliness, is the opposite of that which the Lord used when tempted of Satan. in Matthew 4:4 - "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." In connection with the material side of things, it does not mention shipwreck, but does mention that which accompanies shipwreck. Verse 9 says, "which drown men in perdition." Then it refers to the love of money, "which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith [or wandered from the faith], and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

The man of faith, here called the man of God, is exhorted to flee these things. There is danger connected with them. The warning used is as though some great catastrophe is about to take place ahead, and he is told to flee; he is to lose no time in getting away.

He is to fight the good fight of faith, or strive earnestly in it. It is a good fight; that is, it is worthy of all the energy that can be brought to bear upon it.

Then follows the most solemn "enjoin" of all those brought before us. It is done as in the sight of God, and the Lord's witnessing "the good confession" before Pontius Pilate: "That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." Then we shall be associated with

Him in all His glory, and what a range of glory is here associated with His appearing!

This is followed by injunctions to those that are rich, not to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God who is brought before us as the One who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Then the opposite of heaping up riches, is to be rich in good works and willing to distribute.

In closing I would call attention to the last clause of verse 19: "That they may lay hold of what is really life." J.N.D. Translation. Man calls life that which his wealth or position enables him to do, which others not so favored are unable to do. But here, what is really life is not that, but is association with those whom God has chosen, the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to them that love Him.

This can only be accomplished by getting our eyes off the things which are seen and fixing them upon the things which are unseen, realizing that the things which are seen are but for a moment, but the others work "for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." J.L.E.

## We Would See Jesus and We See Jesus

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It was preparation time in Jerusalem, for the great feast of the Passover was at hand; and Jews from all over the Palestinian area were assembling for the feast. Little did they know that for faith this would be the last Passover. That which had been inaugurated at Israel's deliverance from Egypt had really looked forward through the centuries to the death of the "Lamb of God." God would "provide Himself a lamb." And now the time had come, and the Lord said to His disciples, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer" - that Passover to which all others looked forward. The type was now to meet its antitype, and He to whom the passover lamb had pointed was there to die on that Passover day. He had earnestly desired to eat that Passover with them before the type would be fulfilled in His death.

Strange things took place in Jerusalem at that time. The Lord had been acclaimed as the "Son of David" when He had ridden into Jerusalem on the ass's colt (John 12:13-15). Many had strewn palm branches before Him, and He had been hailed as the "King of Israel" according to the 118th Psalm; but at the same time He was rejected. The Jewish leaders had decided on a course of getting rid of Him by any means, and were ready to also put Lazarus to death because many of the Jews believed on Jesus when they saw Lazarus alive who had been dead.

But in the midst of this undisguised hatred of the Lord Jesus, there was one bright note. Some Greeks had come up to worship at the feast. "The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus." This pleased Philip, and he sought Andrew to tell him the good news - if the Jewish authorities rejected their Lord, there were Greeks who desired to see Him. To their uninstructed thoughts, this seemed like a notable honor for Him; so they went and told Jesus.

"And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a [rather, they corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." John 12:23, 24. He was not then to be honored by admiring Greeks, but to be glorified by going into death and coming forth as the head of a new creation. An entirely new harvest was to be the result of His death and resurrection.

We are never told that the Greeks got to see Jesus, but a very important truth was disclosed to the two Apostles. The Lord Jesus had been rejected as Israel's Messiah, and He now took that title of rejection, the "Son of Man." It was a much broader title, for under that He suffered and will reign over all. He will not merely reign as Messiah over Israel, but, as Son of Man, He will have all things put under Him (see Psalm 8).

Furthermore, there was no blessing for Greeks in a Messiah on earth; as such, He would have blessed Israel, but they had refused Him. He was now about to die on the cross and rise again. He was to lay the foundation for blessing to mankind of every race - "whosoever will." But the true grain of wheat had to fall into the ground and die, or else remain alone. Jews and Greeks were alike ruined by sin, and His sacrificial death was a necessity if He were to have companions in that

scene of glory into which He was to enter. He could have gone straight back into the glory from which He came, but He must needs have gone alone if He had not first gone down into death. All the redeemed in heaven, and on earth at a later date, will be the trophies of His death and resurrection. He will have much fruit as the result of His dying on the cross. "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Isa. 53:11. What an abundance of fruit there will be from the death He suffered, and from which He arose the mighty victor!

Let us now turn to Heb. 2 In this chapter His supremacy over all is decreed, and the 8th Psalm is quoted, to which allusion has already been made. He is to have that dominion given to Him by God as the Son of Man. He is called Son of Man for the first time in that Psalm. But in Heb. 2 it is further stated that He has not yet received His dominion. Not everything has been put under Him at this time, but, as surely as God has spoken, so it will be done. But for us, at the present, "We see Jesus." How? As the Greeks wanted to see Him as a living man on earth? NO. "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor."

By faith we look up into heaven and see the Lord Jesus at God's right hand, where He ever lives for us. He is there now in the presence of God for us, and we are accepted before God in all the acceptableness of His beloved Son. What a privilege we have by faith! It is no longer Christ as a man on earth, nor even Him on the cross, or risen and on earth, but the ascended glorious One. Truly, by faith, "We see Jesus,... crowned."

Many Christians seem never to get beyond the cross, and speak of sitting at the foot of the cross. But our blessed Savior is not on the cross, nor in the tomb, but in the glory of God. When the prophet Elijah was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind, the "sons of the prophets" -the students of the prophets - sent fifty strong men to find him on earth, but failed in their attempt. Many would still find a living Jesus on earth, and those who only speak of His example and teachings, do not know His death, resurrection, or present glory. The Apostle could say, "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more." 2 Cor. 5:16. We have a glorified Savior, of whom it is testified "that He liveth."

None of the religions of earth, except true Christianity, has a living head in the glory of God. Mohammed is dead, and so are countless others who propounded a theory of religion. Those Greeks were ignorant when they desired to see a living Christ, evidently expecting to see some miracle or to receive a blessing; their blessing could only come through His death and resurrection. But for people today to stop short of His death, resurrection, and glorification at God's right hand, is to deny the very basis of Christianity and the reality of the saved sinner's blessing in Him now. That is why there is so much enfeebled Christianity today, and so little of the believer's walking in the enjoyment of Him and all the fruits of His victory. True enjoyment of Christ, as and where He is, makes for more heavenly mindedness and less worldliness.

Many people do not understand that Christianity proper did not begin until Christ was received in the glory of God and the Holy Spirit came down to indwell the believers. It has been well said that Christianity began on the other side of the cloud that received Him out of their sight, while His death and resurrection as the true grain of wheat laid the foundation for the abundant crop of the new creation.

May God grant us to have a deeper sense of the necessity of His death and resurrection, of His present place in the glory of God, and to dwell in the enjoyment of our place in Christ in that glory. May the Man in the glory of God fill our hearts with wonder and praise. And the more we contemplate Him there, the more we shall live in moral conformity to Him now. Then the moment is coming when we shall actually "see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2) - not as He was on earth before, but as He is now. Then we shall be fully conformed to His image, and shall have bodies of glory like His.

Yes, "We see Jesus,... crowned."

## Who Strengtheneth Me

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The Apostle Paul could do all things through Him who strengthened him. Sweet and precious experience! not only because it gives ability to meet all circumstances, which is of great price, but because the Lord is known - the constant, faithful, mighty friend of the heart. It is not, "I can do all things," but, "I can do all through Him who strengtheneth me." It is a strength which continually flows from a relationship with Christ, a connection with Him maintained in the heart. Neither is it only, "one can do all things." This is true, but Paul had learned it practically. He knew what he could be assured of and reckon on - what ground he stood on. Christ had always been faithful to him, had brought him through so many difficulties and through so many seasons of prosperity, that he had learned to trust in Him, and not in circumstances. And Christ was the same ever.

## Words Written to Christians

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The Apostle wrote to the Corinthians that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." 1 Cor. 15:3. It is evident that he thus wrote to them after they believed the gospel and were baptized. Never is language so precise applied to unbelievers. Those who so preach assume what is false; namely, that all are saved, but that it after all avails only for such as believe. But this is to trifle with both God and man. For it is absolutely true that, till they believe, all are alike the children of wrath. So the Apostle classes himself with the most privileged of mankind, yet declares that, "We all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Eph. 2:3. All were alike dead in their offenses and their sins. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in our offenses, quickened us together with the Christ.

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