

# SERMONS OF R B WILSON

by R.B. Wilson

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*Wilson's poetic sermon collection celebrating Christ's redemption, mercy, and the believer's relationship with Jesus as Savior and friend.*

8 Chapters

## Table of Contents

1. 00.00. Wilson, R. B. - Articles
2. A Song and a Prayer.
3. Glorifying and Vain-Glorifying
4. Hold Fast.
5. Revelation and Response.
6. Strengthen the Things which Remain
7. The Testimony of our Lord
8. We Faint Not.

## **00.00. Wilson, R. B. - Articles**

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Wilson, R. B. - Articles S. A Song and a Prayer S. Glorifying and Vain-Glorifying

S. Hold Fast S. Revelation and Response S. Strengthen the Things which Remain S. The Testimony of our Lord

S. We Faint Not

## A Song and a Prayer.

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A Song and a Prayer.

Blessed Redeemer! sent from above, Matchless Thy beauty, wondrous Thy love, Tender Thy mercies, faithful Thy word, Gladly I own Thee Saviour and Lord.

Precious the moments when I retrace Thy path so lowly, Thy ways of grace, Hearts that were broken, eyes that were blind, In Thy blest presence healing did find.

Tempted of Satan, yet did'st Thou go Forward in triumph o'er every foe, Till in the darkness of Calv'ry's tree, Thou did'st atone for sinners like me.

Past all Thy sorrow, now on the Throne, Thou without ceasing lovest Thine own, Constant and watchful, Thy shepherd care, Till they together Thy glory share.

Come! precious Saviour into my heart, Bid ev'ry rival thence to depart, Be Thou my pilot safe to the shore, With Thee to enter joys evermore.

Keep me, Lord Jesus, to Thee so near, Let Thy blest presence banish all fear, Soon from the glory Thou wilt descend, Soon shall I see Thee, Saviour and Friend.

R. B. Wilson.

## Glorying and Vain-Glorying

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Glorying and Vain-Glorying. The title we have chosen for this paper reminds us of two conditions of soul that may characterise us as believers. They are found in Paul's two epistles to the Corinthian Assembly. The Apostle first deals with the spirit of vain-glory which was very much in evidence at Corinth, for he well knew that this evil must be firmly judged and removed before the Corinthians could be in a fit spiritual condition to appreciate and enjoy the glorious things that filled his own heart to overflowing. Indeed it is well for us ever to remember that God's order is always "Cease to do evil; learn to do well" (Isaiah 1:16-17); for if we reverse this order, as many attempt to do, we shall always be in doubt and difficulty.

It is well known that the saints at Corinth had fallen into such a low spiritual condition that the Apostle was burdened with grief on their account. In his second letter to them (2 Corinthians 2:4), he writes, "for out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears" — "Much affliction," "anguish of heart," "many tears." Surely the repetition of these significant and sorrowful words from the pen, and from the heart, of the Lord's devoted servant ought to touch a sympathetic chord in every true Christian's heart. How great must have been his affliction when the sad news reached him from the household of Chloe, that the saints at Corinth, among whom he had so fervently laboured, through trying days of persecution, and among whom he had determined to know nothing save "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2), were forming parties and thus destroying the unity of the assembly, in the truth of which he had sought to establish them! How great his "anguish of heart" to behold his beloved children torn by strife and contention! and when we recall the fact that in Christ Jesus he had begotten them through the Gospel we can understand that the "many tears" flowed copiously from a heart filled with parental affection for them notwithstanding all their waywardness and folly (1 Corinthians 4:15).

We may here remark that the evil of division which had its beginning at Corinth in the early days of the Church, is fully developed in Christendom today, and apparently there is no hope of recovery. This lamentable state of things is due to the fact that the professing church has abandoned the truth of Christ's Headship, and aided and abetted earthly heads to usurp His place. More grievous still is the fact that there are many true believers who give a mental assent to the truth of Christ's Headship of His Assembly, and yet who in practice deny it. Boasting the knowledge of such important truths as the one "Headship" and the one "Body" and yet refusing to walk in the separate path such knowledge apportions to them, do they really differ in spirit from those to whom our Lord addressed the heart-searching and memorable words "Why call ye Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say" (Luke 6:46)? No worldly-wise schemes such as we hear of today, for healing the many breaches in Christendom would have met with Paul's approval. Nor would those leaders, who refuse the guidance of Scripture and adopt human arrangements, such as amalgamation, have been any more successful.

It is both uplifting and edifying to note how Paul seeks to win the Corinthians from their evil ways and thus to accomplish his desire that they should be "perfectly joined together in the same mind

and in the same judgment." We refer to 1 Corinthians 1:9-10, here he tells them that "God is faithful, by whom ye have been called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Without further preamble, the Apostle at once endeavours to bring the consciences of these wayward and worldly saints into God's holy presence.

He reminds them that they have a link with God as His "called" ones, and further that this calling was a high and holy one, even to be in the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Doubtless this forcible reminder of their high calling, falling, as it did on the ears of saints who were in a low spiritual condition, would produce searchings of heart, such as were caused by the divisions of Reuben; but it was generally Paul's method in seeking to reach the consciences of backsliding saints to remind them of the purpose of God for them. This he does in the beautiful context preceding the verse we are considering, in which he assures them that they were "awaiting the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ Who shall also confirm you to the end unimpeachable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." Precious, precious promise! What words could be more fitting to deepen the work of repentance in backsliding hearts? As a result of the wonderful declaration in 5:9, Paul now exhorts them by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ that they all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among them. The Apostle well knew the power and sweetness of that Name, that it was the only centre of unity, and only by that Name would his exhortation to unity and happy fellowship come home to their souls. When Paul called together the elders of the Church at Ephesus (Acts 20:29) he informed them that after his departing grievous wolves would enter in among them not sparing the flock. In Corinth, however, it was the flock themselves who were the evil workers. The enemy, whose constant purpose it is to scatter the sheep, does not mind whom he uses as his instruments, so long as the scattering is accomplished, and it is important to note that these instruments, whether false shepherds or deluded sheep seek their own glory. All the parties in Corinth were verily guilty, but surely the worst was the one that chose for its party badge the very Name which should have been their common bond of union, the very Name pleaded by Paul, for the restoration of unity among them.

It is most touching to note how Paul seeks to instruct and to warn his beloved children in the faith. This he does in ch. 1 (latter part), 2, 3 of 1 Corinthians. These chapters contain many profound and precious truths for example:

1 Corinthians 1:18. The preaching of the Cross — foolishness to the perishing. Unto us which are saved — the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:20. Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

1 Corinthians 1:23. Christ crucified — unto the Jews a stumbling block. Christ crucified — unto the Greeks foolishness.

1 Corinthians 1:25. The foolishness of God is wiser than men. The weakness of God is stronger than men.

1 Corinthians 1:31. He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

These are selected from ch. 1, and there are many other gems in this wonderful casket of holy Scripture. In 1 Corinthians 4:1-21 other matters are referred to by the Apostle which manifest the spirit of vain-glory existing among the saints at Corinth, but limited time and space will only permit

a brief reference to them. We gather from 5: 3 that such was their high opinion of themselves that they considered they were quite competent to pass judgment on their leaders, even Paul himself not escaping their criticism. What dignity and humility is shown in Paul's reply! "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment, . . . But He that judgeth me is the Lord(vv. 3, 4). Happy is the Christian who can make a like confession! In 5: 6 the Apostle charges them with being puffed up for one against another, and that this exaltation of their teachers was really a gratification of their own pride. It was not that they puffed up the teacher, but themselves. Then he explains their folly and shows how absurd is their glorying in men, for even if one possess some gift, he has not attained it by his own excellence or ability, but it is the free gift of God. Paul asks "What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" It is apparent that there were those in Corinth, apart from the leaders, who gloried in their own fancied gifts. Paul refers to such in ch. 8, where he says "Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth, and if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know" (5: 1-2). The last two cases to which we wish to refer, display the spirit of self-glorification in a more marked degree than any of the others. The Apostle brings them vividly before us in ch. 4 and 5. In 1 Corinthians 4:8, he says "Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us, and I would to God ye did reign that we also might reign with you." Doubtless, it was with much anguish of heart that Paul wrote these words. Bad doctrine, as it always does, had produced bad practice they had forgotten that the Lord's pathway through this world was one of suffering, shame and loss, and that their's should be likewise; but for suffering they preferred surfeiting, for tribulation they preferred triumph, for the world's curse they preferred its Crown. The joy of the Christian in sharing rejection with Christ they knew nothing of, and the precious promise that "if we suffer we shall also reign with Him" (2 Timothy 2:12) had lost its charm for them. Paul waited in patience for the reigning time to share it with his beloved children, but they preferred to reign without him. The account he gives of his own manner of life, must have filled them with shame, though this was not his object (see verses 9-14). The last case for our consideration is that recorded in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13. It was a case of evil so heinous that it was not so much as named among the Gentiles, and the guilty man was a member of their own assembly. Instead of having mourned that he might be removed from their company they were "puffed up" and apparently quite prepared to tolerate his continued presence with them. It seems incredible that a company of believers who had been called into the fellowship of the Son of God (1 Corinthians 1:9) should display such disregard for the holiness of that fellowship. In Psalms 89:7, we read "God is greatly to be feared in the Assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him." But it is the Christian's privilege to know God in a far nearer and more blessed relationship than Old Testament saints could do. We know God as Father; we know Christ as Firstborn among many brethren; we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him; then surely our fear of God, and reverence for God, should greatly exceed that of the psalmist of old. But does it? As far as the Corinthians were concerned, both fear and reverence were absent. Hence the urgent entreaty of the Apostle to "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person" 1 Corinthians 5:13. The unholy idea that the evil of another is not to be judged, but that each must judge himself, means the destruction of God's glory in the Church. In recording these various phases of evil in the Assembly at Corinth, their carnal divisions, their exaltation of leaders, their acting as judges, their boasting in their gifts, their glorying in this life, their being puffed up, when evil was rampant in the Assembly; the writer's earnest prayer is that

the saints of God may be preserved or delivered from similar evils which abound in Christendom in this present day.

R. B. Wilson.

Speech.

"Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom."

How many words — not bad or evil — but idle, for the moment without harm meant, do we speak in a day? It is not Christ, and mark, if it is not Christ, it is something else — the flesh.

J. N. Darby.

## Hold Fast.

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### Hold Fast.

One of the most interesting and affecting scenes recorded in the Holy Scriptures is that given in Acts 20:17-38. Since the Spirit of God penned these words, the hearts of His people have often been uplifted, as they contemplated therein the zeal and devotion of God's honoured servant Paul, the great Apostle to the Gentiles. Notwithstanding the fact that the Holy Ghost had witnessed that bonds and afflictions awaited him, he triumphantly pursued his course, for none of these things moved him, neither counted he his life dear to him, so that he might finish his course. But a heavy burden lay on his heart, for he knew that "grievous wolves" were awaiting the opportunity, on his departure, to scatter the flock on which he had bestowed so much care and affection. How touchingly he reminds the elders of Ephesus that for three years, night and day, he ceased not to warn every one with tears. Calling upon them to watch and remember, he commends them to God and the word of His grace and finally prays for them all.

Now let us take our thoughts from Paul and those first century Christians, and crossing the intervening centuries of the church's chequered career — fix them on the saints in their present condition. Who will venture to claim that spiritual progress has been a marked feature of her long history? Has the Bride been loyal to her heavenly Bridegroom? Has the church truly manifested to a lost and perishing world her heavenly character in holy separation? Alas! we must hang our heads in shame, and confess that her whole course has been marked by failure. But God has always had His chosen witnesses, who, like beacons, have illumined the darkness in their own day and generation, and it is even so today, while the professing church approaches that solemn hour when, Christ, whom she professes to serve and honour, will spue her out of His mouth (Revelation 3:16).

Many Christians await, with daily expectation, their Lord's return, anxiously waiting to hear their heavenly Bridegroom say, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away" (Song of Solomon 2:10). Not a doubt have they that they are in the "perilous times" of the last days, predicted by Paul. They are "perilous times" because iniquity abounds under a fair Christian show, a form of godliness with the denial of its power: "perilous" too, because "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). But their hearts beat high in anticipation of the soon-coming compensation, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Timothy 2:12); a rallying call that must have cheered the persecuted saints in that distant day. Great would be our loss if we regarded the apostle's exhortations as having no message for us today; and may the Lord preserve us from turning a deaf ear to them. A favourite exhortation of Paul's was "Hold fast." In 1 Thessalonians 5:21 he calls upon the saints to "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." How much sorrowful strife and division would have been avoided if saints had heeded this brief word of exhortation. In Acts 20:30 we have this warning to the Elders of Ephesus, "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Often has the need of this warning been evident. How often, in a time crisis, have leaders, on some plausible pretext,

persuaded whole companies of Christians to follow them in a path not according to the truth of God. But the blame lies not only with the leaders, but also with those who give blind submission to them, and who thus shirk their responsibility to judge matters for themselves in the Lord's presence, as the Bereans of old, who searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so (Acts 17:11).

Never was there a day when the messengers of Satan were more active, pouring out from pulpit and platform their evil teachings in the form of "good words and fair speeches" to deceive the hearts of the simple. What need for the solemn warning of the Lord in Matthew 7:15, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." Such men seek to impress their hearers by their scholarship and knowledge, but under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the youngest believer can prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. Let us value the truth, and hold it at all costs. A second "Hold fast" is in Paul's second epistle to the Thessalonians, "So then, brethren, stand firm, and hold fast the instructions which ye have been taught" (2 Thessalonians 2:15). Those conversant with the two epistles to the Thessalonians will have noticed a marked difference between them. The first rings with a joyful note. Paul commends them for their work of faith, their labour of love, and their patience of hope. Although suffering terrible persecution, their joy was in the Lord and in the glad expectation of His coming; and the heart of the apostle was filled with delight, so that he speaks of them as his glory and joy. Turning to the second letter, we are conscious that evil has been working among them. Like some blight that settles on a beautiful flower garden, the emissaries of Satan had cast their blight of unbelief on this fair garden of the Lord. Paul again commends, as in his first letter, their faith and love, but makes no mention of their patience of hope or their joy in the Holy Ghost. Evidently their hope of the Lord's coming had become dimmed, and consequently their joy had waned, so well had these false teachers done their deceitful work. The apostle had taught them that the Lord Himself was coming, and that they would be caught up to be for ever with Him; but the false teachers had persuaded them that the day of the Lord had already come, and that the trials and tribulations through which they were passing were the proof of it. No wonder they were troubled and shaken in mind. Assuring them of the error, Paul seems to say, Do you not know that Christ is coming for you, and the first object and effect of His coming will be to gather you together to meet Him in the air? In view of this working of error, it is not surprising that the apostle, in his second letter, as in his first, exhorts the saints to "hold fast." His second appeal appears to be even more emphatic than the first, "Stand firm, and hold fast the instructions which ye have been taught" (2 Thessalonians 2:15). May this firmness and tenacity be more characteristic of all true believers in these last days!

Turning now to 2 Timothy 1:13 we find another of Paul's hold fasts: "Hold fast the form of sound words." On reading Paul's two letters to his beloved Timothy, one is struck with his frequent references to what is the opposite of sound words. Timothy was not to give heed to fables and endless genealogies; some had turned aside to vain jangling, understanding not what they said. Timothy was to refuse profane and old wives' fables, and withdraw himself from men occupied with questions and disputes of words. But these false guides are not alone in guilt, as the apostle shows; "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:3-4). No enlightened saint would deny the

fulfilment of this solemn prophecy in this our day. It is because there are itching ears that the insidious poison is imbibed. But while many are being carried away by the torrent of evil teaching, the grace of God has provided a sure "hold fast," and a firm foundation for all who desire them.

Just as Timothy was exhorted to "Hold fast the form of sound words," so it is the inestimable privilege of every man to plant his foot firmly on, what one of Britain's most famous Prime Ministers called, "The impregnable rock of Holy Scripture." Oh that men would realize that in their search for light and life they are entirely dependent on the living word of the living God. In Isaiah's day men had lost the knowledge of God, and were seeking light by resorting to familiar spirits. This sorely distressed the great Evangelical prophet, and caused him to utter that pleading cry, "Shall not a people seek unto their God? Will they go for the living unto the dead? To the law and the testimony! If they speak not according to this word, for them there is no daybreak." "No daybreak!" unspeakably solemn words! They remind us of Peter's reference to the false teachers, in which he designates them as "wells without water . . . to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever" (2 Peter 2:17).

"My power and might are thine faint heart:

Say, why art thou cast down?

Stand, holding fast what grace thou hast, That no man take thy crown."

Hold Fast.No. 2.

We read in the Epistle to the Hebrews 3:6, "But Christ, as Son over His house, whose house are we, if indeed we hold fast the boldness and the boast of hope firm to the end." Students of Holy Scripture need not to be reminded that one of the objects of this most important Epistle was, to detach the hearts and minds of the Hebrew Christians from an earthly system of religion that was temporary, and to direct them to what was heavenly in origin and character, and eternal in duration. A close study of the writer's statements, wherein he sought to accomplish his purpose, would afford a rich spiritual feast to all who undertook the soul-edifying task.

It is evident that the epistle is addressed to converted Jews who were passing through a period of trial and persecution. They would be thoroughly conversant with the Jewish religion; and all the prominent personages, places and practices pertaining to the earthly system would be well known to them; and the fact that the system was instituted by God Himself would undoubtedly ensure its veneration by them. But the whole system had been set aside by God, for it had not been able to procure blessing for men; and in it God had been dishonoured by the wickedness of Israel.

Many Scriptures could be quoted to show the solemnity of the people's failure in the holy things of God. Read Isaiah 1:10-15, wherein God says, "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting." Another prophet states that the priests had polluted God's sanctuary (Zephaniah 3:4); and the last prophet of the Old Testament presents things at a very low ebb. Malachi reveals that the people had no heart for God and His things; although there was the outward show of religion, there was no reality. They brought the lame and the blind for sacrifice to God, thus despising His holy Name. Coming to the New Testament there is no evidence of recovery on the part of the people. Their beautiful Temple which our Lord had at the beginning of

His public ministry acknowledged as His Father's house, He afterwards speaks of as "Your house," left desolate, for God had forsaken it (See Matthew 23:38). The condition of things that met God's holy eye could scarcely be worse than it was; but the darkest hour of night is just before the dawn. A new order of things was about to be ushered in; Christ was about to build His assembly of LIVING STONES; but before the church could be brought into being, Christ the Son of the living God must suffer death on the cross and rise again. Blessed indeed is the portion of those who can sing: On Christ salvation rests secure; The Rock of Ages must endure; Nor can that faith be overthrown Which rests upon the "Living Stone." In Him, it is ordained to raise A temple to Jehovah's praise, Composed of all the saints, who own No Saviour but the "Living Stone."

View the vast building, see it rise; The work how great! the plan how wise O wondrous fabric! power unknown! That rears it on the "Living Stone."

These words recall to our memories our Lord's words to His servant Peter in Matthew 16:13-18, "On this rock I will build my assembly, and hades' gates shall not prevail against it." How very solemn and foolish the notion of those who maintain that this rock was Peter, rather than the truth confessed by Peter that Christ was the Son of the living God. Multitudes are seeking rest for their souls in Popery, where this notion is held; in a system which is but a revival of Judaism, a human and formal religion whose approaching end is definitely stated in Revelation 18:1-24. What a contrast to this is the glorious future of the true church, portrayed in Revelation 21:1-27.

Reverting now to the text at the beginning of this paper, we note that the writer finds it necessary to warn the Hebrew believers that their being God's house depended on their HOLDING FAST the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. This shows that the truth of the building in Scripture contemplates on the one hand the sovereign, divine workmanship, where the gates of hades can not prevail; and on the other hand, that aspect where man builds, and where failure and ruin enter. Popery has confused these two, vainly imagining that the powers of evil cannot prevail against that which man builds, be he ever so evil. Of the danger the Hebrews were in another has said, "The Hebrew Christians were in danger — being attracted by their former habits, and by a law and ceremonies which God Himself had established — of forsaking a Christianity, in which Christ was not visible, for things that were visible and palpable. The Christ of Christians, far from being a crown of glory to the people, was only an object for faith, so that if faith failed, He was deprived of all importance to them." (J. N. Darby.)

How very solemn and yet lamentably true are these soul-stirring words. How many there are in this day who revere the things that are "visible and palpable," be they beautiful buildings of finest architecture, charming and impressive music, or earthly priests clad in richest vestments: things that appeal to man after the flesh. Others, though not attracted by such things may get their eyes fixed on men rather than on Christ, and be affected by chosen leaders, companions, or friends with whom they have enjoyed Christian fellowship. God will have us occupied with Christ in the glory, not with visible things down here, be they naturally attractive or appealing to the emotions. May these words not apply to us. "Faith has failed, Christ is deprived of all importance to him." Oh! let us ever "HOLD FAST the precious truth that belongs to God's House, over which Christ is SON; let us "hold fast the boldness and the boast of hope firm to the end." As called with a heavenly calling the saints do not belong to this scene, they belong to heaven whither they are bound, for heaven is their glorious destiny. The church does not belong to the earth; Israel is an

earthly company, but the church belongs to heaven. If the church does not hold fast its true character and hope it entirely falsifies what it is as the House of God, hence the exhortation to hold fast the boldness and the boast of our heavenly hope. Anything that tends to weaken in the soul our true heavenly character tends to give a false impression of the God Who has called us to be for Him in testimony in the present moment. May we not become feeble or cowardly; may it be constantly the joy and boast of our hearts that we belong to heaven and are going to heaven, so that our feet may tread the heavenly way that leads to where our fore-runner has gone, within the veil. Till that blessed hope is realised in the coming of the Lord, may the prayer of our hearts ever be "O, keep us, love divine, near Thee. That we our nothingness may know, And ever to Thy glory be Walking in faith while here below."

Hold Fast.No. 3. In a previous paper we were reminded of the precious truth that all true believers in our Lord Jesus Christ constitute the house of God. Confirmation of this wonderful fact is found in 1 Peter 2:4-5, where we read of the saints being built up "A spiritual house;" and in Ephesians 2:20-22, where they are spoken of as "Built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit." It is well to note the prominence given to Jesus Christ in these important Scriptures. Truly His glory far outshines that of Moses, who was faithful as a "servant" in the house of God; but Christ as "Builder" of the house, and as "Son" over it, has been counted worthy of greater glory (Hebrews 3:3).

What visions of glory do these precious Scriptures reveal to us! In presence of the greatness of the light they afford, we do well to search our hearts. Do we, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, realize or appreciate, as we ought, the dignity that God places upon us, in calling us to be living stones in the formation of His house? Psalms 29:9, referring to an earthly temple, says "Every whit of it uttereth glory" (margin); and another Psalms 96:6, says that strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. Knowing that these features characterized God's earthly house, we conclude that it must be His desire that these same features, in a spiritual way, should be manifested in His house at the present time. May it ever be, dear fellow believer, our desire and prayer for grace to enable us, in this world of darkness and unbelief, to show forth, as living stones, some rays of the glory, some manifestation of the strength, and some traits of the beauty, of the church's living Head. Thus shall we give pleasure to the heart of our God. In this same chapter, Hebrews 3:14, there is another exhortation, to HOLD STEADFAST. Here we are reminded that believers are become companions of the Christ, if indeed they hold the beginning of the assurance firm to the end. In using the word "partakers" instead of "companions" in this verse, the authorised version has missed the true meaning; it is not our blessing in Christ but rather our place with Christ that is spoken of. It is the same word as "fellows" in Hebrews 1:9, where we read of Christ being anointed with the oil of gladness above His companions. Companions of Christ! Companions of Him, whose glories are unsearchable, whose power is illimitable, and whose love is unfathomable! The question may well be asked, "Who are these highly favoured ones, whose privilege it is to enjoy such intimacy with the mighty Son of God?" Are they a select company of glorious angelic beings? Are they chosen from the records of the patriarchs, prophets and kings in the Old Testament? Are their names emblazoned on the renowned pages of this world's history? No! none of these! They are those to whom our Lord referred when, on the morning of resurrection, He said to Mary, "Go to my brethren. and say unto them, I ascend to my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." They are those referred to in Hebrews 2:11, "For both he that sanctifies and they who are

sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." Yes! they are those found on earth today, who, as true believers, are not ashamed to confess Jesus as their Saviour and Lord. They may suffer scorn and rejection by the world, but as companions of their rejected Lord they pursue their happy way to the longed-for goal: To be with Him in life's eternal home, Where sin, nor want, nor woe, nor death can come.

Having spoken briefly on these two wonderful truths in Hebrews 3:1-19; firstly that believers form the house of God, secondly, that they are become companions of the Christ; our earnest attention must be drawn to the fact that the possession and enjoyment of these great blessings are rendered conditional by the word "if." "Whose house are we if we hold fast" (Hebrews 3:6); "Companions of Christ if we hold . . . stedfast" (Hebrews 3:14). These ifs are intended to produce soul exercise, and we will thank God for them if this happy result is achieved. They are certainly not there on account of any change in God's attitude of grace, nor any withdrawal of His purposes of blessing for men. They were introduced because some of the Hebrews were only professors. When they heard the glorious message of salvation, "the word of the report did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard" (Hebrews 4:2). They were like the stony-ground hearers, there was no root in them, and when tribulation and persecution came, they were offended, (Matthew 13:21). Some also longed for the material things pertaining to an earthly religious system, things which aforesaid they had given up. It is remarkable that after each of these conditional promises, a most solemn warning is given by the devoted writer of the epistle (See verses, 7, 8; 15). He knew the irreparable and eternal loss which the Hebrews would suffer if they left the path of faith for the weak and beggarly elements of Judaism. How earnestly he reminds them of the deplorable conduct of their forefathers in their wilderness wanderings; their continual murmurings, notwithstanding God's goodness and mercy; their crying for bread, and God sending the manna: their crying for water, and God's bountiful supply from the smitten rock; their crying for meat, and God sending the quails. God, in pity, delivered them from Egypt's dread bondage, saying, "I bare you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself;" His mighty works, watchful care, and invincible power they had known and proved for forty years; yet they tempted Him by saying "Is the Lord among us or not?" (Exodus 17:7). Could there be worse ingratitude? Could there be greater sin?

Solemnly indeed do the warning appeals of Hebrews 3:1-19; Hebrews 4:1-16 sound in our ears, "Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." But alas! we know the warnings were unheeded, the evil heart of unbelief prevailed, the dire result being their departure from the living God and the perishing of that mighty host in the wilderness, with the exception of two invincible men of faith, Caleb and Joshua.

Most probably these timely and solemn warnings, given to the Hebrews in the first century of the Christian era, produced in many of them that state of soul exercise which resulted in their eternal salvation. But we are living in the twentieth century. Have these warnings any voice for us? Does the solemn responsibility rest on us to take heed, lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God? There are many false teachers who would seek to persuade us that we are quite free from such responsibility because the warnings in Hebrews were for Jews only. We would be well advised to turn a deaf ear to such, knowing that God will deal in judgment with those who corrupt His word. No! we can claim no exemption, nor do we wish to do so. These solemn heart-searching, God-given warnings are meant for every twentieth century believer, and

woe betide us if we neglect them.

We are in the midst of a Christendom whose heart is one of unbelief. Departure from God, as a consequence, marks its sad and downward course; and its predicted doom is rapidly drawing near. Let us, dear fellow-believer, hold fast to the precious truths we have been considering, for we can only prove that we are God's house, and companions of the Christ by holding fast our assurance of hope firm to the end.

R. B. Wilson.

## Revelation and Response.

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Revelation and Response. At a meeting of Christians held a short time ago, one speaker gave an address on the subject "What the Church is to Christ," followed by another speaker who took for his subject "What the Church is to God." It is reported that those who were privileged to be present greatly enjoyed the two addresses, and we feel thankful to God, that, in this world where the enemy of souls is apparently so successful in deflecting the minds of men from occupation with the blessed God and His Beloved Son, and the wonderful sphere of blessing that grace has so fully revealed, there are those who delight to meet together for the contemplation of such Heavenly themes as those above mentioned.

It is the writer's judgment that it might be profitable to prolong this meditation, on the Church, not in its relation to Christ, or to God, but what it is as related to the individual members who compose it; and what kind of response should be expected from those who are so highly honoured of God as to be chosen as living stones in His House, and so beloved by Christ as to be elect members of His Body and His Bride. In the New Testament the Church is presented under various aspects. e.g., a House, a Body, a Bride, a Lampstand and a City. The House Aspect. The House suggests at once a dwelling-place. How marvellous is the grace of God, that He has always desired to dwell with men. Even in Old Testament times, where we have the record of His dealings with His earthly people, the Jews, we read of His gracious invitation to His servant Moses, "Let them make Me a Sanctuary that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8). What wonderful condescension on God's part and how blessed the portion of the people in whose midst the mighty God desired to dwell! But how sad is the history of this greatly favoured nation! What a record of disobedience, failure and unbelief is theirs! so much so that when we turn to the New T. we hear the first Christian martyr, Stephen, say to their offspring, "O stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers, ye also" (Acts 7:51). The Tabernacle was God's Sanctuary while His people journeyed through the wilderness, but when they reached Canaan, a more substantial building — the Temple at Jerusalem became His Sanctuary. It is necessary to note that both the Tabernacle and the Temple were material buildings, but it is hoped that no reader of this paper entertains such a notion that any material structure, however vast its size, or ornate its architecture, forms the House of God in this day. Another reference to Stephen's address in Acts 7:48 assures us that "the Most High dwells not in places made with hands." The reason, no doubt, that many hold wrong ideas about the Church, is their belief that Christianity is a development of Judaism. This is a great mistake, for the Old Testament says nothing about the Church. It gives us a record of God's dealings with an earthly people, whereas the Church is heavenly, in nature, origin and destination. But though the Church is not mentioned in the O.T. we would be great losers if we neglected to study closely the wonderful types of the Church as given to us in Exodus 25:1-40; Exodus 26:1-37; Exodus 27:1-21; Exodus 28:1-43; Exodus 29:1-46; Exodus 30:1-38. These chapters reveal to us a domain where treasures of heavenly wisdom abound in richest profusion. Everything they contain is planned by God Himself and Moses was repeatedly warned to make everything "according to the plan shown him in the mount." Apart from

a brief reference to the boards of the Tabernacle, time and space forbid our further reference to these wonderful types. These boards, forty-eight in number, covered with gold, standing upright on sockets of silver, and ten cubits high, supporting the beautiful curtains (typifying the manifold glories of Christ) formed God's dwelling place in the midst of His earthly people.

Reader! if you are a true believer, this wonderful description of the boards applies to yourself for note:

1. In God's sight you are covered with gold. Gold signifies the righteousness of God. You are in Christ. You are God's righteousness in Him. See 2 Corinthians 5:21. You are no longer among those referred to in Romans 10:3 who are "ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness."

2. You are standing on the sockets of silver. Silver in Scripture signifies redemption, You are on redemption ground.

3. You are ten cubits in stature, meaning you have reached God's standard of responsibility (ten Commandments were given to Israel). Romans 3:23 no longer applies to you.

It must be clearly stated that 1, 2 and 3 only apply to believers as in Christ.

4. The boards, upholding the beautiful curtains, surely represent believers in this day, who both individually and unitedly, seek to herald forth the glories of Christ. What a blessed response is this for all the favours grace has shown us! and how zealous we should be in manifesting it!

Let us now look at the New Testament. The types and shadows of the Old, however interesting and helpful they may be as patterns of heavenly things, must take a secondary place in our thoughts to the heavenly things themselves. Many Scriptures might be considered but our choice must be a very limited one.

We turn first to Matthew 16:13-19. Here we have the record of a conversation between our Lord and His disciples. He asks them the question "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am." After hearing their various replies, He repeats the question and Peter replies in those ever memorable words, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." What a cheer this heaven-born confession must have been to the heart of the Lord Jesus, for He said to Peter that His Father in Heaven had revealed it to him.

Then the Lord makes a statement, which has been the subject of controversy in religions circles throughout the ages. since His blessed lips gave utterance to it, but which. on the other hand, has afforded super-abounding joy to the humble and faithful child of God. The statement is: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my assembly."

Many hold the false idea that the Rock was Peter — an unstable rock indeed would he have been No! not Peter! but Peter's confession is the Rock, "Christ, the Son of the Living God." The name Peter means a stone or a piece of the Rock, possessing the same life and nature as the Rock, and nothing less than this — "having Christ's life and nature" — would be acceptable to God as material for His Assembly. Remember the boards of the Tabernacle, the gold, the silver, and their stature of ten cubits.

"I will build MY Assembly." The quiet contemplation of these five words with all the assurance, mighty power and infinite love which they express, must fill the hearts of believers with supreme joy.

Conscious of His power to build that blessed Object which would afford Him every delight through eternal days He challenges the gates of hades and manifests the futility of Satanic power. Shortly after these triumphant words were uttered He reminds His disciples (verse 21) of His approaching death and resurrection, which must both eventuate before the Building could begin. His devotion unto death must enhance, to the true Christian the thought of His love as expressed in the words MY Assembly, and we would again ask the question, "what Response do we render in return for all His love and the place of high honour He has bestowed upon us?" Does it not appear to us that He expects it, for in wonderful grace He tells us of the worst hindrance which blocks the way to our yielding it? "What is that?" does some one ask. Dear young believer, seek the quiet of your Lord's presence, and hear Him say to you "If any one desires to come after Me, LET HIM DENY HIMSELF and take up his Cross and follow Me" (verse 24).

After what has been said, some one may ask: Is the Church in existence today? If so, where is it? When did it begin? In reply we add that the Church is living today though the world may not see it. Scripture, however, assures us that "The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Timothy 2:19).

If it were possible to assemble all true believers in a town or city (say Edinburgh for example) into some large place, we could say of them that they were the Church of God in Edinburgh. As to the Church's beginning on earth, Acts 2:1-47 tells us that the day of Pentecost was its birthday, and Jerusalem its birthplace. After Christ had finished the work of redemption and had ascended to Heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to indwell His Assembly. After nearly two thousand years this Building is not completed. New stones are constantly being added, and when the last one is placed in position, then Christ will come to claim His Bride and present Her to Himself, a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing (Ephesians 5:27).

"Oh, Day of wondrous promise The Bridegroom and the Bride, Are seen in glory ever, And love is satisfied."

There are many events recorded in God's Word, which shine like mighty beacons in the dense darkness of this world, but only those, who through God's mercy, have received their sight, are aware of them. One of these is given to us in Luke's gospel, Luke 2:10-11. We remember the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night, and how thrilled they must have been, when the surrounding darkness was suddenly dispelled by the brilliance of the glory of the Lord, and on their ears there fell the angelic message, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day — a Saviour which is Christ the Lord," and to remove every shadow of doubt as to Who He actually is, Matthew 1:23 adds "They shall call His Name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is GOD WITH US." This spontaneous and mighty display of grace on God's part, in sending His Son for man's redemption, has drawn forth volumes of praise from myriads of redeemed and adoring hearts. Cold and callous, indeed, must be the heart, where response is unknown.

Another event, wherein is displayed the matchless grace of God is recorded in Acts 1:1-26; Acts 2:1-47. In these chapters we read of the Lord and His disciples being together, Judas the traitor,

was absent. The death and resurrection of Jesus are both accomplished, and He is about to ascend back to heaven from whence He came. He gathers His loved disciples around Him, and commands them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father. This, according to John 14:16, was the Holy Spirit. Further, He tells them that they "will be baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days hence" (Acts 1:5), and verse 9 assures us "When He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight." But though out of their sight, He is still the object of their affections, as they are of His. It is on account of His love for them, that He sends the Holy Spirit, but this brings us to ch. 2, where we get the birthday of the Assembly, the day of Pentecost, and its birthplace, the upper room at Jerusalem. Speaking of Jerusalem as its birthplace, we do not contradict the statement in our first paper that the Assembly's origin is Heavenly. The presence of the Spirit is necessary for the formation of the Church, for we read in Ephesians 2:22 that believers are built together for a habitation of God IN THE SPIRIT. But from whence did the Spirit come on the day of Pentecost? Surely from the ascended Lord in heaven. If so, then the Assembly's origin is Heavenly. Let it be clearly stated that had Christ's ascension not taken place He could not have sent the Holy Spirit, and had the Holy Spirit not descended from heaven there would have been no Assembly or House of God. It is important to note with regard to the rushing mighty wind that it represents the Holy Spirit as taking up, His abode in the company of the disciples, whereas the Tongues of fire represent His indwelling of individuals. 1 Corinthians 3:16 refers to the former. The Apostle Paul writes "Know ye not that ye (the company) are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (the Company). 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 helps as to the latter. The Apostle says "What? Know ye not that your body (individual) is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" In connection with the second scripture, how comforting is the thought that, if our bodies are even now the temples of the Holy Ghost, how certain it must be that the redemption of our bodies is coming.

Before we leave off our consideration of Acts 2:1-47, an extract from the writings of J.N.D. may be appropriate. Referring to the visible character that the Holy Spirit takes he says "When it descended on Christ (Matthew 3:16) the Spirit was like unto a dove, symbol of the meekness and sweet tranquility of Him of Whom it was written, He shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets, a bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench till He send forth judgment unto victory. . . The Spirit came then as an impetuous wind, filling all the house and as cloven tongues of fire. This partition was symbolical of the many languages, the fire of the penetrating power of the Word of God, discernor of the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

Now what was the response to this mighty manifestation of the grace of God in sending the Holy Ghost that "His people might be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49)? There is one striking phrase which occurs often in these early chapters of Acts, and which is descriptive both of individuals and of companies.

"They were filled with the Spirit."

What weighty words are these! One feels that their meaning could be better expressed in the language of another. After referring to the great power, and the great grace, and the great love which characterized these early Christians, he says:

"Such is the scene which passes before our eyes, when the Church was established in the beginning — when the Spirit ungrieved, displayed all the effect of His presence. Most blessed scene, giving us to understand what it is to be filled with the Holy Ghost . . . so filled with Him, that He may be the source of all that is thought, of all that is done, and that all that the heart (which is His vessel) produces, may be the fruit of His presence. What a blessed state." The perusal of this brief extract should produce in the heart of every true believer the desire, that the precious soul experience, portrayed by the writer, may, through God's grace become his own. Thank God, if such is the case. Every Christian is born of the Spirit, and indwelt by the Spirit — God's work and God's gift — but the exhortations to "Grieve not the Spirit" (Ephesians 4:30), to "be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18), to "Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19), and to "Walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16), surely imply that the hindrances to the attainment of this "blessed state" mentioned by the writer lie with believers themselves.

We note with approbation, the wonderful response on the part of these early Christians, who formed the nucleus of God's Assembly, to all the fervour and blessing God had manifested toward them. We admire their fervent love one toward another, a love that led those who were in circumstances of opulence, to sell their possessions and goods, in order to give the money to their needy brethren. We note also their confessed weakness and dependence in the presence of God, and their remarkable boldness and confidence in presence of their persecutors. Their manner of life also must have been most attractive to men, for the same description Luke gives of the Lord, he applies to them. Compare the last verse of the second chapter of Luke with the last verse of the second chapter of Acts. At the close of our meditation on these early chapters of the Acts, where we have the precious record of our Lord's ascension to heaven in Acts 1:1-26 and the descent of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:1-47 to indwell the little company of believers, thus forming the Assembly, we count it a privilege to thank God for the response, in the way of the faithful testimony to these mighty truths, rendered by the Church of the first century. We may well ask ourselves why the response of the twentieth century Church appears so feeble by way of contrast. The risen, ascended Lord is still on high, building His Assembly; He has carried out His promise that the gates of Hades should not prevail against it. The Holy Spirit is still on earth indwelling the Assembly and the individual members composing it, and His power and presence are still at the Church's disposal.

Finally, the same Lord Who vouchsafed His presence to the Church of the first century, vouchsafes His presence to the many thousands of faithful souls today, who gather in truth and loyalty to His Name. But the days of the Assembly's earthly pilgrimage are fast drawing to a close. The heartfelt longing of multitudes of believers, so sweetly expressed in the words of a well-known hymn will soon be satisfied.

Oh bright and blessed hope! When shall it be that we, His face, long loved, revealed shall see.

Oh! when, without a cloud, His features trace, Whose faithful love, so long, we've known in grace. When we come to Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians we find much more of the precious truth regarding the assembly as the House of God. The truth revealed in this remarkable Epistle is so precious and edifying that it becomes us to approach its study in a spirit of true humility and subjection to the guidance of the Holy Spirit; deeply conscious that this divine teacher is alone competent to minister its glorious and majestic doctrines to the hearts of true believers. This

Epistle gives us the richest exposition of the blessings of the saints individually, and of the church corporately.

It is important to notice that, though the Apostle is about to declare the heavenly glories of the church, he always begins with the individual. This is prominently the case in chapter 1, where the church is not mentioned until the end. Another has said, "The moral order of this is exceedingly beautiful. In the admirable wisdom and grace of God it is the direct setting aside of that which is found in all earthly systems, where the individual is merely a portion of a vast body which arrogates to itself the highest claims. It is not so in the Word of God. There the individual blessing of the soul has the first place. God would have us set thoroughly clear, and intelligently appreciating our individual place and relation to Himself." Weighty and acceptable words! In wonderful grace our God and Father would thus reassure even the feeblest of His children of His affection and care, not only for the church corporate, but primarily for each individual member thereof. The sorrowful condition of things in Christendom today, where the tendency is to set aside what is personal for that which is corporate, compels us to raise a warning voice. It is boldly declared on every hand that "Salvation is in the church," thus robbing Christ of His glory in redemption, and setting aside His atoning death on the cross. Another evil result is that the soul's freedom of access into God's presence is frustrated. In face of such evils, let saints proclaim joyously that: On Christ (not the church) salvation rests secure The Rock of Ages must endure." Should it not fill us with grave concern that millions of people are nursing the vain hope that the appearance of their names on the church membership roll is all that matters in regard to their eternal salvation? What a delusion! As in the previous papers we will seek to classify our remarks under the two headings of Revelation and Response. Although the Epistle to the Ephesians forms the chief subject for our meditations in our present paper, it would be helpful to refer to the Book of Numbers, in the Old Testament, on account of the similarity of teaching. Numbers gives us the walk and warfare of God's earthly people, and Ephesians the walk and warfare of God's heavenly people. In the opening chapters of Numbers we find the Israelites at the start of their wilderness journey. Moses, their leader, acting under God's instructions, gives final orders as to their march. First, they were to be numbered, every man had to pitch under his own standard — every tribe was given its own place with regard to the Tabernacle, God's dwelling place in their midst — and finally, every man had to declare his pedigree.

What consternation and dismay would fill the hearts of thousands today, if a similar announcement rang throughout Christendom! And why not? If a Jew was compelled to declare his pedigree, why not a Christian? or a mere professor? But some one may say, "I am not a Jew, and therefore pedigrees do not bother me." One hopes, that behind such a remark, there is not the suggestion that God is prepared to wink at laxity in His heavenly people which He would not tolerate in His earthly people. The same God Who demanded a declaration of pedigree from His earthly people, as recorded in Numbers, is the God Who accompanies His heavenly people in their journey heavenwards today. The former, to whose care was committed the Tabernacle, were greatly honoured of God and, no doubt, appreciated their honour; but how that honour pales in comparison to that bestowed on those "Who are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22). They are not occupied with a material building, but they, themselves, form God's habitation. Oh! dear believer, what an honour God has, in His marvellous grace, bestowed upon us; and how should we value it! A Wonderful Revelation.

Now let us study Ephesians 1:1-23 in closer detail. In Ephesians 1:3-5, such a wonderful revelation is made to us, that we may well pray God to forbid that we should read Holy Scripture, and be as little affected by it as is the bird by the message which runs through the wire on which it perches. Here we are told that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself." Oh! the heights and depths of grace: what love and mercy do these words reveal to our souls! What an honour to be chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame, before Him in love (holy as regards character, without blame as regards conduct), for only as thus characterized could we be God's habitation (Ephesians 2:22); and then in prolongation of the wondrous tale of grace we have the Christians glorious pedigree; predestinated unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ. What a glorious pedigree! What a blessed relationship! Reader, is it yours? If not, you have no membership in that habitation of God referred to in chapter 2:22.

We must ever remember that this glorious pedigree, although it emanated from the heart of God in a past eternity, could only come into our possession through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is only after our Lord's death and resurrection that we read of His glorious and ever memorable message to His disciples, given through Mary, "Go to My brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father; and to My God and your God." Thus this Scripture in John 20:1-31 is the endorsement of Ephesians 1:5. The Response. In Ephesians 1:1-23, the Apostle declares to our admiring hearts all the counsels of God. Three wonderful facts concerning saints are made known:

1. They have been blessed with all spiritual blessings.
2. They have been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blame before Him in love.
3. They have been predestinated unto adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself. This is the blessed company that has been builded together for a habitation of God. How glorious their pedigree How fitting that Ephesians 1:3-5 should precede Ephesians 2:22. The Apostle, at the beginning of Ephesians 4:1-32 seeks a response from the saints at Ephesus to all the rich unfoldings of divine blessing that he has made to them: he desires that they should walk worthy of the calling wherewith we have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love. We may well challenge our own poor hearts as to whether we are responding in this way to the wonderful revelation that God has given to us in this wonderful Epistle.

Then Paul exhorts the saints to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. What a great privilege for saints to respond to the truth in this way! We are not asked to maintain the unity of a sect or system, or of any party or company of Christians where human ideas or personalities bind men together, but to seek to maintain the divine unity that subsists by the Spirit of God, where the will of God in the mind and leading of the Spirit of God is everything. At the close of the Epistle we learn that, if we would respond to the wonderful revelation of truth given in this epistle, we shall be involved in conflict. So many endeavour to shun the conflict, but the truth of God is to be maintained at all costs, and God has given us the armour in which to stand firm for

Him in this evil day. May we therefore, while rejoicing in the greatness of the revelation of divine blessing, vouchsafed to us in the riches of God's grace, ever seek to respond to it in all the responsibility connected with God's habitation, and with the warfare that belongs to a people that would be faithful to Him.

R. B. Wilson.

## Strengthen the Things which Remain

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### Strengthen the Things which Remain

Everywhere the need is great, and we are reminded of how Nehemiah was affected when he heard the report about the people of God at Jerusalem, how he got down before God in fasting and prayer, and asked for twelve years off duty before the king to go to Jerusalem. Arriving there he viewed the wall by night, then set to work to rebuild it, watching and praying.

Ezra deals with the state of the people. Having learned for himself from God's word he sought a right way for all who were with him. Those who trembled at the word of the God of Israel assembled at Jerusalem, God's centre for His earthly people: no other place of meeting would do. In the wilderness, the Tabernacle was the divine centre; the people had their tents, and God had His, the Tent of meeting. When Israel got into the land, Shiloh was first the centre, then Jerusalem. In our day, Christ is the centre for every saint. It is in heaven we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour at God's right hand. Stephen was the first to see God's new centre; the heavens were opened, and by the Spirit's power Stephen's eye was filled with the glory of God and Jesus. But this view was not only for Stephen, "We all" look on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face (2 Corinthians 3:18); and in Hebrews 9:1-28; Hebrews 10:1-39 we see how saints are fitted and encouraged to enter now into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. On account of Israel's idolatry, Moses pitched the tent of meeting outside the camp, and all who sought the Lord went out and worshipped there. Today, all who have faith are exhorted to go forth unto Jesus outside the camp, and there offer the sacrifices of praise to God continually, the fruit of the lips, confessing His Name. It is in 1st Corinthians we have the divine instructions for the gathering together of the saints of God's assembly; and the first thing in their gathering is the eating of the Lord's Supper for a remembrance of Him. We are to go on with the breaking of bread "Till He come." In the days of the returned remnant, the people were caring for their own houses, and neglecting God's house. The prophet Haggai, speaking for God, calls upon them to consider their ways. They were to go to the mountain and bring wood to build God's house for His glory and pleasure, and in so working they would find that God was with them. What they were building might seem feeble compared with Solomon's temple, but they were to go on with the work, assured that the latter glory of the house would be greater than the former. We must not give up anything that belongs to Christ. The moral tone was very low in the days of Malachi, but those who feared the Lord spake often one to another, and a book of remembrance was kept for them. One thing I would encourage the saints to do is to get together and read the Holy Scriptures and pray. The fellowship and the breaking of bread will only be a reality as we listen to God speaking in His word, and as we speak to God in prayer. In John's First Epistle he wrote "these things, that your joy may be full" (1 John 1:4); in his Second Epistle he trusts to come "and speak face to face, that our joy may be full" (verse 12). It is not always what we get when we come together that helps us; it is sometimes what we part with. Water removes defilement, and rust is rubbed off. So that in meeting one another to read and pray much may have to go, wrong thoughts, wrong feelings and wrong desires. But the word of God not only puts out wrong things, it puts in right things, the things of God. May we therefore, as children

of God, be "so much" the more together as "the day" approaches, considering Christ, and considering one another, and encouraging one another (Hebrews 10:1-39).

(Extracted) R. K. Wilson.

## The Testimony of our Lord

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"The Testimony of our Lord" A brief word as to the character and course of "The testimony of our Lord" 2 Timothy 1:8.

It has been said, to the effect, that the whole course of the testimony of God has been under review by the Spirit of God in Scripture with all the evils that beset it until its completion, so as to provide divine wisdom for us in every exigency. The character and principle of all has been shown, all coming to light before the canon of Scripture closed. The attack of the enemy upon that testimony may vary in form, but the underlying principle in each case is laid bare by the word of God and provided against. True we need the power of the unction from the Holy One for spiritual discernment; but this is not only not denied us, but assured to us, if we will take the course prescribed: "Think of what I say, for the LORD will give thee understanding in all things" (2 Timothy 2:7, N.T.). This is a great comfort for faith; and let us beware of that state which Jude has to warn the saints of: "Ye who once knew all things" (Jude 1:5 N.T.). The passage in 2 Timothy 2:1-26 quoted above continues "Remember Jesus Christ raised from among the dead, of the seed of David, according to my glad tidings, in which I suffer even unto bonds as an evil doer; but the word of God is not bound." Then, after Paul has enjoined Timothy to put these things, and the solemn considerations of 2 Timothy 2:11-13, before the remembrance of his brethren, the peculiar form of the attack of the enemy is manifested. Coupled with impiety, we have the evil teaching of "Hymenaeus and Philetus; men who as to the truth have gone astray, saying that the resurrection has taken place already; and overthrow the faith of some" (2 Timothy 2:17-18). The course of the man of God is then clearly prescribed. But what is the character of this attack of the enemy? It is subversive of Christianity itself as being God's administration which is in faith (1 Timothy 1:4), and overthrowing the faith of some. It also denies the true character and course of the testimony. It therefore behoves us to pay close attention to the wisdom furnished us here in this whole passage and indeed in the whole epistle, and that in regard also of the testimony of God. In one word the apostle gives the true character of the testimony: "Be not therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner; but suffer evil along with the glad tidings, according to the power of God; Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, etc." (2 Timothy 1:8-9). This true character of the testimony of our Lord has been, in the wisdom of God for us, thrown upon the screen, so to speak, of Paul and his course in connection with it. How easily might the term "The testimony of our Lord" (not that it could do so truly) pass through our minds; but how arresting the words inseparably connected with it, "nor of me His prisoner!" What does this mean? Ah, it is the secret of the whole matter.

Timothy is called upon to remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead of the seed of David, according to his (Paul's) glad tidings; and then he adds, "In which I suffer even unto bonds as an evil doer." "Jesus Christ raised from among the dead." Now if the resurrection had taken place already as the heretics stated, it is clear that it would not have been added here by Paul, "I suffer unto bonds." No, Christ was raised, but not Paul yet; but on the contrary, he was suffering unto bonds as an evil doer in his prosecution of the testimony of our Lord. And so with us, in this poor

world, if the testimony we render be divorced from suffering, it proves itself not to be the testimony of our Lord and is, in effect, saying that the resurrection has taken place already. Thank God, one is assured that this is not so; but it is a truly exercising consideration in these days of conventional living and popular preaching. Has the salt of our responsibility lost its savour? The word remains, (John 17:14) "I have given them Thy word and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, as I am not of the world." In everything, the enemy would seek to falsify this, in practice and in testimony.

Well, if Paul was bound, the word of God was not. He could not move freely about and preach it as once he had been able, now he was a prisoner; but he could endure: "For this cause I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Timothy 2:10). Does not this also give the true character of the testimony, the testimony of our Lord, as to its circumstances and spirit in these last days? Assuredly it does. When the Lord comes to take us from our post, the place He has set us in to "Trade while I am coming" (Luke 19:13, N.T.), it will be time enough for us to leave it and our occupation, conditioned as they are by but "a little power" (Revelation 3:8, N.T.). May we indeed, as that passage also speaks, "keep the word of His patience" (endurance). In Matthew 8:1-34 a brief outline of the passage of the testimony across the world, in the path of the blessed Lord is furnished. In verse 18, after the exhibition of His grace, fulfilling the prophecy of Esaias, "Himself took our infirmities and bore our diseases," he commands to "depart to the other side." Ah, that is it. At once his practical destitution is manifested in verse 20, as against the perhaps not insincere desire of the scribe to follow him: "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the heavens roosting-places; but the Son of man has not where He may lay His head." Then comes the agitation of nature, which His word quells; and then on making the land full demon power is manifested in the two Gergesenes, "exceeding dangerous." This word is only otherwise used in 2 Timothy 3:1, of the last days: "In the last days, difficult days shall be there." Now no doubt Matthew 8:1-34 refers specially to the testimony rendered in connection with Israel, but in their great features of the natural and the supernatural these outline what Paul and we also have to meet in the maintenance of the testimony.

While proper christian warfare is carried on in the heavenlies, the place of our seat in Christ and our testimony, there is also the wide sphere of nature, where the natural man disports himself, but where our minds also often move when higher considerations should characterize us. And here it is necessary to distinguish between the action of a spirit using an apostate from the truth, and a christian who fails to judge himself according to the light vouchsafed to him. We may thus become ready tools to Satan, as Peter in Matthew 16:1-28, who, elevated perhaps by the revelation made to him, and in a kindly nature, refused the cross to His Master and was rebuked by Him as Satan: "Get thee behind Me, Satan." In the service of the Lord how easily may nature come in in unjudged motive, and the enemy take advantage of it to damage the work done. Well for us if the thoughts and intents of the heart are judged by the Word of God in all His service, as in all else. How apart was the blessed Master from the start of His service in "What have I to do with thee, woman? mine hour has not yet come" (John 2:4, N.T.); but how tenderly does He care and provide for her when His work is done, in "Woman, behold thy Son" designating the disciple whom He loved, and to the disciple, "Behold thy mother" (John 19:27).

Surely, the testimony of the Lord, in whatever little way we may have it entrusted to us, calls for the utmost watchfulness in this connection. How, too, has that testimony been clouded in perhaps some careless behaviour after the particular service has been rendered. Nature, while fully owned, or it is but apostatizing (see 1 Timothy 4:1-16), must not lead in the service of God. All the sources and occasions of our service should be scrutinized and judged by us surely. We can afford to wait HIS promptings and guidance in it all.

C. N. Snow.

God's Voice in the Scriptures.

"I know Whom I have believed."

They cannot hide from our souls the heavenly beams of our Father's revelation — God has spoken and His voice reaches the heart. It makes itself heard above the din and confusion of this world, and the strife and controversy of professing Christians. It gives rest and peace, strength and fixedness to the believing heart and mind. The opinions of men may perplex and confound — we may not be able to thread our way through the labyrinths of human systems of theology: but God's voice speaks in Holy Scripture — speaks to the heart — speaks to me. This is life and peace. It is all I want. Human writings may go now for what they are worth, seeing I have all I want in the ever-flowing fountain of inspiration — the peerless, precious volume of my God.

C. H. Mackintosh.

## We Faint Not.

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"We Faint Not." In these closing days of the church's pilgrimage, who can deny the solemn fact that faintness and weakness, with all their sorrowful results, characterise the saints generally. The prospect might well alarm us, had not the Spirit of God forewarned us of this in the Scriptures, wherein we can always find that which will uplift our hearts in the midst of all the ruin and decay.

How triumphant, and uplifting, are the opening words of the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:1, "Therefore, having this ministry, as we have had mercy shown us, WE FAINT NOT." With Spirit-given power, he had contrasted (2 Corinthians 3:1-18) the permanent glories of the new covenant with the passing glory of the old, which was to be done away. The new covenant is not of letter, but of spirit, for the letter kills, but the Spirit quickens — written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tables of stone, but on the fleshy tables of the heart. The new covenant was a ministration of righteousness and life, the old of condemnation and death. As we read the closing verses of this important chapter, we can feel something of the joy that filled the heart of Paul. He had known the terrible bondage under the old covenant (see Galatians 2:4), but he was now in the rich enjoyment of the liberty of the new: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17); liberty that belongs to all the saints of God. When we reach the climax of the comparison of the two covenants, at the end of the chapter, with affectionate desire this devoted servant of the Lord would have all the saints in the enjoyment of the wonderful privilege, "But WE ALL, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are transformed, according to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18, New Tr.). Should not these remarkable words demand our most earnest consideration? How often have we heard them: and how often has their precious message fallen on deaf ears? What unspeakable folly is ours! and what irreparable loss we have in consequence! We often speak of poor Peter's folly on the glory mount, for seeking to place the Lord on the same level as Moses and Elias, while we ourselves are but feebly affected by the wonderful glory that now shines in the face of Jesus. Peter knew not what he said; but are not we often marked by ignorance on account of our unfaithfulness and faint-heartedness? On that mount there was a display of the coming kingdom glory, but it is our privilege to behold that face once marred more than any man's, now radiant with the love and glory of God. We gaze upon His glory as Head of His assembly, and as the First-born among many brethren; and we can join in a note of praise that was not heard on the mount. Honoured as they were, Peter, James, and John, could not then have sung, as we can today:

Yes, we see Thee crowned with glory, Highest honour to Thee given; But the glory of Thy Person Is the light that shines in heaven.

Further, there is a blessed result to our contemplation of our exalted Lord. We are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit. It is a gradual process which ought to characterise us all the way through, until, at our Lord's coming, we are fully conformed to His image. Another has said "When I see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, it is the very thing I like to look at, because the Man whom I see in the glory, is the One Who bore all my sins.

Oh! I delight to look at Him, and this is the way I get Christ graven on my heart by the Holy Ghost." What a lovely example the protomartyr, Stephen affords us (Acts 7:54-60). While the stones are being hurled at him, he looks up and sees the glory of God and Jesus. Like his Master, Who, on the cross, cried "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do," he cried "Lord lay not this sin to their charge." Again, the Lord said "Father into Thy hands I commend my spirit," and Stephen says "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." How truly Stephen was changed into Christ's image. May we each know in increasing measure the blessedness of continually looking upon Jesus, for this alone can make us epistles of Christ known and read of all men.

Glorying in this ministry and in its wonderful results in those who, like himself, enjoy the blessings that flow from the contemplation of it, the apostle says at the beginning of chapter 4 "WE FAINT NOT." Deeply conscious of the blessing conferred on him, as one into whose heart had shone the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; and conscious too, that he was a chosen vessel from which this light was to shine forth for the blessing of others, the apostle prepares himself for the fierce conflict, which he knew would assuredly follow his faithful proclamation of the Glad Tidings. "WE FAINT NOT, but have rejected the hidden things of shame, not walking in deceit, nor falsifying the word of God, but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every conscience of men before God" (N. Tr.). What circumspection before men! What holy zeal before God! What devotion to his Lord! Are not the things renounced by Paul the characteristic traits of the faithless and the faint-hearted? So that the glory of the Lord Jesus should be set forth in his preaching in all the clearness and brightness of its revelation to him, Paul would have no compromise with evil or evil-doers. Would to God that the saints now manifested the features and purpose of the apostle. We must not think that the evils to which Paul refers are non-existent in the church today. On every hand there are those who walk in deceit, and concomitantly falsify the word of God. Nor is it enough to profess the path of separation, in these last days, to be immune from walking in deceit. The Scripture clearly shows that it is possible, for those who once stood firm for the truth, to turn aside, through unfaithfulness and faint-heartedness. Beloved saints, let us take our stand by the side of Paul: let us heed his loving appeal — "I entreat you therefore, BE MY IMITATORS." Then with him, we shall with triumph say, "WE FAINT NOT." When we reach 2 Corinthians 4:7-12 we find such a record of persecutions, sufferings, and trials which would overwhelm the stoutest heart. All the fiery darts of the wicked one, and all the fury and malice of men under his dominion, combined to extinguish the light that shone forth from Paul; but all these subtle and fierce attacks were valiantly withstood, and we get the secret of their discomfiture in verse 7, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassingness of the power may be of God, and not from us." These attacks on the Lord's servant were not intermittent but continuous: no rest, or relief was afforded this zealous herald of the Glad Tidings; "ALWAYS," says Paul, "bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body." There can be no doubt that the life and death of Jesus had made a deep impression on Paul, for in his letter to the saints at Philippi he expresses a deep desire to know HIM, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death (Php 3:10). The apostle knew of the perfect devotion and obedience of the Lord to the will of His God and Father. He knew that the Lord, in subjection to that will, had become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; and he was zealous that his own path might be a copy of his Master's — that the same self-abnegation, the same obedience, the same will-subjection, might, at whatever cost, characterise himself. He knew that

he was a chosen vessel for the outshining of the glorious light committed to him, and that any movement or expression of the will of the vessel would only mar the outgoing of the light. One has said, the more the natural man was annihilated, the more was it evident that a power was there which was not of man. The apostle now adds "We which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake." He well knew what martyr sufferings were, but in them he discerned the working of God to produce the blessed result, "that the life of Jesus also might be manifest in our mortal flesh." This was the lot of Paul and his companions in the Gospel, while the saints at Corinth were having the normal life of men. But what of ourselves, saints of the 20th century? Has Paul no message for us? Are we only to gaze with admiration on the faithfulness and zeal, and triumphs of a devoted soldier of the Lord Jesus, or have we to seek to imitate him? Twice over, in his first epistle to these same believers, Paul expresses the longings of his heart, in these words, "I entreat you, be my imitators;" "be my imitators, even as I also am of Christ." Are these ringing appeals out of date? I verily believe the Spirit of God would have them resound right along through the ages, until they reach the listening ears of saints today; for if their message was necessary in those early days, are they not much more necessary today? We often sing: Our earthen vessels break, The world itself grows old.

If they are breaking for the same reason as Paul's, then God be praised. Let them break! for thus shall the precious light shine forth in this dark world. Again in verse 16 we hear the triumphant notes of Paul, "Wherefore WE FAINT NOT; but if indeed our outward man is consumed, yet the inward is renewed day by day."

R. B. Wilson.

Prayer. In prayer, it is not the lip it comes from, but the ear it goes to, that is the great thing.

G. V. Wigram.

Looking unto Jesus. Our love to Him rises to the measure of our enjoyment of His love to us: we can never rise higher than what we see in Him, whether it be love, self-denial, or service. Hence the practical importance of the words, "Looking unto Jesus."

A. Miller.

Divine Music.

It has been said of Paul, "Such as he are chords on which God strikes, and on which He produces wondrous music; but Christ is the music itself."

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