

Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

Vol. XLVII

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL

On Making Your Own Book

As readers will see from the current issue, the series of articles by E. H. Chamberlain dealing with prophetic subjects is being continued during 1959, the next paper entitled "Daniel's Prayer and God's Answer" being due to appear (D.V.) in February.

Some of our readers might care to consider keeping these particular articles together in book form. This can be achieved by the simple method of cutting out the relative pages from the Magazine and pasting them scrap-book fashion into an ordinary Exercise book. Since the leaves are printed on both sides, an additional copy of WORDS OF HELP will be needed (two copies, if it is desired also to retain a file of the complete Magazine). In this way, at trifling cost, the reader will have a valuable treatise on prophetic subjects of outstanding importance: furthermore, by compiling an Index as each fresh article comes along, he will have a valuable and handy reference book.

In a recent letter to the Editor, Mr. Chamberlain has stated that he will continue his practice of proving his statements from Scripture. This accounts for the large number of references quoted. These however are valuable because they enable the reader to check what the author has written with the word of God itself.

The Editor recommends the above plan of study from his own experience. Additional copies of WORDS OF HELP, also back numbers for September, October and December, 1958, containing the previous articles of this series, may be obtained direct from the Publisher.

Give Attendance to Reading (I Tim. iv. 13)

LET DAYS SPEAK (VII)

Tunbridge Wells,

7th July, 1958.

Beloved younger Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It has been on my heart for some days to write you a New Year's message for 1959, if the Lord has not come in the meantime, and I hope you will accept all I write as an expression of very warm affection from an old man who can no longer communicate with you in any other way.

First, I wish you sustained joy and peace of soul in the assurance of your salvation and daily communion with your Lord, and what follows has this end in view. My message falls into three headings, the first two of which are personal and the third collective:—

Pray Without Ceasing (I Thess. v. 17, 18).

Make *prayer* a real background to your daily life. I am not thinking only of "saying your prayers" morning and evening, though I hope this is your practice, without formality or the repetition of words as a habit. Nor am I thinking only of prayer in its character of making *requests* "if it be Thy will." But I mean prayer in its widest sense of thanksgiving, and of bringing before the Lord any matters that come on your mind at any time throughout the day, without interrupting your duties of course. Through our Lord Jesus Christ and by His Spirit, the Spirit of God's Son, you have the privilege of addressing God as Father, and that as an individual son, i.e. "*my* Father," not "*our* Father." If you were in your earthly father's company in happy relationship throughout the day you would naturally talk to him from time to time on all kinds of subjects. We ought surely to have no less liberty in speaking to our Father, Whose ear is ever open to His children and Who is always accessible.

Give Attendance to Reading (I Tim. iv. 13).

(a) Even more important is the reading of the Scriptures, for then you are listening to your Father speaking to you. I do not only mean reading the Scripture Union portion and

Notes. By all means do so if you find these helpful. They are compiled with much prayer and care by godly servants of the Lord. But, looking to the Lord for His guidance, make time also for *Bible Study*. Read a particular book through, a chapter (or part of a chapter if it is long) a day. Long books can be divided into sections, and the Psalms into groups, and treated for this purpose as separate books. Alternatively, follow up a word or phrase or subject in its various connections with the help of references or a good concordance. It is striking how interesting and profitable this is. Do not neglect any part of the Bible, whether you understand it or not. The Holy Spirit will enlighten you in due time. Read early in the morning and perhaps study before going to bed. However well known, or difficult, the passage, you will find a word or a phrase that will recur to memory from time to time as a help or cheer if you read attentively.

Here the analogy of relationship with an earthly father breaks down. Young people today think (and do they not often say?) their parents are “not up to date,” and writing as a parent I say are the children not often right? But I also see that while conditions have changed enormously since my boyhood (see further on) basic things remain the same—truth, sobriety, integrity, courtesy etc., on which parents can advise helpfully. But your Father in heaven is eternal. His word, the Holy Scriptures, recorded by men inspired by the Holy Spirit, is also eternal, “quick” (i.e. living) and powerful, with a message to his children which is undated, as it were. It can never be said to be “*not up to date.*”

(b) Also find time to read and digest current printed matter on the Scriptures such as “WORDS OF HELP,” “THE CHRISTIAN POST,” the American “GRACE AND TRUTH,” and many other similar magazines which keep close to the Scriptures and do *not* launch into “love” stories, with a little Christianity to sugar the drug-pill!

(c) As you grow more mature it is good to read some of the writings of the revival of 100 to 120 years ago when the Spirit of God brought afresh to light the great truths of the Lord Himself being the true centre of gathering (Matthew xviii. 20); the Holy Spirit being the true Controller of worship, prayer,

praise and thanksgiving, edification, exhortation and comfort in the assembly of saints (I Cor. xii, xiv, etc.); the distinct position of the church or "assembly" (Eph. and Col. etc.); the distinction between the Lord's coming in the air for the church (I Thess. iv. 13 to end, etc.) and His coming to the earth to judge Israel and the nations (Matt. xxv. etc.); and many other such important truths. You will find the style of these writers old-fashioned and condensed, their sentences often long and involved, and full of references to controversies long since forgotten. The substance of their writings is what the Holy Spirit provided through them to meet the needs of the times in which they lived. Nevertheless these truths are eternal and are still needed today as well as those other truths emphasised by the Lord's servants who are led by the Holy Spirit to meet the peculiar needs of the times and circumstances in which you are living. With the modern education most of you have received, perseverance in reading the older writers will soon enable you to overcome what at first seem to be their idiosyncracies, and you will be spiritually enriched and further equipped for service through them. The difficulties are greater for you than they were for me I know. For example, comparing conditions in my father's boyhood and my own, in both the horse was the fastest power for road-transport; there were no internal combustion engines (no motor-cars, aeroplanes etc.), no telephones, no electric light or fires, and so on. But between my boyhood and your adolescence the difference in external achievements is stupendous. None of this makes the truths unfolded by these servants of God out of date or unnecessary today. So persevere, but not to the neglect of (a) first, and (b) next, as you can *make* time!

Assembling Yourselves Together (Heb. x. 25).

This is the third and collective heading. We are exhorted not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together . . . but in so doing to be exhorting one another and "so much the more as ye see the day approaching." The power for destruction of modern scientific discoveries and many other things surely point to the near approach of God's intervention in

power, and *before that* we know the Lord will come in the air for us. It is therefore very important today to heed this exhortation. It is based most appealingly on the ground that we have boldness to enter into the most holy presence of God because of the sacrificial death of Jesus, and because of His present service on our account as our High Priest.

So I venture to press on you not to neglect the prayer meetings, the Bible readings, and the remembrance on the first day of the week of the Lord's death. Duties have their place. School home-work, evening classes, home duties, may well be, and should be regarded as part of "God's plan for your life," but often these things can be so adjusted as to admit of attendance at one, or perhaps two, weeknight meetings. Recreation on Saturday afternoon can sometimes be followed by a meeting in the evening, or vice versa. Here I speak from experience as my home-work when at day school in my teens took anything from two to four hours a day, and a little later I had evening classes, all necessary for seven public examinations, the last three competitive. (I did not pass them all!) So I can say in all friendliness I have proved it can be done very often, though not always. The meetings on Lord's days are of course less liable to be hindered, except by essential home duties, illness or what might be called geographical circumstances. While I am writing this I am feeling it that I have not been able to get out to a meeting for over ten months, and oh! how I have missed them, but the Lord knows best.

This letter has grown much longer than I intended when I started it. I hope I have not wearied you or been too "school masterish." As I said at the beginning, it is written in all affection and, I may add, with some understanding of the pressure and speed of the present day.

Yours affectionately in the soon-coming Saviour,

J. C. KELL.

LORD'S DAY REFLECTIONS**XIX. THE SHELTER OF A SACRIFICE**

Read: I Kings xviii. 30.

Seldom has there been such a concourse of guilty people as that which was assembled on Mount Carmel on the day when Elijah proposed to vindicate the true God. Under the leadership of an outstandingly wicked king, with a wife even worse than himself, Israel had gone after Baal, thereby angering the true God and bringing upon the land a penal drought which had lasted some three years.

But the time had come when the God of all grace was about to extend His mercy to these unworthy people, and Elijah had been told to go and show himself to Ahab in preparation for the coming rain. So in order to restore Israel to the worship of the true God, Elijah summoned Ahab and the prophets of Baal to meet him at Mount Carmel, where the trial by fire was to take place.

How guilty the people were! Up till the very last moment on the great day of decision they persisted in their appeal to Baal, fruitless though it proved. Had they been truly repentant they would surely have shrunk from the test to which Elijah had put them, instead of which they brazenly persevered with their efforts to obtain recognition for their idolatrous worship. All day long their bellowing and shrieking had rent the air, until, about the time of the evening sacrifice in Jerusalem, Elijah had called them from their vain pursuit.

Baal had had his chance, but there had been "neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded." Baal was exposed as an unreliable, fraudulent and lifeless idol who indeed had no real existence outside of the foolish imaginings of his criminal and fanatical devotees.

What exactly was it that Elijah proposed to do? He undertook to demonstrate that Jehovah was the true God, and to do this by bringing fire down from heaven. No one knew better than Elijah how terrible the coming down of fire from God could be. When two of the sons of Aaron had dared to offer before the Lord "strange fire . . . which He commanded

not," there went out fire from the Lord and devoured them, so that they died before the Lord. Guilt cannot go unpunished where God is. Again, at a later date, the Lord caused the earth to open her mouth and swallow up a company who were rebellious against His chosen representatives on earth (Num. xvi). Were those gathered on Mount Carmel less guilty than Nadab and Abihu, or than Korah, Dathan and Abiram? By no means.

In the light of this how remarkable was Elijah's command to the people to come near to him (ver. 30)! It would not have been surprising had Elijah told them to get as far away as they could, to avail themselves of any shelter they could find, and to hide themselves behind the rocks. For it cannot be safe, surely, for guilty men to expose themselves to the presence of a holy God. But no! the word was "Come near unto me."

What is the explanation of this? How could Elijah be so sure that the people were not drawing near to their destruction? The answer is that a sacrifice was about to be offered before their eyes. As the people stood beholding, Elijah took twelve stones for an altar; he then laid the wood in order, and the sacrifice on top, in readiness for the consuming fire, all being drenched with water so that the power of God might be unmistakably demonstrated. Then, when at long last all was ready, the hush of that mountain top was broken by the strains of fervent prayer "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word." Immediately the fire of Jehovah fell, consuming the burnt sacrifice and devouring the wood, the stones and the dust in the fierceness of its heat.

How wonderful! The fire consumed, *not* the guilty spectators who deserved to die, but the sacrifice. God's anger against the people was appeased by that which spoke to Him of His Beloved Son's coming offering up of Himself for the sins of His people. So that not a single hair of the head of any one of the onlookers was even singed by the fire of God's judgment!

How far surpassing all human thought is the mercy of God!

E. A. PETTMAN

THE REVIVAL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

THIS prophetic subject is of such importance that four separate portions of God's word deal with it extensively. We must direct our attention therefore to:—

Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the Great Image (Daniel ii).

Daniel's vision of the Four Beasts (Daniel vii);

The First Beast of Revelation xiii;

The Scarlet Beast which carries the Harlot (Rev. xvii),

The study of these scriptures cannot fail to lead the believer to the conclusion that the Spirit of God speaks of the Roman Empire in all four, and the reader who is not familiar with these scriptures is earnestly requested to study them, and to study them together. The reading of articles or books on prophecy is no substitute for reading the word of God itself.

Before going to these scriptures, let us examine the well-known phrase:

The Times of the Gentiles (Luke xxi, 24).

Our Lord says "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." When did these "times" begin?

When God established David as king over Israel, He subdued all his enemies on every side. He was God's king. Under David's successors, in spite of frequent failures in obedience and prevalent idolatry, faith triumphed from time to time, and God wrought deliverance for the king that owned Him. But at length He had to give Israel up; first the ten tribes into captivity to Assyria, and later the kingdom of Judah to Babylon.

There in Babylon God spoke to the Gentile king, Nebuchadnezzar, in his dream of the great image (Dan. ii). As Daniel interpreted the dream to him he said "Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the *God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.*"

Thus we have power and authority committed by God to a Gentile ruler, when His own people Israel had failed. Here then is the commencement of "the times of the Gentiles." When God's kingdom upon earth is once more established in

Israel, the times of the Gentiles will be finished. Jerusalem indeed later on knew times of prosperity and freedom, but never again was God's kingdom established there.

The Four Great Empires

Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the great image, and Daniel's vision of the four beasts are both interpreted for us as meaning four successive "kings" or empires. The last empire is replaced by the kingdom which God Himself sets up. So that these two visions give us the whole of the times of the Gentiles.

The great image which Nebuchadnezzar sees, fittingly symbolized to him the kingly power now committed to Gentile hands. But the prophet of God sees the four empires as savage beasts. The Bible paints the picture of these empires in bold strokes in which their main characteristics are made evident, but the fourth empire is given in greater detail. It is evidently the main theme of the Spirit of God.

The first empire, that of Babylon, is the head of gold (Dan. ii. 38). In Daniel's vision the first great beast is made to stand on the earth as a man, and a man's heart is given to it. This corresponds perhaps to God's humbling of Nebuchadnezzar, after which he acknowledged himself as a man, subject to his Maker (Dan. iv. 34-37; vii. 4).

The second empire of course, is the Medo-Persian, as Belshazzar was told by Daniel (Dan. v. 23). The Persian element soon predominated, as is indicated by the bear raised on one side. The extensive conquests, and the extortion which characterised the empire, are indicated by the words "Arise, devour much flesh."

Next we have the Macedonian or Greek empire of Alexander, as the next chapter (Dan. viii. 21) makes clear. It was noted for extraordinary rapidity of conquest, and extensive dominion (Dan. ii. 39; vii. 6).

The Fourth or Roman Empire

There is no room for doubt as to the identity of the fourth empire. It is plainly the Roman. After the Macedonian empire was divided, there was a considerable period before another

great empire arose, but when it did, it was clearly that which the fourth beast represented.

Nevertheless, though the "iron" in Nebuchadnezzar's vision, and the words "strong exceedingly" in Daniel's, pointed to Rome; though the picture of iron "breaking in pieces and subduing all things" (Dan. ii.40) indicates how Rome relentlessly crushed all opposition in its all-subduing conquests; yet some of the most prominent features of the Bible prophecy in no way correspond to the Roman Empire of history. It is these things that lead us clearly to the conclusion that the world has not yet seen the last of this fourth empire. The features to which we refer are:—

(1) Its Diversity.

Three times the fact is mentioned that the fourth beast was diverse from all the rest (Dan. vii. 7, 19, 23). Daniel himself felt the need of special enlightenment as to it. But the Roman Empire of history was not so remarkably different from its predecessors.

(2) Its Tenfold Division.

The ten horns which the beast carried are interpreted to Daniel as being ten kings that shall arise in this empire. Not, let us notice, like the four horns on the goat in chapter viii, which take the place of the notable horn (ver. 8), and represent a break-up into four kingdoms. Here there is no break up. Now the past Roman Empire never displayed this ten-fold division, The separate, warring kingdoms in Europe that came into being after the fall of the Empire in no way answer to the ten horns on the beast.

(3) The Destruction of the Beast ushers in the kingdom of the Son of Man.

The Roman Empire is no more. But will anyone say that the kingdom of the Son of Man has come? The most ardent contender for "spiritualizing" the scripture prophecies will hardly maintain *that*. So that we must conclude, if God's word is to stand, that the Roman Empire, in some form, is to be revived.

The Ten-Horned Beast of Revelation, Chapters XIII and XVII.

Turning now to these last two visions, the remarkable unity of scripture prophecy becomes very striking. For in the section of the book of Revelation which awaits fulfilment after the Rapture of the Church, we meet these visions of the rise of a ten-horned seven-headed beast whose description (apart from the seven heads) recalls in many respects that of Daniel's fourth beast. But whereas Daniel's vision gives us the *first* rise of the Roman Empire, in what is now history, the Revelation visions give us only the *revived* empire, with a bare reference to its past existence. This is plain from Rev. xvii, 8 "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and *shall be present*" (true version).

It is evident that "the beast" has a past, a time of disappearance, and then a revival under Satanic influence. So we are told in Rev. xiii, 2, "the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority." We saw that, in Daniel's vision, the fourth beast is noticeably different from the others. This diversity undoubtedly consists in the character of the *revived* empire, a revival resulting not merely from human strife and ambition, but having its source in the "abyss."

So then the "little horn" (Dan. vii. 8) who appears *last* when Daniel sees the beast, is the personage represented by *the* beast of Revelation. Daniel is told "he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws."

It is still the *Roman* Empire, but in Revelation the *man* who leads it, who derives all "his power, and his throne, and great authority" from Satan, is the prominent subject of the vision. His blasphemies against God, and his warfare against the saints, are those of Daniel's little horn. Also his time of power is given as 42 months—exactly the same period as the little horn's "a time, and times (2 years) and the dividing of

time (half a year")—or three and a half years in all (Dan. vii 25). Let us remember the emphasis which the prophetic Spirit lays on the difference between this beast and the first three. Here in Revelation it is seen as a monster—a composite beast. We ought not then, to suppose that what is coming is a mere repetition of the rise of empires in the past.

This power that shall arise is Satanic in origin, Satanic in the ferocity with which it will subdue all opposition (Dan. vii, 19, 23), Satanic in the intensity of its opposition to God and in the persecution of His saints. Its rise to power so suddenly, so unexpectedly, so miraculously impresses the whole world as being supernatural. "They worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" (Rev. xiii, 4).

If we compare the description of the dragon in chapter xii, with the beast in chapter xiii, we see how close is the connection between them, for both have seven heads and ten horns. If it was the Roman Empire, in the person of Herod the Great, which sought the destruction of the infant Christ, Satan was the real power behind it all. Likewise Pilate, again the representative of Rome, was an unwitting tool of God's great enemy. But, when the Roman Empire is revived, it is no longer Satan working behind the scenes, but openly. He is worshipped and the beast is worshipped, perhaps under the delusion that this is the true god. For the second beast, or false prophet (v. 11) has power to work great marvels, which persuade men that the true and universal religion has at length arrived. Here is the Satanic trinity, an imitation of the divine—the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. See also Rev. xvi, 13.

What of those who are faithful to God and refuse to submit and worship the beast? For them there will be the most relentless persecution ever—tribulation which the world has never before seen. "And it was given unto Him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them" (xiii. 7). But he will not be permitted to accomplish what he seeks—the complete extirpation of the worship of the true God. The Lord Jesus

has said that for the elect's sake these days of tribulation shall be shortened (Matt. xxiv. 22), and forty two months is the limit beyond which he is not allowed to continue.

The vision of chapter xvii gives us the explanation of the seven heads of the beast. They are first, "seven hills, on which the woman sitteth"—the geographical location of the city of Rome. But also they represent seven kings—successive, not contemporary, as the ten horns are. The suggested interpretation of seven forms of government is probably correct—the sixth or imperial form being then, in John's day, in existence. A seventh was future, and perhaps still is. But the beast is of the seven, and yet is an eighth. That is, his empire has features in common with previous forms of government, and yet is entirely distinct. We are also told that one of his heads had received a deadly wound, but that this was now healed. Thus there will be the unexpected revival, perhaps of the imperial form of government, but certainly of what was thought to be gone for ever.

The Beast and the Ten Kings

In Daniel vii, the little horn arises among the already existent ten horns, and plucks up three of them, but in Rev. xvii we read "the ten horns . . . are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour *with the beast*. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast." It would seem then that in those lands where Rome alone once ruled there will then be but ten distinct rulers (or governments). This Satan-inspired man whom Scripture calls *the Beast* then comes to power, we know not how; he brings about the overthrow of three rulers and probably substitutes his own nominees for them (for there are still ten); finally they accept his supreme authority.

These ten rulers are quite possibly democratic governments such as we are familiar with, for in Nebuchadnezzar's own vision the iron in the feet of the image is seen mingled with clay, representing the "seed of men" taking part in government,

and bringing in weakness as compared with the strength of autocratic government. How wonderfully the word of God anticipates all these developments!

We may surely see in the various attempts which have been made of late years to unite the Western nations together, a fore-shadowing of this Satanic coalition. Fear of the eastern nations may well be the ostensible reason then for its formation, just as a like reason now operates. But whatever man or Satan may plan, God overrules all for His purposes! The evil empire is allowed to continue to accomplish the judgment of Babylon, and then it in turn is destroyed by the Lord Himself. "For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, *until* the words of God shall be fulfilled" (Rev. xvii, 17).

When Shall These Things Be?

Before the judgments of God are poured out on the earth, the Church will be taken to heaven. (The scriptural basis for this statement, for those unfamiliar with prophetic truth, may be seen in an earlier article, July 1957). Hence it is clear that the rise of the Beast will take place *after* the Rapture of the church. Also he is to be destroyed by the Lord Himself from heaven (Rev. xix 19, 20).

The Kingdom of the Son of Man

Through all the centuries of "the times of the Gentiles" the goodness of God has given to His saints to know the certainty of His own intervention at last, by the establishment of the kingdom of His Son. The stone cut out without hands was seen in the earliest of the visions to strike the image upon the feet of iron and clay and to destroy it. The stone, that is of course, the kingdom of our Lord, then became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. Likewise in Daniel vii, the beast is destroyed, his body given to the burning flame and then "Behold, one like the Son of Man . . . and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN.

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from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL

The following is an extract from a letter dated July 1958 from North Surrey, British Columbia, which has come into the Editor's hands:

".....our address has been changed, and I do not know who to contact concerning the paper WORDS OF HELP which I receive each month. We are grateful to whoever sends this to us, and I can assure you it gets plenty of use, as I pass it on to four people before mailing it to a friend who does the same. So you see it is a source of blessing to many."

We are grateful to the Lord for the cheer and encouragement of a letter such as this. What a joy to be able to share the precious things of God's word with others of the household of faith so far away!

Whoever supplies the copy of WORDS OF HELP referred to in the foregoing letter will have the satisfaction of knowing that his, or her, thoughtful action each month is bringing blessing to at least seven other persons. How well worth while the effort is! We hope that others of our readers will be encouraged to engage in this simple yet valuable service of making copies of the Magazine available to their friends.

We extend warm greetings to our readers in British Columbia.

"Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth".

(Ecclesiastes xi. 1, 2)

THE MANTLE OF ELIJAH

Read: I Kings xix.; 2 Kings ii. 1-15.

(Notes of an Address given at Worthing, 24/5/58)

GARMENTS, in scripture, are not without significance. The coats of skins (Gen. iii.) were the outcome of sin and sacrifice. Jacob took the colours of royalty and of heavenly origin and placed these purples and blues with the gold of divinity and the scarlet of propitiation to make his coat of many colours for Joseph—the most wonderful type of Him who was to come. Clothing of pure linen, clothing of sackcloth, priestly garments and kingly robes, and “The coat without seam, woven from the top throughout” (John xix. 23): what deep significance is here indeed!

The mantle of Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, covered an hairy form “girt with a girdle of leather about his loins” (2 Kings i. 8). It covers the bowed head of the prophet. He has travelled a journey “too great” for him but for the touch of the heavenly messenger and the cake baked on the coals and the cruse of water. It had been a long journey, too, from Jezreel southward into the wilderness of Beer-sheba. He “went for his life” (I Kings xix. 3), for he was fully aware of the import of that fearful vow of Jezebel. So had David fled, leaving Saul’s javelin still quivering in the palace wall (I Samuel xix. 10).

It is beautiful to see that Elijah seeks the impregnable presence of God; it is a refuge available to all God’s people. “So David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him” (I Samuel xix. 18). The presence of God is our place of refreshment and of strength, and He will even send His messenger more than once to remind us of our need, lest we fall short of the great relief of *telling* Him all the fear and weakness that possess us. There is the deeper joy of knowing that He is *listening*, and will surely *answer*.

Elijah’s name means “My God is God Himself.” He is devoted to a Person—not a religion; he is dedicated to the living God—not to ceremonies, nor the mockery of drawing

nigh with the lips while the heart is far from the Person of God Himself. Thus, to him there is invitation in the words "What doest thou here, Elijah?" And he pours out his plaint, as did David to Samuel, knowing that he was being heard with sympathy and understanding.

So he stands "upon the mount before the Lord." "And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and break in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind." The mantle of Elijah was not yet wrapped about his face. There followed the earthquake and the fire, but Elijah still waited for the Person—"My God is God Himself." The Self-existent One passed by—the Eternal—these were the *evidences* of His passing, they were not the Lord Himself. The rending of the mountains (the seemingly established and immovable things), the quaking earth and the consuming fire are a threefold demonstration of the instability of earthly things, a divine reminder to the prophet, full of comfort, that the LORD Himself remained the *eternal* Refuge for His people. "And after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle" (I Kings xix. 12, 13). He is immediately aware of the *presence* of the LORD. He knows, too, what manner of behaviour becomes one allowed, as he is, into the presence of the Eternal God. We, in our day, too often fail in this respect.

The "Still small voice" is a beautiful portrayal of the character of the divine Speaker. We may learn much from the sound of a voice. The voices of the world are too often strident with boastful authority, expressive in one way or another of the failure of man. The word for "still" is rare and unusual in the Hebrew. It has the sense of calmness even to silence. The whole expression conveys the thought of the down-stooping of God in sympathy and grace that He might meet us where we are—in weakness, in despondency, even in failure. Elijah has come a very long journey to hear that wonderful voice. It silenced the echoes of the screaming voices of the priests of Baal, and displaced the murderous utterances of the Phoenician idolatress. It refreshed and invigorated the

dispirited prophet, sending him upon a new mission in which he would display that single-hearted integrity for the glory of his God which had ever characterised him. "Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet *in thy room*" (I Kings xix. 16).

The mantle of Elijah—a cloak of sheepskin like those still to be seen upon the shoulders of the Bedouin nomads today—was, in itself, a symbol. Elijah's devoted dissociation from all that emanated from the king's palace placed him far from those "that wear soft clothing . . . in kings' houses" (Matt. xi. 8). It was no light matter for Elisha that the mantle of Elijah was cast about *his* shoulders. He was "ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth" (I Kings xix. 19). It was a position of responsibility; others were dependent upon his administration. The thought, in scripture, associated with the number twelve is always connected with administration. It was a grievous reflection indeed that the twelve tribes of Israel were passing under the administration of an idolatrous queen. The troubled mind of Elisha must often have turned to God on this account. That he waited in a spirit of readiness is evident. His name means "God is Saviour," and he was anxious for the service of the Saviour God. Unknown to him, and away at Horeb, the mount of God, the Still Small Voice had spoken his name—"Elisha . . . shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room." The mantle of Elijah was upon his shoulders—with one gesture Elijah had performed the investiture both of prophet and sonship by adoption.

Elisha's farewell to his earthly parents was as irrevocable as his slaying of the oxen and the burning of the plough. It was given to Elijah to see the first steps in the pathway of his adopted one toward the goal of his true ministry: "He arose and went after Elijah and ministered unto him."

A period of about eight years passes before we read again of the mantle of Elijah. The great prophet has continued to combat the evil influences of the worship of Baal and

Ashtoreth. He has pronounced the doom of Ahab to his face in the vineyard of Naboth, and spoken the word of the LORD in judgment upon Jezebel.

At the commencement of 2 Kings ii., there is no reference to Elijah's death. He had cried in his exhaustion "Now take away my life," but the design of God is not death but life—in resurrection: "And it came to pass, when the LORD would *take up* Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal" (2 Kings ii. 1). The days of Elisha's journeying with his master were drawing to a close, yet they were the most important in his history. The journey they now take from Gilgal is one in which "*Elijah went with Elisha.*" The elder is going with the younger. We, too, may have to go upon a journey of instruction and experience. When this is so, we shall not go alone. There will be One with us Who has cast His mantle upon us. We are His by adoption, and each spiritual experience can be undertaken in His company.

The journey from Gilgal to Jordan is the spiritual preparation of Elisha. Gilgal means "circle," and in Joshua v. it is the place of circumcision. "And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you" (Joshua v. 9). It is the severance of the characteristics of the Egypt world. Paul writes to the Colossians (Ch. ii.) "Ye are complete in Him . . . in Whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ . . . *risen* with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead." They left Gilgal behind them on their journey together, but the knowledge of what Gilgal stood for could not be forgotten.

"And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Bethel. And Elisha said, as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel" (Ver. 2). When man, in the flesh, is shut out, it is possible to know God *as in His house*. Bethel means "House of God." To know a person in business or in our own house is different from knowing him in his *own*

house surrounded by so much that is characteristic of him. It was at Bethel that God "talked with Jacob" (Gen. xxviii.). "Behold I am with thee, and will keep thee . . . I will not leave thee, until I have done that which *I have spoken to thee of.*" God speaks in His House of His risen Son and of our relation to HIM. When we come together in assembly it is an occasion for corporate reverence to God. We are *His House*, and, if there is spiritual awareness of this, He will speak there. When Jacob became aware of God's presence at Bethel "He was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place" (Gen. xxviii. 17). The words translated "afraid" and "dreadful" are both associated with "reverence."

The journey continues (2 Kings ii. 4). "The LORD hath sent me to Jericho." At each stage of this spiritual progress Elisha is tested: "Tarry here, I pray thee." With what spiritual tenacity he pursues his purpose, even to refusal of the request of the one he had delighted to obey! One is reminded of the words of Naomi: "Go, return each to her mother's house" (Ruth i. 8); "Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me?" (ver. 11); "Turn again, my daughters, go your way" (ver. 12). But "Ruth clave unto her" (ver. 14): "The LORD do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me" (ver. 17). So Elijah goes with Elisha to Jericho—the city where the enemy was overthrown, the hostile power defeated. To an Israelite, Jericho held the same significance as the battles of Trafalgar or Waterloo to a native of this land. For the believer there is the divine assurance "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world" (I John iv. 4). This is a word of power. It has its counterpart in the assurance given to Joshua (Ch. vi. 2) "The LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour." The victory is spoken of in the past tense; the battle is already won. But the people have been to Gilgal, the hill of circumcision (Ch. v. 9), and they have known the exercises of God's house, for they "Kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho" (ver. 10). There is no short cut to spiritual experiences of victory—to that deep personal inner awareness of the power of Christ in resurrection.

“And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here: for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan” (2 Kings ii. 6). For the third time Elisha refuses to be parted from him: “They two went on.” Outwardly they were dissimilar. The wild looking zealot from the hills of Thisbe, his long hair falling over his sheepskin mantle; the broad shoulders and the strong hairy form were a contrast to the youthful figure of Elisha clad in the more usual habiliments of civilisation. Yet the same indomitable purpose carried both forward—zeal for God in a dark day of apostasy.

The crossing of Jordan is not significant of the literal death of the body. It is the death of the Lord Jesus as the power by which His own are brought into association with Himself. The outcome of His death and resurrection is that He has taken *present* possession of the heavenly places *for us*. To apprehend the significance of the crossing of Jordan is to enter into the calling that is ours in Christ Jesus. Elijah is a presentation of Christ in resurrection power, and Elisha lays hold upon this with Spirit-taught tenacity. He is thus the only man of the Old Testament to *see* the annulling of death. The mantle of Elijah had smitten the waters “and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground” (ver. 8). Elijah is *with* Elisha in this experience. It is beautiful to see the Lord Jesus in resurrection showing, to His own, Himself as the power of life that could bring them over Jordan with Him.

“And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so” (ver. 9-10). The request is invited, and it is in accord with the character and purpose of Elisha. But it is granted only to faith tested and proved. So does Elisha *see* his great leader taken up. The pledge of the promise is in his hands—the mantle of Elijah.

The mantle of Elijah is not a charm. The possession of it indicates a personal realisation of the worth of Christ in His

death, His resurrection and ascension. The mere knowledge of these truths as historical facts is not to hold the mantle of Elijah. It is only an Elisha who can cry "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." It is "To know him and the *power of His resurrection*" (Phil. iii. 10). Apprehended in this way, He is the source of all our power and blessing. This was the true chariot power for Israel. It surrounded Elisha at Dothan—"Behold, the mountain was *full* of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha (2 Kings vi. 17).

The chariot of fire has entered the heavens and Elisha has beheld until he can "see him no more." "And he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces. He took up also the mantle of Elijah." He discards that which is characteristic of himself; he has the mantle of Elijah and a double portion of his spirit. So, in our day, we have the holy privilege of knowing that God has taken up a Man into the heavens. Christ received up into heaven is the One in whom is all our blessing, but to *see* Him in this character is the outcome of personal exercise on the part of each individual believer, if he is to represent Him—the Heavenly Man—in this present world condition. Let us not be as those who "stood to view afar off" (2 Kings ii. 7).

The "Double portion" was the portion of the firstborn. It distinguished him from the rest of the family. In his first epistle (Ch. ii. 9) Peter assures those begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead that they are "A chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a 'purchased' people." We sometimes sing "What a portion there is thine!" It is the double portion of the firstborn, and Elisha asked a "hard thing" when he sought it. It is not to be lightly esteemed: its value and privilege are incalculable. The church is indeed a distinguished company.

Surely the practical reaction to this distinction should be in testimony, which shows itself, not in words, but in that true representation of the One who has been taken up into heaven. It was this *representation* of all that Elijah had stood for that was the glorious obsession of Elisha. So can he stand, *alone*,

by the brink of Jordan, with the mantle of Elijah that fell from him. It is good, in our own dark day of apostasy, to hear that voice of faith in the God of resurrection: "Where is the LORD God of Elijah?", and to see, even in figure, something of the mighty worth of our Lord Jesus Christ in His death as the smitten waters part hither and thither that Elisha may pass over.

EDWARD T. WOOD.



DANIEL'S PRAYER AND GOD'S ANSWER

SEVENTY years' captivity in Babylon, and then a visitation from Jehovah, causing them to return to their own land—such had been the prophecy of Jeremiah (xxix.10). Was there not cause for rejoicing as the time of fulfilment drew near? Many had settled down in captivity, as indeed God had bidden them (verses 5, 6), and had no wish to return; but many looked forward eagerly to the promised liberation.

Daniel, who was himself probably too old to return, yet desired intensely the restoration of the beloved city and temple. But to him the first question was that of Israel's repentance, for without that a return was worse than valueless. So in Daniel ix. we find the prophet in sackcloth and ashes, on his knees before God, confessing his sins and the sins of his people (verse 20). Not, be it noted, the sin of his people only; for though Daniel himself had been conspicuous by his faithfulness, yet the nearer to God a believer lives, the greater must be his consciousness of unworthiness. Thus there was no question of confessing the sins of others with a sense meanwhile of his own righteousness.

Thus did he acknowledge the evil which had called forth God's judgment, while now seeking the fulfilment of the promised blessing "Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of Thy servant, and his supplications, and cause Thy face to shine upon Thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake" (verse 17).

His prayer seems to have in view only the immediate restoration at the end of the seventy years' captivity. Yet his earlier visions, as well as those of other prophets, must have

made him anxious about the entire future of his people, and in the answer which God gives, not only the requests which he uttered, but the unspoken desires of his heart are met.

To understand the revelation given to him, we need to bear in mind that it concerns Israel and Jerusalem—"Thy people and thy holy city."

"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy " (verse 24).

What is spoken of here, then, is the *final* blessing of Israel and of Jerusalem, a blessing which goes far beyond the restoration from Babylon. Transgression and sin, which had marked them throughout their history, and had so often brought down God's judgment, should come to an end. "To make reconciliation for iniquity" will be fulfilled when a repentant Israel sees the blood of Calvary applied to the blotting out of her sins before a holy God. Likewise the righteousness in which they will stand will be everlasting, not human righteousness now, but "Jehovah our righteousness" (Jer. xxiii. 6). Vision and prophecy will no longer be needed when the full blessing of the millennial kingdom is enjoyed. Finally, the sanctuary, so often defiled in the past, and repeatedly to be so in the future would then be "anointed" and the Shekinah glory once again would fill the house (Ezek. xliii. 5).

The seventy-week period in which this was to be brought about was divided into three parts. First, seven weeks; then sixty-two weeks; finally, the last week is spoken of as a separate thing in verse 27 of Daniel ix. The first two periods, sixty-nine weeks in all, "unto Messiah the Prince" leave no doubt that each "week" of the prophecy means a seven-year period. Thus we have, not seventy years, but seventy times seven years.

The beginning of the period is quite definite "From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem" (not the temple merely). This commandment is plainly referred to in Nehemiah ii. 5-8.

The first division of seven "weeks" or forty-nine years has reference perhaps to the actual period of building, though this is not stated. The whole sixty-nine weeks, or 483 years, brings us, according to one very careful and detailed reckoning, to the very day on which our Lord presented Himself to Jerusalem as her King (John xii. 15). But instead of being received with acclamation as Messiah *the Prince*, they knew Him only as the prophet of Nazareth, and presently He was delivered to be crucified. As Daniel was told, "After the threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, and shall have nothing" (R.V.).

Does the last of the seventy "weeks" follow immediately? Quite clearly it does not. Instead, the prophecy continues "and the people of the *prince that shall come* shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined". That is, there is another prince yet to come. His "people" not himself, will destroy both city and sanctuary. It is God's righteous recompense to the guilty city.

Now, it was the Roman armies that God allowed to accomplish the destruction. Titus, the Roman general, desired to spare the beautiful temple, but nevertheless according to the prophetic word it was destroyed as well as the city. But the "prince that shall come," who is he? Clearly he also is to be a Roman prince, or leader. What is said of him in verse 27 shows quite definitely that he is the one who becomes head of the revived Roman Empire—the Beast. Let us examine the verse carefully. The translation is apparently difficult, at least at the end. The Revised Version reads "And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week: and for the half of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and upon the wing of abominations (perhaps meaning "because of the protection of idols") shall come one that maketh desolate: and even unto the consummation, and that determined, shall wrath be poured out upon the desolator." The marginal reading of "desolate" instead of "desolator" makes a better sense, for the prophecy concerns Jerusalem,

then to be desolated once more because of fresh iniquity, that is, the protection of idolatry which the Antichrist introduces.

Now it must be remarked that this verse supposes a *resumption* of the Jewish sacrifice and oblation, which had perforce ceased when the city and sanctuary were destroyed by the Roman armies. Thus it is plain that until the Jewish sanctuary is rebuilt, this verse cannot be fulfilled. It is also evident that, when Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, was "cut off," the predicted seventy-two weeks leading to Jerusalem's blessing were abruptly interrupted. In the present church period they are not reckoned at all, for the church's calling is to heavenly blessing. But when, in the perhaps not very distant future, the Jewish sanctuary is again established, the Roman "prince that shall come" will make this covenant, giving his support to the Israeli economy. It is probable that the resumption of "sacrifice and oblation"—the worship of God in a rebuilt temple—will take place under the protection of this covenant. It is at any rate certain that God *then* begins once more to reckon the last remaining week of the seventy.

Where will the church be when this time comes? In heaven, with the Saviour whom she now awaits!

How soon after the Rapture will this seventieth "week" begin? The answer to this question is bound up with the separation, under God's gracious working, of a godly remnant out of unbelieving Israel. If we turn to Revelation xi. we find the angel saying to John "Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple (i.e. sanctuary, the holy place) leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months."

Thus we find God beginning again to take account of the worship of the earthly *sanctuary*, while the holy *city* is still defiled. Here then is the beginning of the seventieth week. Amid the ritual offering of "sacrifice and oblation" there are true worshippers, while the "city," symbolising the economy

as a whole, shelters under the protection of the Roman prince. However, it is also clear that he has not yet reached the height of his wickedness.

Many scriptures concur in focussing our attention upon the latter half of this seventieth "week," a period, that is, of three and a half years, or forty-two months, or twelve hundred and sixty days, as it is variously described. The "dragon" of Rev. xii. is cast out of heaven and persecutes the woman (symbolising Israel) for this period (verse 6 and 14). The "beast" who derives his throne and authority from the dragon is allowed to continue forty-two months (Rev. xiii. 5). The "treading under foot" of the holy city (Rev. xi. 2), and the time of testimony of the two witnesses (verse 3) is for this period. Finally, the little horn of Daniel vii. has power for three and a half years (verse 25).

Thus we may with certainty conclude, that when the Roman "prince" causes the sacrifice and oblation to cease, with half the "week" still to run, that this coincides with Satan's being cast down from heaven and his taking possession of this man to fulfil his purposes. Then begins the revived Roman Empire, and its Satan-inspired warfare against God's earthly people Israel, and especially the godly remnant who confess the Name of Jesus. This "prince that shall come" is the little horn of Daniel vii., who "shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to *change times and laws*: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time ($3\frac{1}{2}$ years) (Dan. vii. 25). He breaks his covenant with Israel, stops their worship and their festivals and substitutes idolatry—the "abomination of desolation" spoken of in Dan. xii. 11. Our Lord makes clear in Matt. xxiv. 15 that it is at this time that the great tribulation begins. Is not this also "the protection of idols" because of which in Dan. ix. 27 the desolator is sent against Jerusalem?

The godly remnant of Israel will certainly refuse to join this enforced idolatry, even as Daniel's three friends did. But the unbelieving mass of Israel will bow, as our Lord warned the men of His generation. The unclean spirit of idolatry, which

was completely exorcised from Israel by the captivity in Babylon, will return with sevenfold intensity (Matt. xii. 43-45). Because of this idolatry then, the desolator will come upon Jerusalem. Many scriptures speak of the king of the north as the desolator. But what is the end of it all?

When "the consummation, and that determined"—the completion of God's judgment upon His rebellious people—is reached, the seventy weeks will have run their course, and then shall Jerusalem say "Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of Jehovah," as she welcomes the Saviour whom once she rejected.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN.



BE STILL

"Their strength is to sit still." (Isa. xxx. 7)

**"In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."
(Isa. xxx. 15.)**

If you would know all the wondrous beauty of a forest glade, you must not be satisfied with passing through it with hasty foot, and in company with a troop of merry children, whose ringing laughter carries panic into the hearts of thousands of shy living things that, with trembling hearts, keep still in hole, and brake, and nest. No; you must go alone, and sit quietly down on the log of some felled tree, and wait. Then the mystery of beauty will begin to unfold itself: the fairy bowers, the mossy glens, the interlacing boughs. Presently a note will sound from yonder bough, as the signal for the outburst of many sweet-voiced choristers, and the woodland will ring with the music of the birds; whilst the squirrel runs up some neighbouring tree, and the rabbits come out to feed, and the young foxes play about their holes. All this is hidden from those who cannot wait. So there are mysteries of glory and beauty in Scripture hidden from the wise and prudent, but revealed to babes. There is no book that will so repay time spent over its pages as the Word of God.

(From "Elijah"; by F. B. Meyer).

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

FAITH IN THE BIBLE

There is one thing that God's Spirit always assumes—the perfect goodness and the unswerving holiness of God. And this, beyond all doubt or fear, we are entitled always to keep before our hearts in reading the Bible.

Never let the breath of suspicion enter your soul. Invariably, when you listen to the written word of God, range yourself on His side. You will never understand the Bible otherwise. You may be tried; but be assured that you will be helped out of the trial. The day may come when nobody appears to lend you a helping hand. What is to become of you then? Once allow your soul to be sullied by judging those living oracles, and real faith in the Bible is gone as far as you are concerned. If I do not trust it in everything, I can trust it in nothing.

Objections against scripture are always the creation of unbelief. Difficulties, where they exist for us, would only exercise faith in God. The word of God is always in itself not only right, but fraught with light. It makes wise the simple; it enlightens the eyes.

The necessary claim of scripture is that it be confided in as the word of God, though it does not thence follow that we are competent to explain all.

W. KELLY.

(From *Lectures Introductory to
the earlier Historical Books.*)

ERRATUM

February Issue, page 23, line 10:

For "seventy-two" please read "seventy."

OUTWARD FAILURE BUT INWARD SUCCESS

“Beware lest ye also . . . fall from your own steadfastness”
(2 Peter iii. 17)

ONE of the great vicissitudes of the times for the earnest and thoughtful child of God is the widespread diminution and even termination of certain spiritual activities which have hitherto been accompanied by unmistakable tokens of God's blessing. The gospel of God has been preached and has borne abundant fruit. Confessors of Christ, active and owned of God in word and work, have multiplied and testified together in the uniting bond of peace. But it is undeniable that these successes, striking though they were, have in many cases proved to be short-lived only.

How often we have seen zealous companies of the saints lose first their heart and then their energy, dwindle first and then disappear—the lamp-stand being removed out of its place (Rev. ii. 5). And how often also we have seen active and honoured servants of God, deemed by us indispensable to the progress of divine testimony, cease from their labours. Some have turned aside from the faith once delivered to the saints. Some are fettered by personal circumstances from which there seems no escape. And some have fallen asleep, the ripest fruit of the Spirit being often gathered first. In result, we feel that for one cause or another, the mighty have fallen and the stalwarts have been taken from us.

Viewing these things, grave questions arise with many. Where, they say, do Christian service and testimony and faith now stand in the light of prevalent facts like these? Is it true that the efforts of faith are invariably and inevitably doomed to failure? And, as this seems to be the case, is any effort at all worth while nowadays?

Such feelings of spiritual depression as these prevail widely among the children of God. Many are so confused by the welter of warring nations, clashing creeds, false teaching and evil living that they are saying in their despair, Who will show us any good?

We entirely share the view of the exceptional difficulties of our day. Further, we quite believe it to be possible that the influence of the power of the world on the church, and the corrupt state of Christendom is even worse than any of us have imagined. But we also believe that the present disorganised state of nominal Christianity was foreseen of God, that it was present in its incipient stage in the apostolic days, and, moreover, that principles of guidance for those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart are provided in the Scriptures. The Epistles of Paul to Galatia, Corinth, Colosse and Thessalonica, as well as the Lord's own messages to the seven churches of Asia, all combine to show that declension in heart and ways had even in those early days begun in the church of God.

It is undoubtedly clear from the Scriptures that, so far as practical correspondence with the divine ideal is concerned, the church was an *outward failure* from the beginning.

But it is equally clear that the Scriptures that foretell the increasing corporate failure of the Christian profession also indicate the possibility of the *inward success* of the individual believer in the midst of the most distressing and depressing circumstances. That success consists of the inward realisation of the presence of Christ Himself with the faithful in the hour of their apparent destitution. Did not that Blessed One say to those who imagined themselves forlorn and forsaken, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (John xiv. 18)?

Paul, the pattern to those who believe, learned how to endure abasement in His service, and we shall find the encouragement we need from his recorded words and example in the face of early apostasy. Mark what a spirit of cheerful confidence pervades the Epistles he wrote as the prisoner of the Lord at Rome. His communications, for instance, to the Ephesians, Colossians and Philippians, to Timothy, Titus and Philemon, were all written when the decay and disintegration of the companies in Asia and Europe, formed by his own ministry, were becoming manifest. Whatever might happen

collectively, the apostle was assured within himself, and assured Timothy, that "the firm foundation of God standeth" (2 Tim. ii. 19, R.V.).

Paul possessed that serenity of mind about the fruit of his labours which comes to all those who rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. It was a real fact to him that Christ was the Head of the church, and that the Holy Spirit the Indweller of the church, was the power on earth to gather and nourish the members of Christ's body. God was for him, therefore, in this service: and how could there be failure? If there was an external breakdown, the internal operations of God's Spirit were continued. Like the body of the individual believer, though the outward was decaying, the inward was renewed day by day.

Paul was not discouraged nor cast down by the unpromising appearance of things in the apostolic churches. He left the final results of his teaching and edification in God's hands. He believed that it would be found in the day of Christ that he had not run in vain nor laboured in vain. Deserted by those who were ashamed of his chain, he never harboured the suspicion that he was defeated. On the contrary, he knew he was more than a conqueror through Him that loved him.

The true success of a Christian is that assurance in his own soul, which arises from trust in God. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (I John v. 4). The man who *believes* he is on the winning side in the conflict for truth is already the victor. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego achieved their conquest *before* they passed unscathed through the fiery furnace, for in full view of its flames they declared their assurance of deliverance to the king himself (Dan. iii. 17). And the triumph of their faith was seen as they walked through the fire, as, at a later day, it was also seen in the case of Peter walking on the waves. And in both cases the cause of their triumph was also seen—they were walking with Another.

In the midst of a decadent Christendom, let us maintain a joyous faith within our hearts, continuing in the things we have learned of God. Though the oxen stumble and the cart totters,

the ark of God will not fall to the ground. The best things are God's, and they *must* remain intact for us, whatever happens.

It will be difficult for us to attain to the full measure of the faith seen in some of the saints of pre-Christian days. But we shall do well to endeavour to imitate, at any rate, the triumphant song of that Old Testament prophet, which he sang in the face of the growing oppression by the great enemy of his people:—

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom,
Neither shall fruit be in the vines;
The labour of the olive shall fail,
And the fields shall yield no meat;
The flock shall be cut off from the fold,
And there shall be no herd in the stalls;
Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.
The Lord God is my strength,
And he will make my feet like hinds' feet,
And he will make me to walk upon mine high places.”
(Hab. iii. 17-19.)

W. J. Hocking

(Reprinted from “THE BIBLE MONTHLY,” *January*, 1921)



PASSING ON THE TRUTH

(Read: Acts xviii. 1-3 and 24-28; 2 Timothy i. 13—ii. 2).
(Extended notes of address given at Wildfell Hall, Catford,
3rd May, 1958)

THE use of the word “therefore” in 2 Timothy ii. 1. links what the apostle is about to say with what he has written previously, so that to understand the true bearing of his exhortations, the context must be examined.

A Day of Departure from the Truth

The general tenor of the epistle shows that the apostle was writing in view of departure from the truth so widespread that he has had to say "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me" (Ch. i. 15). How deeply serious that was! At Ephesus, the chief city of that Roman Province in Asia Minor, the apostle had ministered for two years, during which "All they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." Moreover, to the elders of Ephesus Paul had protested that he had not shunned to declare to them "the whole counsel of God." What years of triumph for the new faith those had been!

But that era was passing. Over the land where the genial sunshine of the truth had shed its warming rays, the chilly mists of doubt and speculation were gathering ominously, so that the aged apostle had to say, with a lump in his throat we may be sure, that all were turning away from him. No doubt Paul was keenly sensible of the personal slight of this desertion. Yet more he would feel the dishonour to the truth of God, the rebuff to the cause of Christ, and the appalling spiritual loss entailed for those within the Christian circle, and eventually for the unbelieving world beyond.

Paul's own approaching Departure

Yet, bitter as must have been his disappointment over this seeming collapse of part at least of his life's work, there was a consolation uniquely his at the moment when the apostle wrote. He was nearing the end of his earthly service. Very soon he would leave behind him for ever the storms that had beset his pathway in the world to await in the unruffled calm of heaven the bestowal of the crown of righteousness which he knew was laid up for him there. He had fought the good fight, and kept the faith. He was passing on to the succeeding generation a torch which his own hand had held steadily. A few more weeks or days, possibly hours even, and his Lord would welcome him to his eternal home.

In view of his near departure, how Christlike of Paul to write this letter to his son in the faith! The blessed Saviour,

on the eve of His return to heaven by way of the cross, had gathered His disciples around Him in Jerusalem to speak farewell words of comfort and strengthening for the trials He knew lay ahead of them. Centuries have passed since that hallowed tryst, yet the sweetness of the Saviour's word remains. Believers turn again and again to John xiv.-xvi. for consolation, and, indeed, for inspiration. Now the great apostle does something similar for Timothy.

Timothy however is far away. So Paul bids him come to Rome as quickly as he can. And lest he should not arrive before the executioner's sword has done its evil work, he writes this letter containing instruction not only for Timothy personally, but for all those into whose hands, by the providence of God, it may fall. How deeply thankful to God for this we should be, and to Paul also for his forethought!

The Threatening Peril

What was the peril to which Paul clearly saw Timothy would be exposed? Doubtless there were many. But the counsel given in these verses suggests that he had particularly in mind the danger that Timothy might despair and give up. What are the Lord's servants to do when they find themselves and their message unwanted, and those who once treasured the truth departing from it?

In considering these problems as they are encountered today, we are not concerned here with such lack of success in the gospel as may be due to the persistence of the Lord's servants with traditional methods instead of adapting themselves realistically to the conditions and circumstances of the present. That is a different, though by no means an unimportant, problem. What we have in mind now however is the prevailing utter indifference of the world around, and the carelessness and apathy with regard to the truth to be found within the Christian circle, which are so frustrating and burdensome to those who seek progress for the cause of Christ.

Christ's Example the Answer

Then how are the Lord's servants to be fortified for their task? The apostle bids Timothy "Be strong in the grace that

is in Christ Jesus." He was to consider the perfect example of the Saviour Himself. When He came into the world to bring salvation to men, how was He received, and how did He react to that reception?

The answers to these questions are known to all. In surpassing grace the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John i. 14). How wonderful that He should come at all! Then, having come, He went about doing good, healing men of their infirmities and sickness, delivering them from the thralldom of demons, even raising the dead to life. Not only so, but He spoke words of comfort and forgiveness, assuring sinners of God's readiness to receive and bless every penitent returning prodigal. What was the outcome? He was despised and rejected; for His love He received hatred: and in return for His gentleness and lovingkindness He was given violence and cruelty!

What happened then? Did He return to heaven, leaving the human race to the fate it deserved? No, blessed be His Name! Despite all the hatred and violence He continued His course to the end, yielding up His life for those who did not want Him. Shall we not wonder and worship?

Love brought Thee down, love led Thee on,
 Nor aught Thy steadfast heart could move,
 Till all redemption's toil was done;
 Oh, matchless mystery of love!

A single expression summing this up may be found in 2 Cor. viii. 9: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." There it is—the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Practical Applications

Now, says the apostle to Timothy, you must aim to be like Christ; the grace that is in Christ Jesus is to be your pattern and your strength. When you feel tempted to give up and abandon the cause of Christ; when you feel that you will cease

to strive for the souls of men so adamant in their unbelief; when you feel like ceasing to bother about your fellow-believers with their such poor sense of values; when you are tempted to do any of these things, son Timothy, remember Christ Jesus, and persevere to the end as He did. In a word, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. How sorely we need the apostle's exhortation today!

But there was more. If verse 1 was designed to preserve a right attitude of mind on Timothy's part towards those to whom he ministered, believers or unbelievers as the case might be, verse 2 describes the practical measures Timothy was to take for the safe-guarding of the sacred deposit of truth which God had entrusted to men. So the apostle recalls Timothy to the things he had heard from Paul among many witnesses.

(a) Personal Conviction

First of all, Timothy was to be sure of what he believed himself. That is surely the main reason of the apostle's reminder that there were many witnesses of what Paul had taught and Timothy had heard, Timothy was not told to seek, or to expect, new revelations even from the Holy Spirit, but was to continue in the things he had already learned from the apostle (2 Tim. iii. 14). And he was expected to be so assured as to what he knew and taught that if any doubt arose as to what the apostle *had* said, he was to verify it with the many witnesses available to confirm it.

It must always be remembered that what the apostles taught had the Lord's authority (cf. John xvi. 13; Eph. ii. 20; iv. 11, 12; I Cor. xiv. 37), so much so that in recording the progress of the church from Pentecost onwards, it is said that believers "continued steadfastly (not in the teaching of the Holy Spirit, as we might have expected, though it was that, but) in *the apostles' doctrine* and fellowship. To disparage what the apostles taught is therefore to slight the Head of the church and the gracious Spirit of God also.

At least two things, of course, distinguish the present day from Timothy's. The witnesses, like Timothy himself, have

long since passed away, so that no persons are available to bear oral testimony to what the apostles said. On the other hand, we possess what Timothy did not have, the complete New Testament in which the apostles' doctrine has been divinely preserved to us—a permanent record in black and white to which we may refer as often as we will for verification of what we believe. How privileged we are! And how important it is that believers today, young and old, should devote proper time and study to the Scriptures!

(b) Responsibility to Pass On

Even that however does not exhaust the requirements of verse 2. Timothy, having learned the truth himself, was to pass it on to others—to faithful men, who would, in turn, teach others also. Paul's teaching had not been secret, clandestine, esoteric, but open, public, given to many witnesses, intended to be spread abroad for general enlightenment. Timothy was to help in the spreading.

But, it might be asked, is not the communicating of the truth the work of the Holy Spirit? Indeed, yes! But the Holy Spirit Himself in this verse places upon Timothy, as example for others of course, the positive responsibility of passing on the truth.

This point is emphasised because in the present day increasing reliance is being placed upon what might be called mechanical means of ministry. The printing press has been in existence for centuries, and committal to writing is a method of conveying the truth which has specific divine sanction. Was not God Himself the first Author when He wrote His law upon tables of stone (Ex. xxxii. 16)? And are not the scriptures God's unique gift to men? But is there not nevertheless a tendency to neglect oral ministry, and to despise the teacher whom Christ, as the Head of the church, gives to His people? Why indeed are teachers given by the Lord if the church could get along equally well without them?

There is however a further consideration. Timothy was to seek suitable persons to receive his instruction, persons with two dominant qualifications: (1) they were to be faithful men,

and (2) they must be able to teach others. Incidentally the word "men" here does not indicate that only male persons were in mind. (For an example of the contrary, see I Tim. ii. 8). Women equally with men may be custodians of the truth, and be instrumental in handing it down from one generation to the next (e.g. 2 Tim. i. 5), subject, of course, to the restrictions which scripture imposes where public ministry is concerned.

(c) Public and Private Ministry

So far as the writer understands, the apostle is not referring here to public ministry in formal gatherings of the assembly for edification, though this would not be excluded. It is a question of passing on the truth to younger folk whenever Christian intercourse provides the opportunity to do so. More has been done in recent years by "drawing-room meetings" and similar occasions than is generally recognised. It is the sort of thing we read of in Acts xviii, where Paul is found lodging with Aquila and Priscilla because they were of the same craft—tent-making. May we not be certain that as they worked together on their tents they conversed with one another, Paul passing on to his hosts the wonderful range of truth committed to him. Then at the end of the chapter, these two devoted servants of the Lord received into their home a gifted man named Apollos, of Alexandria, and expounded unto *him* the way of God more perfectly. How delightful to find one generation serving the next in this way!

Surely there is a call today to consider the implications of this particular scripture, and to enquire whether some more specific and effective carrying out of what it enjoins is called for, in order that the truth may be handed down to those who may yet follow us before the Lord Himself comes.

E. A. PETTMAN.



NOTES OF A BIBLE READING ON GENESIS XXXVII—XL.

WE enter in these chapters on the life of Joseph, the last of the lives in this richly instructive book. Joseph's life presents in many respects a contrast to those preceding it, but it is also complementary to them. The lives of the Old Testament worthies set forth different phases of divine life in man, which, in Joseph, is seen fully developed. Little failure, if any, is recorded of Joseph. In his pathway of simple faithfulness and consequent suffering to the glories which followed, he becomes an eminent, if not the pre-eminent, type of the Lord Jesus in His sufferings and glories.

xxxvii. 2-11. Those destined by God to rule are frequently chosen from the shepherds; so Joseph here, as Moses and David, notably, later. To the one who has a shepherd's heart the sceptre can be entrusted.

The hatred of the brethren soon manifests itself. There appear to be three causes:

- (i) His moral separation from them (ver. 2: cf. John vii. 7).
- (ii) His being the special object of his father's affection and honour, of which the coat of many pieces was (a) the personal expression, and (b) the public declaration, and also, perhaps, (c) the mark of appointment to be successor as chief of the clan. Does not the coat suggest the Father's delight in the Lord Jesus? In Mark i. the Father's voice from the opened heaven addressed Him personally on the threshold of His ministry, "*Thou art My beloved Son.*" In Luke ix. the same voice is heard towards the close of His ministry, declaring to others this time His complacency in Him, "*This is My beloved Son.*"
- (iii) Thirdly, they hated him because of his dreams, whose purport they quickly grasped—in which God revealed his future supremacy.

In Joseph's two dreams two sides of Christ's supremacy are foreshadowed, the earthly and the heavenly. Men contest, not His heavenly supremacy, but His earthly.

vv. 12-17. Fulfilment of the will of his father and love to

his brethren took Joseph out of Hebron (place of communion) and put him in his brethren's hands.

He did not find them in Shechem ("support" or "shoulder"), but in Dothan ("laws"). When Christ came His brethren were far from being in the place of subjection under the yoke of God (cf. xlix. 14, 15), and they had the law only after an external and burdensome sort, not written in their hearts, but only on their lips.

18-20. In the dreams we see God's counsels regarding Joseph: here, the counsel of his brethren. They were descendants of Cain at heart.

21-22. All are not like-minded. Reuben here appears to have a conscience and concern for his brother, and a desire to save him (ver. 29).

23-30. Joseph was stripped of his coat and our Lord was stripped of His glories. "There was no water" in the pit, adds the Holy Spirit. Yet death was not to be that way. Joseph was delivered to the Ishmaelites; and the Lord was delivered by the Jews to the Gentiles, it being not lawful for them to put Him to death. Judah's question, "What profit?" is true of life today. Not right, but profits, is the guide (compare Judas, Matt. xxvi. 15). Joseph is sold for twenty pieces of silver; our Lord for thirty.

31-36. The heartlessness of Joseph's brethren shows itself in deceiving their father. Years before Jacob had deceived his father, and by the same means, a kid of the goats. How true that we reap what we sow! God's government is inexorable.

xxxviii. Joseph's story is broken for the time being. It is a dark chapter, but God records things as they are. Judah marries a Canaanitish woman, Shuah (riches). Contrast Abraham's care to secure a bride of his kindred for Isaac. But "where sin abounds, grace over-abounds," is the lesson of the chapter. Tamar is brought into the line of the Messiah (Matt. i. 3), and the royal seed is preserved. Tamar with the other three women in the genealogy of Christ form a beautiful gospel subject.

xxxix. In this chapter and the next all seems to combine to take Joseph farther away from the fulfilment of God's word

to him, but this is only apparent, for all the incidents are but links in the chain for blessing. God had one end in view—sole and supreme control for Joseph. Eph. i. 10 is a brief but full commentary on what is now before us.

vv. 1-6. Even now Joseph is ruler in his master's house, and the house is blessed on his account. Wherever we find Joseph supreme, there is blessing. Is the true Joseph, though unseen, supreme in our hearts and lives? We see the quickness of Joseph's master to appreciate his qualities and to turn them to his own account; this the world is ever ready to do.

7-18. Joseph's fear of God, unchanging integrity and purity shine beautifully here, as also does the absence of all self-vindication and fault-finding, either with God or with Potiphar's wife. The eye single, the whole body is full of light (Matt. vi. 22).

19-23. In prison he suffers quietly for righteousness' sake, waiting God's time (see Psalm cv. 16-22). It was doubtless at this time that (as one version gives it) the iron entered his soul, and the word of Jehovah tried him. God's way is to develop in secret what is to come out publicly (cf. Moses, David, Paul, etc.). Lessons learned with God in suffering are among the most valuable of all. In the prison, as in the house, he is exalted to a position of confidence, a foretaste of what awaited him. Abased or exalted, Joseph shines in the lowly-minded performance of what is entrusted to him.

xl. 1-8. God is preparing and over-ruling. Nothing happens by chance.

9-19. In prison Joseph becomes the revealer of the mind of God: so the Lord on the cross (an infinitely darker prison) becomes the Interpreter, according to God, of all man's sin and doom, and of all God's holiness, mercy and grace. For the different fates of the butler and baker, cf. the two thieves at the cross. Joseph asks for no honours or gain, but to be remembered. We cannot read this without hearing another Voice here.

20-23. Joseph's interpretations come true, as they must of necessity do.

J. P. BULL.

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

Vol. XLVII

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED

This description of believers (Eph. i. 6) is expressive of the special degree of favour in which they are made to stand before God in Christ. It signifies much more than a cool reception in forgiveness of the past, as when Absalom the banished son was brought back from Geshur to David's court (2 Sam. xiv. 24). It is more than our reconciliation to God, rich in grace as this is. It is also of a higher character than the standing in favour which is true of all those justified by faith (Rom. v. 2). Further, it is to be distinguished from God's acceptance of a sacrifice, or of the faithful service and faithful walk of the followers of Christ, for which other words are employed both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. To be "*accepted in the Beloved*" is something altogether exceptional. This special favour and grace bestowed upon us could only be expressed by saying it is "*in the Beloved.*" It is not said to be "*in Christ,*" or even "*in the Son.*" But we who are chosen "*in Christ*" are declared to be invested, in God's estimation, with the comeliness found only in Him Who is the Beloved of the Father, and the One in Whom He is well pleased.

The verb (*charitoo*) is found in one other passage only, and is there translated "*highly favoured.*" It was used by Gabriel when addressing Mary as the virgin chosen out of multitudes of other Jewish maidens to be the mother of our Lord. In recognition of this unique distinction, the angel said to her, "*Hail . . . highly favoured . . .*" (Luke i. 28; see also verse 30, where however a more general term is used).

W. J. HOCKING.

(From "*The Bible Monthly*": Vol. IX. page 165)

LORD'S DAY REFLECTIONS

XX. The Worshipper

(Read John ix.)

TO observe the character of the Lord Jesus in this chapter affords a wonderful opportunity to join hands, in spiritual identification, with this worshipper of the past. There are, of course, degrees of worship. They are influenced by the extent of our apprehension of the One we seek to worship.

It will help to this end if we read on from the previous chapter, instead of allowing a division at the end of chapter viii. There is certainly a change of circumstance at the close of chapter eight; indeed it is the close of an epoch. But we must see Jesus in relation to this change, keeping our vision clear to observe Him as He "passes on."

There is a great sadness in this "passing." The Lord Jesus goes out from the temple—out from Israel—to the poor of the flock. From early morning He has been *again* in the temple. "And all the people came unto Him; and He sat down, and taught them" (Ch. viii. 2). It is here, too, that His enemies gather—the scribes and the Pharisees. It is here, in the temple, that enmity mounts until stones are in the hands of men with murder in their hearts. "But Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and thus passed on. And as He passed on, He saw a man blind from birth" (John viii. 59; ix. 1. New Tr.).

Here we may wonder at His overflowing grace. The threat of death has no power to stay the outpouring of His love. "I *must* work the works of Him that has sent me while it is day. The night is coming when no one can work" (ver. 4). He had seen the approach of that night, but passes on nevertheless, to one who had dwelt in a night of his own—blind from birth.

Ophthalmic disease was rife. It was accentuated by the physical causes associated with that climate. Blindness was communicated by one sufferer to another. But to be *born* blind was to carry a personal stigma from which there was no relief. "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he

should be born blind?" (ver. 2). Their error was one of the errors of the times; that eventual sin was divinely anticipated and punished. Unsound and strange in every way, their error draws out the unerring correction, precious alike to them and to us, "That the works of God should be manifested in him" (ver. 3). The pride and self-righteousness of their leaders pronounced the man to have been "wholly born in sins" (ver. 34). Yet it was an established principle of God that kindness and consideration should be shown to those in his condition (See Lev. xix. 14; Deut. xxvii. 18). Amid all the error of human kind the Lord remains true to the divine principles of grace and truth. "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (ver. 5). Light shall dispel the darkness of the man born blind. "In that day . . . the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity" (Isa. xxix. 18). One thinks of His message to John, in prison, "Go, report to John what ye hear and see. Blind men see . . ." (Matt. xi. 4). The perfect character of the Son of God is unchanging.

And so, perhaps in amazement, we see the Lord Jesus stooped to the earth making clay with the moisture from His own mouth, with which to anoint the eyes of the sightless man. He "made clay of the spittle, and spread the clay over his eyes, and said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, which is interpreted Sent. He went away therefore, and washed, and came seeing" (vers. 6, 7: W.K.). It has been said that men of science can make many things associated with the material earth but have never been able to make clay. However this may be, the clay that was made by the lowly Man of Sorrows is significant of a humanity, pure under the security of God, yet in contact with man in all his blindness. In those days of sorrow and superstition, when the shadow of a Pharisee was believed to be beneficent, and his spittle to possess healing powers, how ever-blessed it is to see the Son of Man applying that which was of Himself in Manhood to the sad unseeing eyes of a blind beggar! To be sent, in grace, at the word of the Sent One Himself, to the pool "which is interpreted Sent," was to take the first steps which would forever link him with the Sender. For the divine object is to bring a

poor beggar into that intimate circle of those, wrought upon by the Spirit of God, who believe on the Son of God. These are the worshippers—and “The Father seeketh such to worship Him” (John iv. 23).

From his earliest days the blind man had been ostracized. His sightless eyes made him repugnant to parents and neighbours alike. There was no love for him. He was a liability and a reproach. This remained evident even when he returned from Siloam, the windows of his vision shining with a light that transformed him—the work of the Light of the world Himself. No one will be found to protect him against the bigotry and pride of the religionists—the cold formalists of that day. “He is of age: ask *him*” (ver.23). He is to stand alone. They could not deny the relationship nor the calamity of his birth, but they abandon him, rather than be associated, even remotely, with “a man called Jesus” (ver. 11).

The man witnesses to that which he *knows*. He is bold, too, to say “I know *not*.” I think he felt his deficiency of knowledge. The Pharisees excommunicated him from Jewish life, but there was no valid answer to his testimony. He was, in reality, moving into the ranks of the “overcomers.” “Who is he that gets the victory over the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (I John v. 5). It is when we are enabled to stand, with vision clear, against the tide of anti-christian forces that we feel alone. “To you has been given, as regards Christ, not only the believing on Him but the suffering for Him also” (Phil. i. 29). But what of the privilege, as well as the sustaining joy, of being, in any sense, *like* Him, despised and rejected as He was, even in the very temple in which He alone had right to be heard.

And now, in His grace, He seeks and finds the one who also treads the path of an outcast. Deprived of what men held to be of value, he became the recipient of faith in the Son of God. It is in the riches of that possession the once blind beggar worships Him.

We are apt to forget our blindness. The Ephesians are called to remember it (Eph. ii. 11). “Ye who once were afar off are become nigh by the blood of Christ” (ii. 13). There are many

passages of similar import. "And you, being dead in offences . . . He has quickened together with Him" (Col. ii. 13). "Afar off"—there is *distance*—but it is too great to measure. There is *nearness*—more real than we can know. It is the vast difference between death and life—blindness and sight: and as we see Him stooping to earth, to make the clay for our anointing we may know, increasingly, the value of His coming in flesh, and worship the "Son of God" (John ix. 38).

EDWARD T. WOOD.



THE GREAT TRIBULATION

When a believer first begins to study prophetic truth, he is apt to be somewhat dismayed by the vastness of the subject, and to feel the difficulty of keeping its various aspects in their right perspective.

In order to do this, and at the same time to derive the utmost spiritual benefit from our study, it is essential to keep prominently before our minds that in all prophecy, God is revealing to us how at length this world is going to be brought into subjection to His Son, our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

It is also most helpful to remember that the church will be taken to heaven before most of the future events which prophecy reveals (perhaps before all of them). This is because her portion is heavenly, and she will appear with Christ when He appears (Col. iii. 4), and reign *with* Him (Rev. iii. 21). It is after the Rapture of the church that the long-deferred promises of the restoration of the earthly people Israel again come into view.

The subject of "*The Great Tribulation*" is intimately connected with Israel's restoration, and though necessarily referred to in former articles, is deserving of separate treatment as one of the connecting links between various prophetic studies.

A careful reading of Jeremiah, chapters xxx. and xxxi., and a comparison of this portion with Daniel xii., will make certain facts very clear. First, that God has made His purpose

of a literal restoration of Israel as certain as anything can be. Second, that a time of distress, unparalleled in its dreadfulness, must come upon Israel just before her restoration. Third, that nothing that has already taken place, neither the restoration from Babylon recorded in Ezra, nor the setting up of the state known as "Israel" in recent years, nor any of the suffering that the Jews have yet undergone, is referred to in these scriptures. The tribulation, when it comes, will be worse than anything previously experienced, either by the Jews or any other people (Mark xiii. 19). But it will lead directly to Israel's deliverance and restoration.

It is important to note that the tribulation is specially said to concern Israel and Judah. It has sometimes been stated that Judah alone will undergo this great tribulation.

Daniel xii. shows us that it is when Michael the archangel arises to undertake Israel's cause that the tribulation comes. But we have to turn to Rev. xii. to get the key to this. There we learn that Michael and the hosts of angels which he leads will cast out Satan and his angels from the place of access to God. No longer will he be able to accuse the saints there; but being cast down, he turns to other methods to accomplish their destruction.

His rage is directed against the woman who undoubtedly symbolizes Israel, "of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came" (Rom. ix. 5). Satan well understands the place Israel has in God's purposes; hence his attempted destruction of the woman as portrayed in this chapter.

What instruments does Satan use against the woman? Consideration of the period of 1,260 days during which the woman will be "fed" in the wilderness to which she has fled at once brings to mind the latter half of Daniel's seventieth week, the period when the Beast is allowed to work. Moreover, we have seen earlier how closely united the Dragon and the Beast are, the one being the power behind the other (Rev. xiii. 2). We can see that any attempt on the part of the Jews to maintain their own religion will bring down the wrath of the Beast upon them. No doubt many will apostatise.

However, Rev. xii. tells us that the woman will escape from the dragon (probably after many have suffered at his hands), so that he turns his attention to the faithful remnant. "And it was given to him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them" (Rev. xiii. 7)—their faithful testimony to the Name of Jesus marks them out as special objects of his hatred.

If we now turn to our Lord's words in Matt. xxiv. 15-31, we shall see that the tribulation will be specially intense in Judea. It begins when the "Abomination of Desolation" is set up in the sanctuary, and is carried on till, apart from Divine intervention, it would have completely swallowed up the "elect"—the faithful Jewish remnant. We are not told by what means the days of tribulation are cut short, but shortened they are. Perhaps the attack of the king of the north (Dan. xi. 40) is the means, even as King Saul was turned from chasing David by a Philistine invasion.

We must not make the mistake of supposing that the ending of the tribulation is followed immediately by the Appearing of the Son of Man. It *is* followed immediately by signs in sun, moon and stars—signs whose duration is not stated. But we do learn from Dan. xii. 11, 12 of two periods, each a little longer than the 1,260 days of tribulation, though what events follow these 1,260 days is not revealed. In verse 11 we have 1,290 days; then in verse 12 a blessing for those who patiently await 1,335 days!

Tribulation has always had a purifying effect on the people of God, and this unsurpassed tribulation will be no exception. "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried" Daniel was told (Dan. xii. 10). "But the wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand." So that also the separation between the godly remnant and the ungodly mass of the Jews will be made evident.

Neither will persecution be the only weapon that Satan will use against Israel. The deceitful miracles which the False Prophet, the Antichrist will work (Rev. xiii. 13, 14; 2 Thess. ii. 9-12, and Matt. xxiv. 24) will turn all but the elect away from the worship of the true God. This gives force to the

Lord's words "He that shall endure unto the end shall be saved." That is to say, he that withstands both the persecution and the deceitful miracles of the Beast and False Prophet, will be saved from the judgment which the Lord Jesus will execute when He appears, and will enter into the blessing of the millennial kingdom. However, those who suffer death because of their testimony will be gainers rather than losers. They will partake in the First Resurrection, and will reign *with Christ* in His kingdom (Rev. xx. 4).

Now hitherto we have been occupied with Israel's time of trouble. But other scriptures speak of a world-wide tribulation. In Rev. vii. John sees a great multitude of all nations who "come out of *the* great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (New Tr.). The definite article used here seems to identify this tribulation with the special Jewish trouble we have been considering.

Yet again, in Rev. iii. 10, in the letter to Philadelphia the Lord speaks of "the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Here again we have the definite article, evidently referring to this *one* future time of trial; for temptation here undoubtedly means "trial."

It is significant, however, that for the world at large, for the "earth-dwellers"—a moral description of those who will no longer believe in "heaven," or look for it as their hope even vaguely, as professing Christians often do now—for these, this time will not be so much a time of suffering as of *trial*, or testing. All the power of the Beast (whose authority will be world-wide, see Rev. xiii. 7, 8) and the False Prophet will be exercised to compel men's worship of the Beast and his image. To this the earth-dwellers will submit. The confessors of the Name of Jesus alone will stand fast.

Will the special tribulation which the Jews are to undergo be a part of this world-wide "trial"? It would seem to be so. The very rebuilding of their temple will tend to strengthen the revival of their religion. Moreover, God will work to raise up for Himself a witness among His ancient people Israel.

So that when Satan seeks to set up *his* religion—the worship of the Beast—he sees the Jews as a special obstacle, even as their overthrow would be a special triumph. However, scripture speaks so forcefully of the special sufferings of Israel in her tribulation, that one would not be dogmatic in treating it as part of the world-wide crisis.

Finally we must draw attention to one important truth concerning the tribulation. To Philadelphia the Lord says “Because thou has kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation etc.”. This promise is significantly different from the promise to Israel—“This is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it” (Jer. xxx. 7). So also the great multitude in Rev. vii. is seen “coming out of the great tribulation.” Now being kept from a trial is quite different from being saved out of it, so that we have this confirmation that the Church will not pass through the Tribulation, but will be taken to heaven beforehand.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN.



THREE APPEARINGS

Read: Hebrews ix. 24-28.

That “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. iii. 16) is a cardinal truth to which every devout Christian must subscribe. One way in which its consequent perfection is manifest is the manner in which it meets the need of all who search it diligently, whether to learn the way of salvation, or, having been saved, to know how a believer should walk. Moreover it speaks of past, present and future after a fashion that marks its divine authorship. It is indeed the word of “Him which is, and which was, and which is to come” (Rev. i. 4).

In the passage under review, past, present and future appearances (see note) of the Lord Jesus are referred to, all three being worthy of prayerful consideration and patient study.

His Appearing in the Past

In verse 26 we read "He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." This took place at the "consummation of the ages," after man had been tested and tried by God, and had shown himself incapable of pleasing God, or living to the glory of his Maker. Then it was that the Lord Jesus came down to the scene of man's failure, lived a life of infinite compassion to fallen men, though despised and rejected by them, and after an unjust trial, in which the judge three times affirmed that he could find no fault in Him, was condemned to suffer the shameful death of the cross.

Well may we sing:—

Love brought Thee down, love led Thee on,
Nor aught Thy steadfast heart could move,
Till all redemption's toil was done;
Oh, matchless mystery of love!

The work done at Calvary not only suffices for the salvation of every needy sinner who puts his trust in the Saviour, but will also in God's good time result in sin being banished from this sin-stained earth.

His Appearing at the Present Time

In verse 24 we have the present service of the Lord Jesus for His loved ones. He has entered "into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." The weakness of believers is provided for by His being their great High Priest, touched with the feeling of their infirmities, so that they can come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace for seasonable help.

But if, through unwatchfulness, a child of God falls into sin, he has an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, Who brings him to see and own his failure in order that communion with the Father may be restored.

His Appearing in the Future

Christ's third "appearing," which is future, is set forth in verse 28, where we read that unto them that look for Him, He will "appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

“Them that look for Him” doubtless embraces not only those who in the present period of grace are brought to know salvation through the work finished on Calvary, and to wait for the fulfilment of His promise “I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also” (John xiv. 3), but also those on the earth after the church has been removed who, having heard and believed the gospel of the kingdom, will be waiting for Him to come and claim the throne of David to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.

H. W. ROUND.

The following remarks, which are in full accord with the theme of the foregoing article, may afford further help in the understanding of this scripture:—

The same word *appear* (in varying tenses, verses 24, 26 and 28) is used to translate three different verbs in Greek.

In verse 24 the underlying thought seems to be that of representation (as in the case of a solicitor “appearing” for his client in Court). The Lord Jesus now appears before God on behalf of believers in the same way as the High Priest of old entered the holiest representatively for all the people (e.g. Lev. xvi. 15-17). W.K. paraphrases the expression “to be presented manifestly to the face of God on our behalf” (See Exp. of Hebrews, p. 175.)

The emphasis in verse 26 is upon the coming forth of Christ to put away sin by His own sacrifice—and doing so *openly*, so that all may be aware of it. This is in contrast with the remark in verse 8 that in a bygone day “the way into the holiest of all was *not yet made manifest* (same Greek word), while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.”

Verse 28 assuredly looks forward to a future day of glory, and the word used covers the thought of “the display or manifestation of the Lord as an object of sight, rather than of faith as now” (See Bible Monthly, Vol. XI, p. 117.)

EDITOR.



THE HOLY CHARACTER OF THE CHURCH OF GOD

The first epistle to the Corinthians, chapter i., gives us the character of those who compose the church of God. (1) They are sanctified (set apart) in Christ Jesus; (2) they are saints by calling (not by natural birth or education); and (3) they call upon the Name of Jesus Christ their Lord.

Such is their character. Then in verses 4 to 9 we get the privileges which God has bestowed upon them:—

- (1) "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Christ Jesus."
- (2) "That in everything ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge."
- (3) "Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you."
- (4) "So that ye come behind in no gift."
- (5) "Waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."
- (6) "Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."
- (7) "God is faithful, by Whom ye were called unto the fellowship of of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

In verses 2, 3, 7 and 8 we find the expression "our (or the) Lord Jesus Christ," but when fellowship is spoken of, the fellowship to which God has called us, the expression is enlarged: it is then "His Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

Now, if God in His grace has called us to this fellowship, it is evident that those who compose His church cannot have anything to do with that which is contrary to the Lord Jesus and His Holy Name, whether it be in doctrine or in practice. To teach or follow any false doctrine concerning Him or His atoning work on the cross, or to overlook any evil practice, would at once mar the fellowship to which we have been called. Those who compose the Church start with a holy character: they are sanctified in Christ Jesus and are saints by calling, and there is a responsibility upon them to maintain their character. This is made evident as we read on in the Epistle.

Thus in Ch. iii. 16 we read: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" And again in Ch. vi. 19, "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" This second scripture refers to the body of the individual believer, and discloses a wonderful fact which we do well to remember at all times. Thus we learn that the Spirit of God dwells both in the collective thing, The Church of God, and in each believer. The Lord Himself referred to this in John xiv., when He said: "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever;

even the Spirit of truth; Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you and shall be in you." "Shall be in you" was something new, and the effect would be to give them wonderful knowledge, because the Lord goes on to say, "At that day ye shall *know* that I am in my Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." "At that day" refers to the present time, after the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, has come, which He did at Pentecost, as we read in Acts ii.

When writing to the Corinthians the apostle seems to speak with surprise when he says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" It was something they should have known. The Apostle reminds them of it and uses it to show the necessity of keeping the temple of God in a pure and holy state. The apostle Paul was specially the minister of the church (Col. i. 24, 25) though he was also a minister of the Gospel, and in the Epistles, specially in I Corinthians, we see him exercising his ministry as an earnest servant of Christ and a faithful steward of the mysteries of God (I Cor. iv. 1, 2).

Further on in I Corinthians xii, we learn how the church of God is formed: "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." The Spirit takes up believers from all nations and from all classes and forms them into one body, the Church, where all distinctions, whether national or social, disappear and where the one Spirit animates and energises the whole.

All these things show us how necessary it is for those who compose the church to maintain their holy character. To His earthly people God said, "Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy" (Lev. xix. 2; xx. 26), and the apostle Peter applies this to us, saying, "As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation (conduct); because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (I Peter i. 15, 16).

DARK WATERS

(Jonah ii.)

Jesus! to Thee alone,
All that is ours, we owe:
For us Thou didst resign the throne,
Thy glory didst forego.

None e'er like Thee has loved;
Sorrow, nor death's deep woe,
Nor wrath divine Thy purpose moved:
Unfalt'ring Thou didst go.

Death only proved Thy love,
Unmeasured and divine;
A love that spake God's heart above,
And thus uncovered Thine.

Thine that sustained the pall
Of night, and Satan's spell;
Where deep to deep's invoking call,
The tempest's rage could tell.

There all the floods beneath,
Wrapped with the weeds around—
Thy holy Head was bruised in death,
Forsaken and disowned.

And on Thy bosom pressed,
Anger and wrath untold;
An ocean, o'er Thy guiltless breast,
God's waves and billows rolled.

Yet dying, bleeding there,
Spotless and just and true!
"Forgive them Father," this Thy prayer,
"They know not what they do."

O Love! Divinely shown,
Passing all human word;
That calls our utmost powers to own,
"Salvation's of the Lord."

J. R. DAVIS.

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

Vol. XLVII

MAY, 1959

No. 5

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL

This issue of WORDS OF HELP really comes to you from Worthing, Sussex, since the writers of the three main articles all live in that neighbourhood.

The idea of a "Worthing" issue had its origin during a conversation in the Editor's house after the funeral last July of the late Mr. J. C. Kell. It was natural that the problem should be discussed of finding others to take the place of the one who had for so many years been a steady contributor to this Magazine, but had now been called home to his reward. A number of friends from Worthing being present, an effort was made to enlist their sympathy, with the result that we have secured the help of two who have not previously written for these pages. We shall look forward to further contributions from their pens, as the Lord may guide, and we hope that others with them may help similarly.

We are grateful to these servants of the Lord for their helpful co-operation on this occasion, and commend what they have written to the careful and prayerful consideration of all our readers.

It may not yet be generally known that our friends at Worthing have recently acquired a new Meeting Room, and we trust our readers will seek God's blessing on all they do there for His glory.

We hope the articles in this issue will indicate to any who may be on the point of deciding where to go for their summer holiday, or to those considering where to live when they retire, that at Worthing they will find warm Christian fellowship as well as downs, and sea, and sunshine.

**"In all thy ways acknowledge Him,
and He shall direct thy paths."**

(Proverbs iii. 6).

Correction

April issue—page 38—tenth line from bottom:
for "security," please read "scrutiny."

PSALM THIRTY-SEVEN

HOW real is God to us in our daily life? This is the question which I think must arise as we reflect upon this beautiful psalm. Here David shows what a reality God was to him, and also the desire (used as the pen of the Holy Spirit) that others should enjoy this reality too. In it, the reader is called on to have to do with God in five real but different ways. First here are some general points.

Psalm xxxvii. was written by David when he was an old man, as stated in verse 25. (He lived seventy years according to 2 Samuel v. 4.) It consists of twenty-two paragraphs, each mostly of two verses and commencing with one of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet; perhaps this arrangement was to facilitate committing it to memory. It is addressed to the individual. It contains the words "the meek shall inherit the earth," and "such as be blessed of Him shall inherit the earth," and these words were used by the Lord in Matthew v., "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

The injunction "fret not thyself" because of evil, is repeated three times, and is surely applicable today when there seems so very much active evil in the world, from the most powerful of rulers to the lowest of men, old and young. Grieved we may be, but fret we must not. "The end of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord. He is their strength in time of trouble. And the Lord shall help them and deliver them" (verses 38-40). The psalm is mainly concerned with God's moral government of the world, which is ever in exercise though not always apparent. Although the Christian has the high calling of being witness to the *grace* of God, yet he is of course subject also to His *government*, and the dealings of God teach him lessons of His holy and blessed nature. So this psalm is valuable for all.

In its 40 verses, the name LORD or Jehovah occurs 15 times. In our reflections, should we take this as referring to the Father or to the Son? To both, no doubt. "Jehovah" refers to God the Father in Isaiah liii., for instance, where in verse 6 we are told that Jehovah hath laid on Him (that is, on Jesus our precious Sin-bearer on the cross) the iniquity of us all.

“Jehovah” also refers to Jesus, as we may see from Isaiah xl. verse 3. “Prepare ye the way of Jehovah,” quoted in Matthew iii., verse 3. Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

Now for the five exhortations.

“Trust in the Lord” (Verse 3).

The immediate connection appears to be that as the reader becomes oppressed in spirit by the evil around, he may be tempted to lose faith in God, and even to imitate the evil. Hence there is the need for this call to trust, lean on, confide in the Lord. And it is the obligation of the Christian at all times. Prayer and the Scriptures are indispensable, divine principles are basic, Christian fellowship is strengthening, oral and written spiritual ministry to be valued, but ultimately it is only God Who can keep us by His divine power. Let us therefore trust in Him. “And do good,” the verse adds. We are to be doers as well as trusters. Trust and obey. May our trust ever be, not in ourselves nor in others, but in the Lord.

“Delight Thyself also in the Lord” (Verse 4).

It is remarkable that God Himself is calling on me to trust Him and to delight myself in Him. God is trustworthy and also delightful. What a gulf there is between the blind unbeliever who cannot be sure whether there is a God or not (and often is afraid in his heart), and the believer who both trusts Him and is delighting in Him. And if the godly Israelite could do this, how much more the Christian with all the light of the New Testament! We delight in the wisdom and goodness and power of God shown in all His works, and in His love and saving grace to sinners. We share, in our small measure, in God’s delight in His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, by Whom all things visible and invisible were made, and by Whose incarnation, suffering, death and resurrection, all who believe are redeemed to God.

“Commit Thy way unto the Lord” (Verse 5).

This is prayer. Distrusting ourselves we look up for the Lord’s guidance and blessing in every step of the way home.

and bring to Him our difficulties, cares, needs, desires. The Hebrew word for "commit" is said to mean "roll," suggesting that if the burden of my daily life is too great for me to lift and carry, I am to roll it over to the Lord in the confidence that He can and will take it up and order my life even to its end. The future which is hidden to me (I know not what a day may bring forth) is known and planned by God.

"Rest in the Lord" (Verse 7).

Literally, be still, or silent, in the Lord. Certainly we cannot rest if we allow the voices of envy, murmuring, anxiety, complaining to rise within us. Further, this is rest "in the Lord." In our quiet moments, by day and night, it is our privilege to realise the Lord's holy and living presence protecting and supporting. We have brought our burdens to Him; by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving we have let our requests be made known unto God. Now we are silent, at rest, awaiting His gracious answers.

"Wait on the Lord" (Verse 34).

Having had my prayers answered, I am not to forget the Lord but to continue with Him, waiting on Him as His child and servant. Perhaps some of the answers are unexpected, even unwelcome, and the leading is grievous to the flesh, but my wisdom is still to go on in obedience and dependence. "Wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt thee to inherit the land." So I will keep on in the way which He has opened up, even though faith and patience are tried. And in the Lord's time He will exalt me, if not in this life, certainly in the day to come, when all who are Christ's at His coming shall be "caught up," exalted, to inherit for ever the heavenly land, that inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them (I Peter i. 4).

Dear reader, are you on the way to heaven? Before Israel of old started on the journey to Canaan, they needed to take shelter from judgment under the blood of the paschal lamb. Are you redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, God's Lamb without blemish and without spot, Who was manifest

in these last times for you? (I Peter i. 19, 20). It is only so that we can be made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light (Col. i. 12).

May the Lord give us to know increasingly and in reality what it is to trust in the Lord, to delight in Him, and committing our way ever to Him, to rest in and wait on and for the Lord. He is coming quickly.

A small boy who lived by the sea where the coast-line was made up of very high cliffs (it could not have been Worthing) was once asked by two visiting botanists if he would be willing to be lowered over the cliff by a rope to pluck some rare plants growing in an inaccessible spot below. They offered him a large reward, but the boy was unwilling until he thought of his parents' poverty. He then consented on one condition, "That my father holds the end of the rope". The father being brought, the boy carried out the task and won the reward. It is good for us to know the Lord well enough to love and trust Him with all confidence in this world of difficulty and danger, and to have "respect unto the recompense of the reward."

W. H. L. GRAHAM.



GOD'S RECKONING AND MAN'S

"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord." Isa. lv. 8.

YET another modernised version of the New Testament has recently been announced as nearing completion, to join many existing translations and paraphrases. This should lead us to think of the inestimable treasure God has put into our hands in the form of the Authorised (King James) version which, having stood the test of centuries, will surely remain in common use, despite attempts to supersede it. Even the A.V., however, sometimes fails to convey the real force of the original Greek or Hebrew verb or expression, and it is the consideration of one particular Greek word, variously translated in the A.V. which is considered in this article.

The word "logizomai" appears in our New Testament as "to count, to account, to reckon, to impute," among other meanings. It is used in Mark xv. 28 and Luke xxii. 37, where we read that the Lord Jesus was "numbered with" and "reckoned among" the transgressors. It will be helpful to consider how decisive and complete this act was on the part of man; Mark xv. 27, 28 admits of no half measures. Let this sense of definite, decisive action be applied to every other passage where this word occurs.

God has declared that His thoughts are not men's thoughts, neither are men's ways His ways. Calvary is undoubtedly the most striking example of this truth. There, men's estimation of Christ is seen in their condemning Him to a humiliating death between two malefactors. God's estimation of Him is such that, because of Him, He would not at that time condemn man. In 2 Cor. v. 19 we read that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing (Greek "logizomai") their trespasses unto them." If God thus forbore with mankind while His well-beloved Son declared His Father's name during His life here, surely His forbearance is seen no less at Calvary. How unsparing was God's judgment of the sinless One, and how complete the reprieve, at that time, for man in answer to the intercession of Him who said "Father, forgive them!" What a reckoning was there at Calvary—decisive both on God's part and man's. How righteous His reckoning: how unjust theirs! Let us ponder awhile to remember that our sins were there.

All thy sins were laid upon Him,
 Jesus bore them on the tree;
 God, Who knew them, laid them on Him,
 And, believing, thou art free.

Our sins being imputed to the Lord Jesus, we are accounted righteous by God. It is all of God, through Christ; so we are constrained to bow in adoration and thankfulness.

Still bearing in mind the decisive certainty implicit in our word, let us now consider Abraham as presented in Romans. Chapter iv. 3 tells us "Abraham believed God, and it was

counted (“logizomai”) unto him for righteousness”; verse 9 that “faith was reckoned (“logizomai”) to Abraham for righteousness.” Because he was fully persuaded that what God had promised, He was able to perform, and because he was strong in faith, giving glory to God, “it was imputed (“logizomai”) to him for righteousness”. God is graciously pleased to honour one who takes Him at His word by counting (ver. 3) reckoning (ver. 9) and imputing (ver. 22) righteousness to him. Mark well, it was God who did the reckoning, and with Him there can be no mistake. What assurance to all who are likewise children of faith! If God is pleased to consider the believer as righteous in His sight, and to put righteousness to his account instead of the former sin, what does the world’s estimation matter to him? If the world was so far out in its reckoning as to his Saviour, is the believer to be surprised if he himself is misunderstood?

Verses 19-21 of Romans iv. are deeply instructive, revealing the secret of Abraham’s blessing. They mention three things which he did NOT do, and their positive counterparts, which led to God’s counting him righteous. These must be considered in relation to the wonderful promise as to his seed which God made to him when he was about one hundred years old. He was not weak in faith. On the contrary he was strong in faith, relying little on circumstances and much on God, and in this he gave glory to God.

The Holy Spirit then records that he considered not his own body now dead. On the contrary, he was fully persuaded that God could, and would, do what He had promised. He staggered not at the promise—this would have been unbelief—but, against hope, he believed in hope.

That God loves to be trusted is seen by His making other references elsewhere in His word to Abraham’s faith (e.g. Gal. iii; Heb. xi; James ii.). Have we honoured God thus in respect of those truths concerning His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the efficacy of His sacrifice for our sins? For us it is the question of the forgiveness of sins—a promise to faith even more wonderful than that made to Abraham, when we

consider the intrinsic holiness of God, and His unsparing judgment of sin. Like Abraham, let us not be staggered, but be fully persuaded, knowing in Whom we have believed. Let none seek to work for this blessing, for Romans iv. 5 says that "to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted ("logizomai") for righteousness".

How right David was in his declaration of the blessedness of those whose iniquities ARE forgiven and whose sins ARE covered (Psalm xxxii.). This is of God by virtue of Christ's death, and is an accomplished fact in those who will believe Him. All is of God, the forgiveness, the covering and the non-imputation (or, non-reckoning) of sin. Scripture shows that the work is done for us by Christ: the faith in that work is ours, though even that is not of ourselves, but is the gift of God; then God reckons us as if we had never sinned, counting us righteous. How this should humble us! No room for boasting here, unless it be in God and in our Lord Jesus Christ, Who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification.

If, by God's grace, we have entered into these truths practically; if we know ourselves to be justified by faith, have peace with God and rejoice in hope of the glory of God, then there are further occurrences of our word "logizomai," which can be of instruction to us. Let us consider them as used by the apostle Paul in relation to his own experience.

In Romans viii. 18 he says "I reckon ("logizomai") that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Perhaps some of those who read these lines are sufferers; but they must give place to Paul, of whom the Lord said "I will shew him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts ix. 16). Paul suffered as few others have been called upon to do. On the other hand he was privileged to realise more than any other (save perhaps John) the glories to come, when time will have ended for the believer. Who then was better qualified

to speak of these things? His reckoning was just, and is therefore an encouragement to all who may be inclined to falter in this way.

It was surely in view of the exceeding and eternal weight of glory before him that the apostle was prepared to be accounted (“logizomai”) as a sheep for the slaughter (Rom. viii. 36; quoting Psalm xlv. 22) by the oppressors of his day. From Isa. liii., where we have the Lord Jesus brought as a lamb to the slaughter by men, we learn that that same One is destined in the counsels of God to have assigned to Him a portion with the great and division of the spoil with the strong. Here again we have the ends appointed for Him by men and by God: how opposed the reckonings! Likewise with the Lord’s follower: the “sheep for the slaughter” is “more than conqueror” through Christ. Like Master, like servant: in both cases how opposed men’s thoughts are to God’s.

Note that the apostle does not here speak of himself alone. It is “we”: he associates others with him. Surely nothing on earth can quench such unshakable faith as this! Would that this confidence in the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, were ours in greater measure.

Our last notice of Paul’s use of “logizomai” is in Phil. iii. 13. “Brethren, I count not (“logizomai”) myself to have apprehended (laid hold); but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark . . .” In brief, Paul had been laid hold of by the Lord for glory; now his one aim is to lay hold of that glory. His reckoning led him to do one thing. Forgetting those things which had no connection with Christ, he would press on, for he realised what lay before him. Is our reckoning like Paul’s? Are we ambitious for Christ, or do we reckon that since we have been saved by *grace we can drift along, finding our main interests in those things which border our daily lives?*

The occurrence of “logizomai” in two further passages will conclude our consideration of the use of this word. In Romans vi. 11 the Spirit addresses us directly: “Reckon (“logizomai”)

ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." What an important reckoning this is! How many falls into sin would be avoided by its constant practice! A believer now with Christ once said of this, "If an occasion to sin presents itself, I am to tell myself that I am dead to it, and must act as being so." This truth realised will surely help me to avoid the evil that I would do, the fruit of the old nature, and the reckoning of myself as being alive unto God will keep me ever aware of the good I should do, as having a new nature.

Finally, in Hebrews xi. 19, we read that Abraham accounted ("logizomai") that God was able to raise up Isaac, even from the dead. Abraham's great faith has already been considered in relation to the promise of Isaac—his birth. That faith was again in exercise in relation to his death. Abraham's unwavering confidence in God enabled him to reckon that God was sufficient for a need which once again went beyond the bounds of nature. Can we rise to such faith? What blessedness is ours in knowing as our Father (Abraham's nearest relationship with God was that of friend) the One Who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above what we ask or think.

What an answer to every problem, to every sorrow or anxiety—HE IS ABLE. Have we learnt to go to the Bank of Grace and present there our cheque "He is able to . . .?" We have but to complete it with our need. Will it be honoured? Listen to Paul. "My God shall supply ALL your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv. 19). May this be our reckoning, our confidence, in the days which may yet remain for us in this world—that we are dead to sin, alive to God, and that He is able—a three-fold cord not quickly broken. May the Lord graciously draw us closer to himself with it.

Thoughts on THE SONG OF SONGS

THIS beautiful book of the Bible, often referred to as "The Canticles" or "The Song of Solomon," is introduced to us as "The Song of Songs," the authorship of Solomon being added. We may ask why it should be called *the* Song of Songs. Perhaps one reason is that there is no mention of sin in the book. There are failures, but no sin spoken of. Thus only those who know this Beloved as their Saviour and Redeemer can enter into this sacred song, for it is a song touching our Beloved.

What a blessed scene it is! Isaiah caught some vision of it (Ch. xxxv. 8, 9) "The unclean shall not pass over it, but the redeemed shall walk there." How it causes us to marvel in holy wonder that One from the glorious Godhead, the Son of God, should come here amongst men, made like unto His brethren, sin apart, to lay down His life for us, and to take out from this sad sin-stained world a bride purified and made suitable for Himself! Thus no introduction is needed at the commencement of this book, but the spouse can say "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth."

In every other book of the Bible we are reminded of sin and death, but not in this Song of Songs. The spouse is conscious of her unworthiness—"Black . . . as the tents of Kedar" (Ch. i. 5). No more worthy than the sons of Ishmael, she is nevertheless "comely . . . as the curtains of Solomon." This may well be a reference to that beautiful curtain in the temple that hung between the Holy Place and the Most Holy (2 Chron. iii. 14): blue, and purple, and crimson, and fine linen, with cherubims ascending, featuring the Blessed One that should come, ever guarding the holiness of God.

The epistle to the Hebrews speaks of "The veil, that is to say, His flesh" (Ch. x. 20). The temple veil was rent the moment our Blessed Redeemer finished His glorious work on Calvary's cross, so that now the believer can enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, his heart sprinkled from an evil conscience

and his body washed with pure water. What precious treasures can be dug from this mine of wealth!

Right at the beginning of the Song there is sweet advice to young believers which will help them to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord. "Tell me . . . where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon . . . go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents" (ver. 7, 8). Sit and feed around the word of God in company with those who love the Lord. Our blessed Lover delights in ardent love. What language he uses to describe his spouse! How like the Saviour! In His wonderful prayer (John xvii.) He speaks so well of His poor, frail disciples, and tells the Father "they have kept Thy word" (ver. 6).

The Lord had to remind the early church in Ephesus (Rev. ii. 4) "Thou has left thy first love." The spouse knew something of this, and lost the beloved's companionship for a while (Ch. iii. 1-3). When she finds him again she says "I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into . . . the chamber of her that conceived me" (ver. 4). Yes, she was back to her first love, and could speak of the one perfumed with myrrh and frankincense (ver. 6).

What endearing language our Beloved uses! Yet, all too often, how poor and inadequate is our response! May we truly say "Thy love is better than wine" (Ch. i. 2); then, as we know more of Him, we shall surely say "Yea, He is altogether lovely" (Ch. v. 16).

Failure has come in, and we are reminded that we are yet in an earthly scene, waiting "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away" (Ch. ii. 17). One of our frequent failures is to think more of the gifts than of the glorious Giver; thus resting in them rather than in *Him*. The beloved was toiling in the night, perhaps bringing home some poor lamb from the cold mountain. So she had to mourn sadly "My soul failed when he spake" (Ch. v. 6). But the faithful lover left her some token on the handle of the door, sweet smelling myrrh, reminding us of His love even unto death.

There is need too for vigilance. Fear in the night is spoken of. The precious Person, and the precious things, of Christ have to be guarded. How easy it is in these days of travel, speed, wireless, television, and such things to be robbed of time to read and meditate upon God's holy word! The psalmist could say (Psa. cxix. 61) "The bands of the wicked have robbed me," and we may lose the sweetness of being borne along in that "chariot . . . paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem." (Ch. iii. 8-10; v. 7-8).

Our Beloved likes to have us near Him. Hear the endearing words "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs" (Ch. ii. 14)—that upward access—"Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice!"

It is beautiful to note after her failure in chapter v., and the sweet token left, that the spouse, with love awakened, can describe something of the beauty of her beloved to others. She has found enquirers, who become seekers. May we speak well of our blessed Saviour, and so kindle a desire in others to seek Him too! Although he had gone on before when the enquiry was made, she knew just where to direct them to him (Ch. vi. 2), and she too enjoys a fuller, sweeter communion with him.

Chapter viii. mentions a little sister, not yet capable of nourishing anything for the Lord, but in connection with her a wall and a door are mentioned: silver, too, is spoken of—"a palace of silver"—betokening plenteous redemption. In the new Jerusalem which John saw coming down out of heaven, the gates (doors) bore the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (Rev. xxi. 12), and the wall was great and high. What a palace of silver that wall can hold, to be seen of all the earth. Kings shall bring their glory and honour unto it. Well may we declare with Paul (Romans xi. 33). "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

Let us heed the voice of our Beloved "Set me as a seal upon thine heart (the seat of love), as a seal upon thine arm," so that we may have Him before us in all we do. And let our inmost soul echo its delight "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine"—"the chiefest among tenthousand"—and "altogether lovely."

P. W. G. REED.

WHAT IS SAINTLINESS?

Doing life's little duties
Under the eye of GOD;
Following very closely
Where Christ, the Master, trod.

Giving up ease and pleasure
To do the Master's will,
Striving with love and patience
His wishes to fulfil.

Spending a little leisure
In comforting the sad;
Giving myself some trouble
To make another glad.

Giving a gentle answer
To undeservèd blame;
Because to friend and scoffer
The Saviour was the same.

Bearing reproach and railing
Humbly and patiently:
Because the Lord would have me
Just like Himself to be.

Teaching the little children
To seek the Lord I love,
Striving by pure example
To draw their souls above.

Repeating to some wanderer
Words from the sacred page;
Being a beam of sunshine
To childhood, youth, and age.

Diffusing light and blessing
Wherever I may go;
Being an imitator
of God: while here below.

Living in close communion
With Him who died for me:
This is a life of saintship
Pleasing, my God, to Thee.

MARGARET E. BARBER.

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

Vol. XLVII

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL

A SERIES of articles under the general title "First Principles of Church Life" begins this month. The articles are the extended notes of addresses given at Bromley, Kent, during October, 1958, and are written from the standpoint of what the Scriptures teach on this subject.

Most readers will be aware that wide divergencies of view exist amongst Christian people as to the lines along which church life should be organised. Those agreed upon the fundamental truths of the gospel as they apply to men individually will differ radically, even fiercely, where matters affecting believers collectively are concerned.

To many, the position facing them appears very similar to that of a person buying a motor car or washing machine. Different types and makes are available, each with its own distinctive advantages and disadvantages. Furthermore, each has its advocate to assure enquirers that the particular brand he is selling is the best; in fact, the only one that can possibly give complete satisfaction. In the end, of course, each purchaser has to make up his own mind which he will buy in the light of his own particular needs, preferences and perhaps resources: normally he can please himself; rarely, if ever, is any question of right and wrong involved.

When considering church order, may a Christian follow his preferences, or is there some overriding factor by which he should be governed? The viewpoint of these articles is that the Christian is *not* at liberty to select whichever manner of church conduct will best suit his own temperament or circumstances, but that he *is* under a paramount obligation to obey what God Himself has ordained in His word.

FIRST PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH LIFE

I. POWER FOR GROWTH AND PROSPERITY

Read: Acts ii. 1 - 41

THE formation of all believers during the present dispensation of grace into the church of Christ was God's eternal purpose for the glory of His Son before the world began. The carrying out of the plan had however to await the appearing of Christ, and it was during the course of his lifetime on earth that, in response to Simon Peter's confession of Himself to be the Son of the Living God, He announced "Upon this rock I will build My church".

Even then, however, the work could not begin at once. The foundation task of making atonement for sin had first to be accomplished, and it was not until the Saviour had died and risen again that He could commission His servants to preach the gospel worldwide.

But the events of Calvary, although overruled by God for the blessing of men, disclosed two things which would need to be taken into very serious account for the future. First, there was the tremendous strength of those forces in the world, backed by Satan, which had been brought against Christ personally, and would continue to oppose, and, if possible, frustrate God's purposes. Secondly, the cross exposed the utter weakness and unreliability of the Lord's followers. How would He ever succeed in building His church upon earth if He had no better men to do it with than a band of craven disciples who forsook Him to a man when their loyalty was tested? These twin threats—externally, the forces of evil; internally, human weakness—could not be ignored.

It may well be that the disciples themselves were apprehensive as to their prospects for the future, and that it was to reassure them the Lord Jesus had declared, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth". But how was that power to become effective when the Lord Himself was not remaining on earth to exercise it?

As might be expected, every need of the situation was foreseen by the Lord, and a power was promised that would be superior to every force that could operate against the church. Before He left them, He told His disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with that power from on high, promising that they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

A Government in this world wishing to advance its interests with a foreign power, appoints an ambassador to take up his residence in the other country in order to conduct the actual negotiations. Such a plenipotentiary must be equal to the task in hand, strong, dependable and faithful to his mission. When the Lord Jesus ascended to the place of power in heaven — the right hand of the Majesty on high — His first gracious act was to send down into the world a faithful Ambassador, the Holy Spirit, in order that heaven's plans might successfully be put into effect upon earth. What a poor lookout for the Christian cause if it had been entrusted to men alone! How soon the project would have failed! But the Lord had declared that the gates of hell should *not* prevail against His church. This promise has been gloriously fulfilled, but only because the power of the Holy Ghost has been in ceaseless exercise on earth since the day He came down.

It will be remembered that when the Council of the Jews became alarmed over the rapid progress of the new faith (Ch. v. 24-40), the astute Gamaliel calmed them down with the argument that if the work were of men it would surely come to nought. And he quoted examples from Jewish national history to prove his point. But, he added significantly. "If it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it". The presence of the Holy Ghost on earth as the Power for Christian witness, meant that the movement *was* of God, and ensured the church's survival against every enemy, as well as its growth.

The book of Acts removes any possible doubt as to this. Chapter ii. contains the historical account of the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Lord had told His disciples to go into

all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. How were "unlearned and ignorant" men to carry out that command when they did not even know the languages of the peoples to whom they were to go? That difficulty was removed at once when the Holy Spirit descended. For the apostles were found immediately speaking with other tongues "as the spirit gave them utterance", with the result that men from every nation under heaven who happened to be in Jerusalem at the time heard the wonderful works of God proclaimed in their own tongues. This was indeed a miracle, but with God the Holy Spirit now present upon earth, there was no limit to the power available.

What was the outcome of the Holy Ghost's arrival? On that day of Pentecost no fewer than three thousand souls were added to the church. Without one vestige of human planning or organisation of any kind, but by the sovereign power of the Holy Spirit alone, each one of those converts individually was added by the Lord to the church. In our day men differ widely as to the merits of particular methods of evangelising. But there can be no argument that the formation of the church at the beginning and its spectacular enlargement in a single day, was the consequence not of a particular method of working, but of the Holy Spirit's unrestricted power, and *His power alone*.

The same Power is at work in Acts iii. and iv. When Peter and John appear before the Council, following the healing of the cripple outside the Beautiful gate of the temple, it is specifically remarked (iv. 13) that their unusual boldness was something which caused the Council, accustomed doubtless to servile cringing on the part of those brought before them, to marvel. How unmistakable and overwhelming the power of the Holy Ghost was!

Later in the chapter, at the close of the remarkable prayer meeting, all those who had assembled were filled with the Spirit, so that the apostles spoke the word of God with great boldness.

In chapter v. the power of the Holy Ghost is demonstrated in connection with the exercise of discipline within the church

—severe discipline too. What was the effect? Were the unconverted scared away? On the contrary, the sequel is given in verse 14: “Believers were the more added to the Lord”. The discipline exercised in the power of the Holy Ghost, accompanied by the benevolent signs and wonders wrought by the apostles, commended itself to the consciences of men, so that many were converted to the faith.

Then in Chapter vi. the Holy Spirit is still given prominent mention. On this occasion harmony within the church was being threatened by murmuring upon the part of some that the distribution of bounty to the needy was carried out unfairly. Men of repute were therefore chosen for appointment by the apostles as supervisors of the work, and the requirement was that those selected should be *full of the Holy Ghost* and wisdom. And the result of their tactful handling of affairs was that a great company of the priests believed. These converts from the ranks of Jewish leadership had seen nothing like this in the course of their priesthood, and what they saw convinced them of the power and reality of the new teaching. What a wonderful thing if the harmonious resolving of disputes today were to become a positive means of attraction to the faith, instead of endless strife and bickering over trifles being the stumbling-block it often is to the world around!

Turn to chapter vii. and the story is continued. Here was a new situation which was going to test to the utmost the Christian’s power to survive the world’s hatred and violence. Hitherto God had shielded His servants from violent death: now they are to suffer martyrdom. Will the one whose life is in jeopardy be able to maintain his faith in the face of the volleys of stones that are soon to batter the life out of his body? In answer to such a challenge the Lord will demonstrate His power to save to the uttermost. Stephen shall be filled with the power of the Holy Ghost, and with that power he will face his foes triumphantly. In fact, so plenteously are the grace and strength of the Lord bestowed upon this man that he reflects the glory of his Master in his countenance, and prays for his murderers in terms almost

identical with those his Master had used when men nailed Him to the cross! How triumphant the power of the Holy Ghost is!

Chapter viii. maintains the theme. Consequent upon the outbreak of great persecution against the church, the believers in Jerusalem were scattered abroad "except the apostles", and went everywhere preaching the gospel. Why "except the apostles"? Can an army march without its leaders? That certainly appears to have been the case here. And although the Holy Spirit is not specifically mentioned, can anyone doubt that it was He who directed the activities of the Lord's people as they broadcast everywhere the truths of their faith?

Further down in the chapter, the Holy Ghost is given to believers in Samaria, resulting in a great ingathering to the church there which exceeded the response the Lord's own ministry in that region had elicited (see John iv. 39 - 42), effective though *His* preaching had been.

Chapter ix. records the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, to whom the Lord appeared personally. That arch-enemy of the church was stricken down, and the blasphemer became the defender and propagator of the faith. Following this it is recorded in verse 31 that the churches had rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and "walking in the fear of the Lord and in *the comfort of the Holy Ghost* were multiplied". It is the same story all along; the church of Christ growing and multiplying by the power of the Holy Ghost exercised in one way or another.

Carelessness in regard to the means adopted to propagate the gospel is of course unbecoming. The power of the Spirit of God may not be used as an excuse for laziness or slipshod conduct in public or private witnessing for Christ. Nevertheless the danger exists of setting too much store by what is merely human ordering, and too little importance upon the all-prevailing power of the Holy Ghost. Surely the Old Testament word of prophecy has its application in every age: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts".

Now if, as the Scriptures already referred to prove, the activity of the Holy Spirit was the all-essential power for the growth of the church, why should the church be any less dependent upon the Holy Spirit for its internal working and prosperity? This question will be considered in our article next month (D.V.).

E. A. PETTMAN



LORD'S DAY MORNING

“And He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are *sad*?”
(Luke xxiv. 17).

“Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said unto them, Peace be unto you . . . Then were the disciples *glad*, when they saw the Lord.”
(John xx. 19.20).

A GREAT difference is disclosed between the state of mind of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, and that of those in the upper room at Jerusalem. In the one case they were “sad”; in the other “glad”. Why the difference? In both cases they were true-hearted followers of the Lord: why such a difference in their feelings?

Those on the way to Emmaus were sad. Surely they were grieved for the ignominy, the sufferings and the death of the One whom they loved and revered. No doubt this was partly the cause of their sorrow, but one feels it was not the *whole* cause. There was also some apprehension of loss to themselves by His death. “We trusted”, they said, “that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel.” These hopes had been dashed, and themselves plunged into gloom.

On the other hand, the disciples gathered in the upper room were *glad*. What had turned their sorrow to joy? It was the joyful certainty that the Lord had risen; the assurance of this made all the difference. No longer were they faced with the finality of His death; no longer was He whom they had loved shut irrecoverably from their sight. They might

have been sorrowful, but their sorrow was "turned into joy." The risen Lord came into their midst, and said, "Peace be unto you." He had made peace "by the blood of His cross", giving thereby a new and everlasting basis to that commonplace Eastern salutation. Moreover, He showed them His hands and His side: "*then* were the disciples glad, *when they saw the Lord.*"

Do you think they entered less into His sorrows when they looked upon the living Lord? Did they think less tenderly of His agony and His death? Surely not! But they knew now that He was risen. Their fears and their forebodings were dispelled, and their hearts were free to enter more simply, more deeply, more unselfishly into the fact of His death for the glory of God.

Let us apply the foregoing thoughts about these disciples to ourselves, as we sit in the Lord's blessed presence at the Table He has spread for us. What thoughts should occupy the hearts of His people at such a time? Indeed wonderful truths flood into our souls. Let us mention some of them.

The broken bread and the poured out cup speak to us of death, of nothing but death, the death of our adorable Lord and Saviour. What a profound theme of worship this is!

But when do we eat the Lord's Supper? Scripture has set its sanction upon the practice of His saints to "do this" on the first day of the week—the resurrection morning (Acts xx. 7). As we remember Him in His death, can we forget that He, whose death we celebrate, is now risen from the dead, and is triumphant over sin and Satan? We do not meet in the gloom and uncertainty of the Emmaus road. The glad consciousness that He is risen has turned our sadness into adoring worship—

"So that amidst our sorrow
A joyful song we raise."

We have also the truth of His promised presence in the midst (Matt. xviii. 20). Though we do not see Him with our natural eyes, He is none the less present, and evident to

those in tune with Himself. The risen Lord on the resurrection morning accepts the memorial of Himself in death which He Himself has instituted. Does He not thus freshly week by week show unto us "His hands and His side", and does not this touch every heart anew as we think of what He has done? Joy and sorrow mingle in His presence; the memory of His suffering brings sadness: the thought that He is risen must bring gladness.

Another chord is awakened by words which the Holy Spirit has linked for ever with the showing forth of His death: it is "till He come" (I Cor. xi. 26). These words tell us firstly that He is coming again; they remind us also that now is the time of His absence. As we "do this", we avow that we miss Him, and yearn for His return; for only in this waiting time is this act of remembrance required. When we are with Christ, and like Him, faith will be swallowed up in sight, and memory will no longer need to be stirred to recall His pierced hands and feet—

"Lo the dear tokens of His passion,
 Though in glory still He bears;
 Cause of endless exultation
 To His ransomed worshippers."

But here, and now, and "till He come", we *do this* in blessed remembrance of Him, and strike this chord also in the chorus of praise to our waiting Lord.

Finally, to whom is the great privilege of eating the Lord's Supper given? Not to angels, but to poor, lost, guilty sinners, redeemed by His precious blood and reconciled to God by the death they remember. Can we ever forget this at the Lord's Table? And if we did, would not the very elements recall to us that it was for us He died? It would be mere affectation to pretend otherwise. Our blessing is a less exalted theme than the sufferings and death of the Blessor, but none the less, it was for us He suffered, and we owe Him eternal praise for it. Shall this note then be altogether silent when we gather round Him to fulfil His desire?

These various themes of praise—the Lord's death, the central thought; but also His resurrection; His presence; His return; the atonement He has wrought for us to the glory of God, and much beside—we may well liken to the various strings of the harp of praise, plucked by the Holy Spirit to produce what is so sweet in the ear of our God and Father—the recital of the perfections, and excellencies of His beloved Son in His Person and work.

If so, how we may hinder, and even quench, that blessed Spirit by venturing to check any string He may touch! No doubt some notes will be sounded more often than others: nor will all be heard in every meeting. But let us, as worshippers in Spirit and truth, leave ourselves willing instruments in His hands who tunes the song. *Then* it will be pleasing to the Father, who ever delights in the glory of His Son: *then* it will convey the adoration of our hearts to Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, to Whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever.

H. W. MARTIN



THE GRACE OF GOD—ITS TEACHING POWER

Read: Titus ii. 11 - 15

THE teaching power of the grace of God is emphasized in these verses. It is operative in the heart and experience of every child of God. Our own personal response to this teaching varies very considerably; some Christians make rapid and steady progress in the school of grace, whilst with others the lessons of grace are but slowly learned.

When writing to the Corinthian believers, the apostle Paul reminds them "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. viii. 9). This precious knowledge is our treasured possession too, and how often when we have been gathered around our

Lord Jesus Christ, remembering Him, our hearts have been moved in deep gratitude and worship for such amazing, immeasurable grace.

Precious as this knowledge is however, it is only the beginning of God's grace in us. The hymn writer expresses the thought, "Grace begun shall end in glory". The glory of God is the triumphal conclusion of grace's matchless story, but now, in this present time, the grace of God exercises its teaching power. This teaching quality and power is invaluable to us. It is God's purpose, not only that we should know that we are saved by grace and that ultimately, by the operation of that same grace, we shall be conformed to the image of His Son; but that here and now we should learn the lessons that His grace would teach us, and respond from our hearts to all His will.

For our schools and colleges, teachers are chosen because of their ability to teach. The real teacher is a person who is able so to impart knowledge that those taught assimilate it in their minds and then reproduce it in their lives. This is the test of the true teacher. A *schoolmaster* may maintain order and ensure discipline, but it is the teacher who, by winning the co-operation and response of the pupil, will secure the coveted results.

As a *teacher*, the grace of God in our Lord Jesus Christ is unsurpassed; for in the hearts and lives of those who are taught by His grace, results are accomplished which could never have been secured under the discipline of the law. "The law was our schoolmaster . . . unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 24-26).

The rule of the schoolmaster met with no response from men's wayward hearts. Man's stubborn will rebels against the rigid requirements of the law. But now, through faith in Christ, we are the *children* of God; and God does not put His children under a schoolmaster, but teaches them Him-

self by His own incomparable grace. What an immense privilege is ours!

The deeper our own personal experience of the grace of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, the more readily will we learn the lessons that grace teaches, and the more quickly will the fruits of grace appear in our walk and conduct.

A beautiful instance of this response to grace is found in Luke vii. 36-50. The woman who was a sinner, who sought the Lord in Simon the Pharisee's house, had no word to say throughout the whole interview; but her actions were more eloquent than any words could have been. She wept her tears of contrition and repentance upon the Saviour's feet, and then laid the glory of her womanhood low before Him as she wiped His feet with her hair. His feet were refreshed with the fragrant ointment which her love had brought, and in the midst of the cold formality of the Pharisee's house, His heart was refreshed by this warm expression of her love to Him. "She loved much", the Lord said. But where did she learn such conduct? Could the enactments of the law have produced so fruitful a result? No: she had been *taught by grace*. It was the Lord's own matchless grace, which did not despise her "broken and contrite heart", that won such a full response from her heart.

When we, in our turn, have our souls saturated with a deep sense of the exceeding riches of the grace of our blessed Lord and Saviour, and bring ourselves to bow low at His feet, there to be taught by His grace and to yield our wills wholly to Him, then will we respond to the desire of His heart for us, "that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world" (Ver. 12). The negative exhortation comes first, teaching us to say "No" to everything that is not of God, and to every worldly lust. These worldly lusts are threefold as described in I John ii. 16: "The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life". Grace teaches us to meet each and every suggestion that springs from these corrupt, deceitful lusts, with an uncompromising refusal; for they are not of the Father, but of the world.

The positive teaching follows, covering firstly the personal life—*soberly*: the exercise of self-restraint; guarding against excess of every kind. Secondly, the social and business life; the life in its relationship to others; acting *righteously* in the midst of an unrighteous world. Then thirdly, the life in relation to God—*godly*: giving Him the supreme place in our lives and doing all that we do for His glory.

In addition, grace teaches us to turn our eyes away from this present evil world and to lift them heavenward. "Looking for that blessed hope", that is, the fulfilment of the Lord's own promise to come again and to receive us unto Himself, "that where I am, there ye may be also" (John xiv. 3). "And the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ", that is, the manifestation and public display of His glory before the whole world. These are the thoughts that are to fill our minds and hearts as we wait for our Lord to come.

Then in verse 14, in one swift, sudden moment, the Spirit of God brings our thoughts back from the glory to the cross: "*Who gave Himself* for us". The teachings of grace centre in our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and in the stupendous fact that He, the eternal Son of God, the Lord of glory, gave His all, and laid down His life for us.

All that He had He gave;
Yes, e'en Himself, my soul to save.

It is the contemplation of such amazing grace which, operating in our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit, wins from us a response which could be gained in no other way; the response of whole-hearted devotion to the Person of our adorable Lord and Saviour, and the response of glad subjection and obedience to all His will. It is brought before us here, in verse 14, as the all-powerful constraining motive to mould our conduct, to purify our walk and ways, to separate us unto Himself as His peculiar people, and to work in us that zeal for good works, which is His gracious will.

May the grace of God not fail of its full purpose in any one of us.

A. E. JORDAN

QUESTION AND ANSWER

QUESTION. Will you please say whether the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom by the Jewish evangelists after the Rapture of the Church will be the same as John the Baptist's preaching of repentance in view of the coming king, or whether they will preach that Jesus the crucified is the coming King?
ENQUIRER.

ANSWER. A kingdom implies a king. John the Baptist did not merely preach repentance in view of the coming king, he proclaimed the *character* of the king: "He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear." He proclaimed also how He would act: "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Matt. iii. 11). He directed the eyes of all around him to the Lamb of God, the Sinner to-be (John i. 29-37).

However, he also said "I knew Him not." But when the gospel of the kingdom is again proclaimed, the preachers will be able to declare not only His character and mode of acting, but who He is—the once-crucified but now risen and glorified Jesus of Nazareth. Certainly they will preach repentance, in view of His coming to judge: "Whose fan is in his hand, and He will throughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Moreover, those who receive the message are described as having "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. vii. 14), a clear indication of the faith of those converted by this preaching.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN.



NOTE ON MARK IV. 25

Those to whom "more is given" are those who *hear*, as it is expressed in the A.V. This "hearing" implies a reception of the new teaching in the truest and deepest sense of the word, receiving the testimony as of God (John iii: 34; I Thess. ii: 13). Such persons are the good-ground and fruit-bearing hearers. These enter into possession of the word. They make it their own by faith. They *have* it. And the Lord added, "He that hath, to him shall be given; and he that hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath." Was not this so with the wayside hearer? The good seed was immediately snatched away, since it lay upon the surface. In a formal sense this class of hearer had the word; in a vital sense he had it not.

W. J. HOCKING.

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FULL LISTS UPON APPLICATION

Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

Vol. XLVII

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL

We are grateful to readers for tributes to our "Worthing" issue in May.

From Northleach, Cheltenham, Mr. A. Mason writes:—

"I enjoyed 'Thoughts on The Song of Songs,' as I often meditate on this book, especially chapter v. 9: 'What is thy beloved more than another beloved,' twice asked. Note the answer from verse 10 to the end. Occupied with him, she says, 'my beloved,' not calling him by his name. It reminds me of Mary at the grave of Jesus. Addressing the one whom she supposes to be the gardener, she says, 'If thou hast taken *Him* away, tell me where thou hast laid *Him*, and I will take *Him* away.' Her own heart was so full of Him that she judged everybody else must be the same. Note also the result in chapter vi., where the bride is asked, 'Whither is thy beloved gone . . . that we may *seek him* with thee?' They want to see *him*. She leads the seekers where they, with her, can find 'him whom my soul loveth'."

We are particularly glad to learn of help and comfort received through WORDS OF HELP by elderly folk, often confined to their home, who cannot be present at gatherings for oral ministry. Should any of our readers know of such, please do not fail to pass your copy of the magazine on to them when you have finished with it yourself.

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God"?

(Micah vi. 8).

FIRST PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH LIFE

II. Power for Internal Working and Prosperity.

Read: Eph. iv. 1-16; I Cor. xii. 1-31.

Last month's article drew attention to scriptures in the early chapters of Acts which show how completely dependent the newly-formed church was upon the power of the Holy Spirit for its growth, both in numerical strength and also in effectiveness as a witness for God on the earth. We must now consider whether it was any less dependent upon the Holy Spirit for its internal working and prosperity.

This question has been partly answered by the references already made to Acts v. and vi., where the effective exercise of discipline and preservation of harmony within the Christian circle were manifestly the outcome of the activity of the Holy Spirit. On those occasions His working was somewhat negative in character, in the sense that it was directed defensively against encroaching evils which, if they had not been promptly checked, would have ruined the testimony of the early church. The importance of this may well impress itself upon us today as we survey the havoc that unjudged sin and unstemmed discontent have wrought amongst the people of God.

There was, however, a positive work of the Spirit within the church which is described in the epistles of Paul. In Matthew xvi. 18, the Lord announced His intention to build His church, without giving details of His plans: these were to be given later. In Ephesians iv. 7-12, we read that "When He ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men . . . And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers: for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" etc. In harmony with this, I Corinthians xii. tells us, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit" (ver. 4); and again, after enumerating the operations of the Spirit, "All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will" (ver. 11). This establishes the principle that what the Head of the church in heaven purposes, the Holy Spirit on earth carries into

effect, acting at the same time according to *His* will, since He is a Person in the Godhead equally with the Father and the Son.

In the affairs of communities in the world we may observe the distinction between the appointing of men and the prescribing of methods, to achieve a given purpose. Governments usually function in the latter way. Parliament enacts a law: those responsible for government then formulate the necessary regulations for carrying it into effect; having done which men are appointed to administer the rules inflexibly. Such officials may in practice be permitted to exercise their discretion in matters of trivial importance, but *essentially* their function is to *carry out* the rules laid down for them by competent authority.

In the organisation of business it is frequently otherwise. Those directing affairs appoint men with suitable and adequate qualifications for the task to be done; then, having invested them with all necessary authority, they leave them to act in accordance with their knowledge of those who are over them: and in the methods they use the personalities of individuals may be noticeable.

Clearly the selection and endowment of men with gifts was the Lord's chosen way of providing for the needs of His church. He might have used an alternative method, for example, supplying His followers with a comprehensive manual of instructions, written by Himself, by which believers would have been able to regulate down to the smallest detail their daily behaviour as individuals, as well as the life of the church collectively. But He did not do this; He appointed men to exercise, by the power of the Holy Spirit, a variety of ministries outside and within the church. The same blessed Spirit, of course, indwells each true believer, and is ever working in him, warming the heart with the love of God, strengthening the new life, and ever directing the soul to Christ.

Some months ago the writer heard the Chief Mechanical Engineer of a large section of British Railways describe the way in which he conveyed "his mind" to the many thousands of men who work under his ultimate control. He did this

partly by a steady stream of written directives, and partly by instructing subordinate officials and deputing them in turn to instruct those working under them. At times, when his multifarious other duties permitted, he himself would take the trouble to talk with men such as platelayers actually at work on the track in order to tell them what he required, and to explain why he wished things done in a particular way. How much simpler it would be, he added, if a small piece of his own mind could be transferred from him and implanted physically within each member of his great team, in order to ensure that all would readily understand and carry out his wishes! Yet is it not along this line that the Head of the church in heaven has chosen to direct and control His body upon earth? He instructs, He leads, He guides, by His Holy Spirit whom He has given to each and every member. What harmony there would be if all were entirely subject to His gracious guidance and prompting!

It would seem that men prefer to be governed by set rules. In the early church the temptation for those liberated by the grace of the gospel to return to the legal bondage of the old dispensation proved almost irresistible, as is evident from the epistles to Galatia and Colosse. Perhaps one reason for this may be that men find obedience to regulations which are automatic in their incidence far less demanding upon their diligence and self-control than submission to the direction of the Holy Spirit in the light of the Scriptures. In contrast to the many systems current within Christian circles today, we believe the scriptures referred to make it clear that the right of choice and appointment of ministry within the church lies solely with the Head of the church personally, and that His will becomes known and effective only by the action of the Holy Spirit.

Acts xiii. 1-4 provides an example of this in practical working. The separation of Barnabas and Saul for their special mission was by the direction of the Holy Spirit. This choice the church at Antioch recognised by laying their hands upon the two selected, thus sending them on their way with full brotherly

support. Even so, lest there should be any question of human call or appointment, verse 4 states categorically, “They, *being sent forth by the Holy Ghost*, departed into Seleucia” etc.

We affirm also that this principle of the Lord in heaven acting by the Holy Spirit dwelling in His church on earth, is also seen in the actual gatherings of His people in the assembly. When believers meet together in His Name, the Lord declares He is present in their midst (Matt. xviii. 20). The Spirit thus brings believers together, not in front of a speaker, but around the Lord. Is it conceivable that He would be there except to preside over what takes place? And in accordance with the basic principle already established, would we not expect the Lord’s will to become known by the effective exercise of the power of the Holy Ghost?

There are many Christians who fail to understand this because they have never experienced the action of the Holy Ghost in directing the worship and prayers of the Lord’s people when they are gathered to His Name. It is equally true, no doubt, that those who have experienced it in no uncertain way often fall short of it, because the Spirit is quenched by self-will and lack of spiritual discernment. But the fact remains that the power of the Holy Ghost is blessedly real, and unmistakable when known. The following is how one who lived in the last century described gatherings for worship in which the presence and power of the Holy Spirit were experienced:—

“Have there not been times when His (the Holy Spirit’s) presence has been realised as a fact? and how blessed were such seasons! There might be, and there were, intervals of silence; but how were they occupied? In solemn waiting upon God. Not in restless anxiety as to who was next to speak or pray; not in turning over the leaves of Bibles or hymn books to find something that we thought suitable. No; nor in anxious thoughts about those who were lookers-on, wondering what they would think of the silence that existed. God was there. Each heart was engaged with Him; and for any to have broken silence, for the sake of doing so, would have been felt to be an interruption indeed.

When silence was broken, it was with a prayer that embodied the desires and expressed the breathings of all present; or a hymn in which all could with fulness of heart unite: or a word which came home to our hearts with

power. And though several might be used in such hymns, and prayers, and ministrations, it was as evidently one Spirit who guided and arranged the whole, as though a plan of it had been made beforehand, and each one had had his part assigned. No human wisdom could have made such a plan. The harmony was divine. It was the Holy Spirit acting by the several members, in their several places, to express the worship or to meet the need of all present."

(From "*Five Letters on Worship and Ministry in the Spirit*"
by W. TROTTER).

But the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit must not be overlooked. For an example of this, consider the interval of some ten days between the Lord's ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Why should this have been? With souls perishing all round, why must even ten days elapse before the glorious gospel was sounded forth? Whatever the divine purpose may have been, the delay served to impress upon the Lord's servants for all time their complete powerlessness apart from the Holy Spirit. Mere desire for the blessing of others, mere energy, would not be enough. The apostles *must* wait for the Power, however long the interval might be. "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, *until* ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke xxiv. 49) was the Lord's positive instruction. May not the neglect of this truth be the reason why much service for the Lord is in fact fruitless, notwithstanding appearances to the contrary, and despite the zeal and careful organisation of those who undertake it? The Spirit truly came once for all at Pentecost, but we in our day must gain His leading for ourselves if we are truly to serve the Master.

This article and the previous one have directed attention to the Holy Spirit as the power for the growth and prosperity of the church. Are there no dangers? May not the guidance of the Holy Spirit be mistaken? Is there no safeguard against the obvious "losing of their way" by some so-called christian fellowships which piously claim to have the power of the Holy Ghost, but whose conduct, sometimes even to the point of impurity, shows they have no such thing?

Undoubtedly there is one great safeguard—the Scriptures. The reader of Acts ii. cannot fail to notice how much of Peter's address in the manifest power of the Holy Spirit is devoted

to the citation of scripture—Old Testament scripture. Whilst therefore the distinctive truth of the Christian faith, with its own special value for our own day, is unfolded in the New Testament, we may not neglect any part of divine revelation. The whole word of God has been given for the protection, comfort and edification of His people in every age.

As the writer views this matter, there are two dangers. On the one hand it is possible to sink into a merely formal adherence to the letter even of scripture, and so become the victim of a legalism and formalism which refuses all promptings of the Holy Spirit (see 2 Cor. iii. 6): on the other, it is possible to assume mistakenly that every prompting within oneself must necessarily be of the Holy Spirit, and to neglect the diligent study of the written word which God has given so that His people may judge objectively what is according to His mind.

It is, however, our purpose (D.V.) to make this the theme of next month's article.

E. A. PETTMAN.



THE ANTICHRIST

“Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time” (I John ii. 18). Again, “He is antichrist, that denieth the Father, and the Son” (verse 22).

Other references in chapter iv. of this epistle, and also in the second epistle of John, give warning of the coming of Antichrist, and of the fact that the antichristian spirit was already abroad in John's day.

In spite of the many failures of the Church in the early centuries of the Christian era, we may thank God that in the main, the antichristian heresies were rejected. But who could fail to realize that there has been a tremendous revival of antichristian error in the last 150 years? The many antichristian sects of the present day agree only in their denial of the

Deity of the Lord Jesus, and this of itself shows that the last days are indeed present. But *the* Antichrist himself, whom all these scriptures tell us is to come, who is he, and when will he appear?

Some have identified him with the Beast, the head of the revived Roman Empire, whom we have seen will be used to establish Satan's own religion. But the association of the expression, "the spirit of antichrist" in I John iv. 1-3 with that of the "many false prophets . . . gone out into the world" points rather to *the* false prophet of Rev. xvi. 13 and xix. 20 as being the man described by the Spirit of God as *the* antichrist. And this false prophet is quite certainly the one first introduced as the beast of Rev. xiii 11. "And I beheld another coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon." This beast is not described, as the first beast is, except for these incongruous features, the horns like a lamb, but the voice of the dragon. Is not this Satan's imitation of the true Lamb?

We remember that the Lord Jesus fulfilled Moses' prophecy of the true Prophet, to whom all must give heed (Acts iii. 22, 23; Deut. xviii. 15). Because Israel would not heed Him, and still reject Him, they will be given over to the delusions of the false prophet. The following verses in Rev. xiii. tell of the great wonders and signs that he will be empowered to perform—empowered, that is, by Satan! The miracles of the Lord Jesus described in the Gospel of John are called "signs." They were evidences of the love and healing power of the Saviour. Miracles to amaze men's minds He ever refused to perform (Matt. xvi. 1, 4; John vi. 30-32), but Satan's Messiah will do this, and will succeed in persuading men to worship the first Beast, to their eternal ruin.

That the Antichrist will be the false Messiah is confirmed by 2 Thess. ii. 3-12. He is there called, "the man of sin, the son of perdition," and "that wicked," or lawless one; but that he is the same person as Rev. xiii. describes is evident from the delineation of his activities and their effect. "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness

of His coming: even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”

We may see from these verses incidentally, that if God will in that day work through the Gospel of the Kingdom in the hearts of many, that no such blessing can be possible for those who at this present time hear the Gospel and refuse it. For them there will be only “the strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned (judged) who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

But this scripture tells us more of this evil personage: “He opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” Now the temple of God can only mean the temple in Jerusalem. It existed when Paul wrote, and must be rebuilt before the “sacrifice and oblation” spoken of in Dan. ix. 27 can again be offered. But the appearance of the Antichrist will doubtless be during the latter half of the seventieth week of Daniel’s prophecy (Dan. ix. 27), when sacrifice and oblation have ceased. He will have a double role. To the Beast he will act as prophet, exalting his master, and compelling all men to worship the image of the Beast. He leads the apostasy of christendom. But he also exalts himself, and that in the very temple of God in Jerusalem.

We have seen that idolatry is established in Jerusalem, that the “abomination of desolation”—the idol that brings desolation—is set up there in the sanctuary, but scripture does not define this idolatry more precisely. But if the Antichrist claims divine worship for himself, yet also for the Beast, this is good reason for identifying him with the wilful king of Dan. xi. 36-39. Thus his name of Antichrist is fully justified. While he robs the Lord Jesus of men’s allegiance, he also

imitates Him. He sets himself up as Messiah, as Prophet, as Israel's God and also as Israel's King. He consummates Israel's apostasy.

The Lord Jesus humbled Himself, but this man exalts himself. Unlike the One who came not to do His own will, this man is described as one who does according to *his* will. He is the lawless one. But as Daniel xi. foretells, he magnifies himself above every god, and yet honours another as god (verses 38, 39). He has no regard for the God of his fathers, an expression that, in a Jewish prophet, points to this wilful man being himself a Jew. Thus does he persuade the mass of the Jews, by his cunning and by his miracles, that he is their Messiah. "He shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished," for he proves to be God's scourge upon an apostate people, and draws upon them the fury of the king of the north (verses 40-45). "For the overspreading of abominations there shall be a desolator, even until the consummation, and that determined, shall be poured upon the desolate (city)" (Dan. ix. 27). But the Antichrist himself will be destroyed, not by any human foe, but by the Lord Jesus at His appearing (2 Thess. ii. 8; Rev. xix. 20).

Yet in the midst of all the delusions and perils of that dreadful time, God will have His witnesses, who by their testimony will help to sustain the faith of the elect (Rev. xi.). Though to add to the confusion many false christs and false prophets will appear, the elect will not be deceived (Matt. xxiv. 24). The scriptures will be their sure guide, as they have been to God's saints in all ages. By them alone, studied and pondered in dependence upon God's Holy Spirit, can we at this present time keep ourselves from the delusions of the spirit of antichrist. "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father" (I John ii. 24).

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN.

A GEM OF PETER'S OUR STANDING IN PETER'S FIRST EPISTLE

“Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation,
“a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him
“Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.”

(I Peter ii. 9).

There is a dark background to Christianity; the gospel does not create this, but reveals it.

In our unregenerate days, our understanding was darkened; our desires were away from God; our conscience accused us, but was over-ridden by our desires; our will was that of a rebel; our spirit was closed to God. We were alive physically, mentally and morally; but we were “dead” spiritually.

However, the time came when God said, “Let there be light”; and then:

“Out of our bondage, sorrow and night,
“Into Thy freedom, gladness and light.
Jesus, we came to Thee.”

In our text a parallel is maintained between Israel after the flesh and the “true,” that is, the spiritual Israel, the Church. And it is not so much here a question of the individual believer as the redeemed society, the Body of Christ. Believers are viewed collectively under four aspects.

I. A Chosen Race

The Jewish converts to Christianity to whom the letter was addressed would at once call to mind their natural descent from Abraham, and would remember, not without a remnant of pride, that they had belonged to the most remarkable people the world has ever seen; the religious teacher of mankind, the custodian of the oracles of God.

But their thoughts would rise on to a higher plane as they gratefully remembered that now, as belonging to Christ their Head and Representative, they were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. We love Him because He first loved us; and if we have chosen Him it is because He has

first chosen us. God chooses people for salvation; He does not choose any to be lost. And He has chosen us to a life of holiness and service.

II. A Royal Priesthood

The readers of the epistle would bear in mind that God had given to their forefathers the most elaborate sacrificial system the world has ever known, the human centre of which was the priest. They were now associated with the great High Priest Who is also King of Kings. Christianity knows nothing of any social order of men who stand between their fellow-sinners and God. The Reformation recovered the great doctrine that every Christian believer is a priest. And the Christian's worship is nothing if it is not spiritual. For worship in centrality the movement of the regenerated human spirit towards God the great Spirit (John iv. 24).

As a royal priesthood the Church has the duty and the privilege of interceding for all men, "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty." Human rulers are not grateful enough for the intercessions of the godly among those they govern.

III. A Holy Nation

Israel had originally been a theocracy; God was their King, and the Tabernacle was His palace. But the people clamoured for a king like those of other nations, and the demand on this occasion of that stiff-necked people was but one of the many and sad declensions that have marked the tragic history of that extraordinary nation.

When our Lord appeared, His people, with the Pharisees as the popular party, were filled with worldly Messianic hopes of earthly power and prosperity; so that, although He was at first popular in Galilee, He was finally given a cross instead of a crown. It is significant, in the records of God's retributive providence among the nations, that the false, carnal enthusiasm of the Jews, which was one of the causes of the rejection of the Christ, was permitted by God to grow in intensity until it precipitated a conflict with Rome, which

brought about in A.D. 70 the destruction of the Holy City and the suppression of the last vestige of Jewish national independence, until its revival a few years ago.

But these dear Jewish converts belonged to a better nation than earthly Israel. They formed part of that "one new man" of which their brother Paul loved to speak. It consists of men and women of all races, of all nationalities, of all classes and occupations, of all dispositions. One and the same Holy Spirit indwells all Christian believers; therefore all Christian believers are spiritually one.

The church is a "nation" that is international or supra-national; it has no physical frontiers; it has no armaments; its weapons of warfare are not carnal but spiritual. And in the sturdy words of good bishop Hooper, "in it neither king nor pope may govern," for it is a holy nation, Divinely called and set apart for God. The Christian's primary loyalty is to Christ, and his primary allegiance is to his "citizenship which is in heaven."

IV. A Purchased People

"Peculiar" derives from an old Roman word meaning property that lies entirely within the owner's control. And God's people belong to Him in various ways, and they belong to Him absolutely. They are His by right of creation; by right of purchase; by right of indwelling; and they should acknowledge this threefold eternal fact of the Divine ownership by presenting themselves and all their faculties to their Lord as a living sacrifice—their reasonable service.

And in view of all these mercies of God, which have conferred upon His people such a wonderful position, they are to "show forth His praises," or make known His perfections, His excellencies. This the believer does as he abides in Christ, for then he carries about with him an influence, an atmosphere, that reflects something of the Divine character; furthermore his worship will be spiritual; and his ministry will honour the Lord. Nothing so fully satisfies the regenerate soul as to realise that he is here for the glory of God. E. ADAMS.

NOTES OF A BIBLE READING ON GENESIS XLI—XLII

xli. 8-36. The present times are the years of plenty (grace), but famine (coming tribulation) is not far away.

vv. 37-46. We reach at last the exaltation of Joseph to the throne. Probably never before or since has a man of such youth held a position of like responsibility. He is thirty years old, an age particularly mentioned in others' lives, the age of mature manhood. It is the grand foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who alone will be competent to meet the exigencies of the famine, and to Whom all knees shall bow (Phil. ii. 9-11).

The expression, "man in whom the Spirit of God is," is remarkable. It is the secret of all. God has revealed His mind and will both as to the present and the future, but only by the Spirit of God can they be understood. In exaltation Joseph is seen in a new relationship. It is connected with his new name, Zaphnath-Paaneah (which in Hebrew means revealer of secrets, and in Egyptian, saviour of the world), that he gets his Gentile bride. To Christianity the mysteries belong.

47-52. Joseph sets forth the Lord Jesus as the wisdom and power of God. The names of his sons, born before the famine, are significant: Manasseh (forgetful). The Jews are Lo-Ammi for the time being; and Ephraim (fruitful), speaking of the church, the fruit of the grain of wheat which fell into the ground.

53-57. In Joseph are centred all the resources, and to Joseph all lands appealed, and so acknowledged his supremacy.

xlii. 1-5. Famine (need) drives the brethren to Joseph, and need will cause the remnant in a day to come to cry to God.

6-24. Hearts are probed and consciences exercised to produce repentance, the point of all blessing; and all by one who loved them and whom they knew not. Nature would have led Joseph to reveal himself sooner.

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FULL LISTS UPON APPLICATION

Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL

The importance of knowing the will of God, both for one's own personal life and circumstances and in its wider aspects affecting God's people and mankind generally, is so great that we make no apology for returning to the theme this month with a valuable article entitled "Knowing the will of God."

In one sense, of course, the whole of the Bible is concerned with the revelation to men of God's purposes and His will. But it will be agreed by students of scripture that much light for the individual pathway is to be gained from the Old Testament biographies of men of God who lived by the faith which is common to all dispensations. Mr. Jones has drawn his lessons from the life of Elijah, concerning whom scripture itself declares that he was "subject to like passions as we are." So that there can be no question as to the applicability of these lessons to ourselves today.

We commend this particular article to our readers for careful and thoughtful reading.

Long as my life shall last,
Teach me Thy way!
Where'er my lot is cast,
Teach me Thy way!
Until the race is run,
Until the journey's done,
Until the crown is won,
Teach me Thy way!

"Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."
(Psalm xvi. 11)

FIRST PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH LIFE

III. The Apostles' Doctrine

When considering the Holy Spirit as the power by which the church of Christ grew and functioned in its early days, reference was made to the written word of God as being a further divine provision to enable believers to ascertain the will of the Lord. It was pointed out that, in his address on the day of Pentecost, Peter quoted freely from the Old Testament, showing that the authority of what God had formerly spoken was in no way diminished. But with the passing of the former dispensation, and the establishment of the church as God's witness on earth, it was necessary that the followers of Christ should know where to look in future for direction as to any changes of conduct the new institution might require.

We believe the short answer to this question is to be found in the first clause of Acts ii. 42: "They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship." Broadly speaking, therefore, what is written in the New Testament constitutes the Lord's specific provision for the regulation and control of His church.

It will be helpful to observe the change in style when passing from verse 41 to verse 42. Up to the end of verse 41, Acts ii. is purely narrative, containing a factual account of what occurred on the birthday of the church. The recording of events is then broken off (to be resumed again in chapter iii.), and the remaining verses of the chapter contain Luke's commentary upon the way in which the life of the church developed in the early days of its existence. And he begins with the statement that believers continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship.

The expression "the apostles' doctrine" is striking, and merits careful consideration.

When the Lord was on earth He referred to the Old Testament as the "word of God" (Mark vii. 13). No Jew, however unbelieving as to Christ Himself, would have disputed the truth or significance of that description. It meant that whatever

had been written in the law, the psalms and the prophets, was to be recognised as possessing divine authority, and calling for men's obedience.

But during the Lord's own ministry there was an important development. Not only did He speak, as the common people were quick to notice (Mark i. 22), with authority, but more than once He used the expression, "It was said by them of old time . . . but I say unto you" (Matt. v. 21, etc.; see also xix. 9), thus placing His own utterances on a level with the word of God. The Pharisees, because they refused to acknowledge the deity of Jesus, might raise objections, but those who accept the person of Christ have no difficulty about the boldness of this claim because they believe He was in very truth the Son of God.

Then, on the day of Pentecost, after the Lord Jesus had returned to heaven, the Holy Spirit came down. The Godhead was still to be represented on earth by One of the blessed Trinity, the Holy Spirit graciously descending to undertake the task of instructing men in the truth. This was the fulfilment of the Lord's promise to His disciples: "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth" (John xvi. 13). What we might have expected to find therefore was a reference to the teaching or doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Instead of which, by the inspiration of the blessed Spirit Himself, Luke writes "they continued stedfastly in the *apostles' doctrine.*"

It will readily be granted by every loyal believer that what the apostles taught *was* by the power of the Holy Spirit. Yet in Acts ii. 42 attention is drawn, *not* to the divine authorship of christian doctrine, but rather to the *human channel* through which it came to men. It reminds us of the psalmist's description of the Manna as "angels' food" (Psalm lxxviii. 25) not because angels made it, or partook of it themselves, but because angels were used as the intermediary through which the Israelites received it. In this way the Holy Spirit Himself establishes the authority which the apostles had received from the Head of the church to direct the early believers as

to their behaviour within their own circle and in the sight of the world.

In our last article, attention was drawn to the fact that the Lord chose *men* for His work, rather than methods. Here is an example of this very thing. Knowing perfectly the need of His church, the Lord appointed *men* to teach by word of mouth, and subsequently to commit to writing, the doctrines connected with the church, and the Holy Ghost describes the aggregate of what these men taught by the comprehensive phrase "the apostles' doctrine."

There is further confirmation of apostolic authority at a later date. When Paul wrote to Timothy exhorting him to continue in the things he had learned, he added, "Knowing of whom thou has learned them" (2 Tim. iii. 14). This referred, of course, *not* to the Holy Ghost, but to himself as the teacher (see also Ch. i. 13). It should be observed also that Paul nowhere suggests that, since the Holy Spirit was to remain with the church, Timothy might expect fresh revelations from **Him** as and when new problems arose. On the contrary, he was **to** continue in the things already received from apostolic lips. How manifestly the Holy Ghost upheld the authority of those whom the Lord chose for His work! The lesson of this should not be overlooked.

At the beginning, the apostles appear to have promulgated their teachings orally, so that their "sayings" were passed round from one to another. Some of these received confirmation in apostolic writings later on. For examples, see I Timothy i. 15, iii. 1, etc. Eventually, however, in the providence of God, they committed their testimony and doctrine to writing. As a result we have the Gospels (though all were not written by apostles)—four separate records of the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus: the book of Acts, written by one of Paul's close companions, containing much useful instruction from the history of the early church in the form of example and precedent: following which come the apostolic epistles, mainly those of Paul, to whom the revealing of the "mystery" had been specially committed (Col. i. 25, 26): and finally

the book of Revelation. The Lord has thus bountifully provided His people with a variety of scripture, in addition to bestowing the Holy Spirit to ensure that they have light and understanding.

What a complete answer this affords to those in the present day who disparage the teaching of the apostles! Professing with much piety to accept the Master's personal authority, they belittle those whom the Master chose to establish the foundations of the christian faith (Eph. ii. 20), and in doing this they also affront the Holy Spirit, by whose power Paul wrote, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you are *the commandments of the Lord*" (I Cor. xiv. 37).

Study of, and instruction in, the scriptures, particularly the New Testament, must therefore be an essential feature of church life. It is not only irreverent, but foolish, to neglect doctrine on the plea that "it does not matter what one believes—it is manner of life that counts." One ground on which Paul called upon the Corinthians to reject fundamentally subversive teaching which denied that Christ rose from the dead, was that "Evil communications corrupt good manners" (I Cor. xv. 33). The Lord Himself is concerned as to the doctrines His people hold: there are some He *hates* (Rev. ii. 15). Babes in Christ need the sincere milk of the word (I Peter ii. 2); having grown they need "strong meat" (Heb. v. 12-14). Believers become transformed by the renewing of their *minds* (Rom. xii. 2). How can these things be accomplished save by the power of the Holy Spirit, as the word of God is read, meditated upon, understood and put into practice?

Finally, it should be noted that the apostles knew nothing of the so-called "charitable" tolerance so widely practised in our day towards those who reject what they taught. Numerous quotations from the epistles could be given to establish the truth of this statement. The apostles knew that what they taught had been given them by the Lord, and did not despise the authority they possessed. Perhaps the most solemn condemnation of those who perverted the gospel of

Christ and propagated false doctrine, was that of Paul when writing to the Galatians (Ch. i. 8, 9): "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." And then, in the exercise of his own personal authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ, he adds: "As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

Founded upon the apostles' doctrine was their fellowship, and this will be the subject (D.V.) of next month's article.

E. A. PETTMAN.



THE LORD AS KING, and THE SUBJUGATION OF THE NATIONS

"The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies."
(Psalm cx. 1, 2)

"The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed . . .

Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee.

Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen (the nations) for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."
(Psalm ii. 2, 6-9)

Will the nations be brought into subjection to Christ through the preaching of the gospel?

No! The above scriptures present a very different picture! Moreover the book of Revelation, which tells of the judgments that God will pour out on the ungodly when the Day of Grace has come to an end, tells us also that these judgments will not subdue men's rebellious hearts where grace has not availed to subdue them. When the Lord Jesus Himself appears

in His glory, the hosts of this world will be arrayed against Him, and will be overcome by His mighty power (Rev. xix. 11-21).

While the church is being formed, the Lord Jesus is seated on His Father's throne. In that place of glory He is exalted "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world (age), but also in that which is to come" (Eph. i. 21). But all are not yet *in fact* subject to Him. "Sit thou at my right hand, *until* I make thine enemies thy footstool," says Jehovah. He is God's anointed king (anointed, not with oil, but with the Holy Spirit—Isaiah xi. 2), and now is awaiting the time fixed by the Father for taking possession of the kingdom. We remember that when the apostles asked Him "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" He told them, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power."

For the Lord Jesus, having taken upon Himself the form of a servant, maintains the subject place through all the glory bestowed upon Him as the Son of Man. When the due time has come, He will ask of the Father, and He will give Him the nations for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession.

As the nation of Israel is destined by God to be the centre of the kingdom on earth of the Lord Jesus Christ, so there is no doubt that the land of Israel is to be the main scene of the conflicts in which the nations are subdued. This is highly significant in view of the interest of many nations today in that region.

"Armageddon," or the "Battle of Armageddon" are terms with which even the world is acquainted. The meaning of the word, "Mountain of Megiddo," points to the place of that name in Palestine, and even in a book of symbols, as Revelation is, there is nothing to lead us to suppose any other meaning. If there is a reference to Judges v. 19, a battle in Palestine is still indicated.

We read then in Rev. xvi. 12-16, of the drying up of the Euphrates "that the way of the kings of the east might be

prepared." This evidently symbolizes the removal of some hindrance, giving to far eastern nations free access to the place of gathering. There has been much speculation as to what "kings" are intended; without clear indications in the scripture, speculation is worse than useless, as it distracts from the real object of prophecy. But reading on in Rev. xvi., we find three unclean spirits coming from the mouths of the dragon, of the beast and of the false prophet. Their effort is to delude "the kings of the earth *and* of the whole world," into meeting together for the battle "of that great day of God Almighty." They are gathered into the place called Armageddon.

Resisting once again any useless speculation as to the ostensible reasons for that gathering, we will turn to Rev. xix. and find God's answer to this tremendous effort of man. There a wonderful vision is described. We read of heaven opened, and of the coming forth of God's King to begin the task of subduing His enemies. He is seen as a warrior, riding on a white horse, His eyes as a flame of fire, searching the hearts of men with an all-seeing gaze. He is called Faithful and True, and whether judging or warring, all is in perfect righteousness. His vesture dipped in blood speaks not of atonement but of unsparing slaughter, for the day of mercy is past. He is crowned with many crowns, but with all that characterizes Him as Son of Man, there is the testimony to that mystery of His person—the name written that none but Himself knew: and His name is called the Word of God. He is the One competent to make God known, then in judgment, as previously in grace.

He is not seen coming out of heaven alone, but followed by the armies of heaven, also on white horses, and clothed in fine linen, white and clean. So we read elsewhere that when the Lord Jesus appears in His glory, all His saints will be with Him (I Thess. iii. 13), and all the holy angels also (Matt. xxv. 31). What a marvellous concourse!

The Beast and the kings of the earth and their armies are there, gathered together to make war on the heavenly Rider and His armies. Yes, it is the great day of God Almighty!

Assuredly those men will not know who is coming forth to make war with them. But they are seeking the exaltation of man, led on by Satan. They are seeking to get the whole earth under man's control, shutting out God utterly. This is the moment, then, when sin has risen to its highest height, that God will choose to break the dominion of sin and Satan forever. On that day the lawless purposes of the Beast and the kings with him will be frustrated, not by providential action, but by the Lord in person. His word—the sword proceeding from His mouth—suffices for the destruction of those great armies. But the Beast and the False Prophet are cast straight into hell, no process of judgment being needed to determine their awful guilt.

Now it is sometimes held that all the enemies of the Lord will be gathered together when He appears, and will be together destroyed. The simplicity of this view is very attractive, as simplicity always is. But there are many scriptures difficult to reconcile with it. If it be asked, "Why does not Revelation xix. say as much?" the answer may be that the *vision* we have been considering may indeed include in its scope the destruction of all enemies. However, the Bible seems to indicate plainly that all will not be destroyed immediately the Lord appears.

Psalm cx., quoted at the beginning of this article, says, "The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies." Hence, when the Lord has begun His rule in Zion, all enemies will not have been subdued. Again, if we take David as a type, we see how God gave him victory over all his enemies on every side, until all were overcome. Then followed Solomon's reign as King of Peace, completing the type of the Lord's millennial reign.

We must defer consideration of this difficult subject for a later article, if the Lord will.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN.



KNOWING THE WILL OF GOD

(Notes of an address given at Wildfell Hall, Catford, 3/1/59)

Read: I Kings xvii.

As might be expected, the Holy Scriptures contain a wealth of reference to the will of God. Not only do they declare in broad terms what God's will is for His people generally, but they offer guidance to the individual as to how he may learn the divine will for his own pathway.

Speaking first of what is general, there are the Lord's own words in John vi. 40: "And this is *the will of Him that sent Me*, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." Here then is the plainly declared will of God, that those that believe on the Son should have everlasting life. How well it disposes us to the thought of God, to know that this is His will, and this the thing He is so anxious to impart—that to everyone who will rest the eye of faith upon His Son, God pledges Himself to give that great gift of everlasting life.

Then in verse 39 there is another reference. Once again it is the Lord Jesus Himself saying: "And this is *the Father's will* which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." What an inexpressible comfort it is to know that eternal security in Christ is the declared will of God the Father for those He gives to His Son!

The New Testament epistles also refer to this important matter. Galatians i. 4 reads, "Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, *according to the will of God and our Father.*" One of the first things a Christian needs to learn is that God has made a difference between Himself and the godless world around him, a difference which can never really be concealed. As the Son of God Himself was *in* the world, but never *of* it, so it is with those that believe on Him. Though sometimes their behaviour may belie the fact, Christians are nevertheless not of *this* world, which is by its character such an affront to God in its wilful ignorance of Him, because they have been delivered

from it by the One who gave Himself for that very purpose.

Furthermore, the first epistle to the Thessalonians gives additional guidance. Chapter iv. 3 says: "This is *the will of God*, even your sanctification." The Christian has been "set apart" by God, and is to set himself apart practically from all that is unholy. He is to behave as one who is not his own, but has been bought with a price (I Cor. vi. 20).

Again in chapter v. 18: "In everything give thanks: for this is *the will of God* in Christ Jesus concerning you." How surprising that the will of God should concern itself with our thanksgiving! A graceless, thankless Christian is an anachronism. Whatever our difficulties, however exceptional our problems, no matter how many things we lack that we think we need, let us evermore thank God for His great goodness to us, "for He is good, and His mercy endureth for ever." Each one of us has received so much more than he deserved, for we deserved nothing.

But whilst the understanding of the will of God in a general way may not present much difficulty, how may one know it for one's own particular pathway and problems? Undoubtedly there have been men of God in bygone days, men of marked devotion to God, who appear to have known with considerable certainty what God's will for them was. One such was Elijah, and there is much concerning him in I Kings xvii. which may be helpful to ourselves.

This chapter records three great experiences which that man of God passed through, and three important lessons he had to learn. There was also a fourth consideration, not specifically mentioned in the chapter, but without which Elijah could not have been the man he was. The incidents mentioned are Elijah's fleeing to Cherith, his sojourn with the widow of Sarepta, and his restoring of life to her son.

The fourth matter about which I Kings xvii. is silent, is that Elijah prayed. It is in the New Testament that James lets us into the secret that Elijah, though a man of like passions with ourselves, prayed; furthermore, that he prayed earnestly.

It is interesting to note that the same thing is recorded of a

great New Testament character. When God told Ananias to seek out Saul of Tarsus after his conversion, he told him that he would find Saul praying. Of the man that was to stand for God before kings, who was to be used of God as no other for the building up of His church, and who was to win finally a martyr's crown, God said, "Behold, he prayeth"

Surely prayer is a first necessity for learning the will of God! Prayer at all times, whether one is prospering or "at wit's end corner"; prayer accompanied by sincere thanksgiving; prayer because the soul delights in God!

Secondly, Elijah had to learn the lesson of humility. He was ordered to run away and hide, when the inclination of a vigorous and forthright man such as Elijah was (see Ch. xviii. 40, 46), would have been to a course of positive action. Having prayed that God would fast shut up the heavens as a judgment upon Israel for their sins, he is told to hide himself at Cherith by Jordan. Would he not be thought cowardly for doing so? What if he were! He was obeying the command of God. Elijah must leave his reputation in God's hands.

On arriving at Cherith, God sustained Elijah with food conveyed to him by ravens. Ravens! unclean birds which the Israelites were forbidden to eat! Surely doves could have been used! But God chose to use unclean ravens. How humbling!

Again, after the tiny rivulet at Cherith had run dry, Elijah was sent to Sarepta to be billeted upon a poor, starving widow! Was there really no one else with substance and wealth enough to supply the needs of a prophet of the Most High? What about Obadiah, who succoured a hundred of God's prophets in caves (see Ch. xviii. 4, 13)—would he not be a more suitable host for a man of God? No; God commanded a poor widow to sustain Elijah, and gave her the privilege of entertaining His representative upon earth.

Why does God act in these ways if not to demonstrate to His servants that He uses humble men and women to perform His will, and to teach them the lesson of humility? How often it may be that God cannot use us simply because we have not learned godly humility! If He did so, we should rob Him of the glory that belongs to Him alone.

The third thing Elijah had to learn was to depend upon God. Is this not a lesson the unbeliever has to learn when first he seeks to have to do with God? How often is the remark made by one who has not learned to rely wholly upon Christ "But surely there must be something I can do!" Such persons have to remain with their hunger unsatisfied until they learn what it is to cast themselves unreservedly upon the mercy of God and the grace of the Saviour.

So with Elijah here: he is wholly dependent upon God. The brook at Cherith is but a small one: it is not a river, like Jordan, the pride of Palestine. It is nothing more than an insignificant stream whose flow gradually decreases to a mere trickle before it ceases altogether. Furthermore, the winged messengers from God come morning and evening, and Elijah has to take one meal at a time from the claws and beaks of ravens. What was God doing with this servant of His if not to teach him his complete dependence upon Himself?

It is still the same at Sarepta. How small were the material resources on which the household of three had to depend! Only a barrel of meal, and a mere cruse of oil! How pitifully inadequate—apart from God! Elijah might easily have despised them. But he did not. So the poverty-stricken household waited upon God for their daily bread, and their needs were supplied.

Lastly, when the shattering blow fell, and the son of the mistress of the house died, what a test of their faith! Elijah enters deeply into her sorrow, and his dismay is evident in his cries to God. Yet there was no need for despair. God was over all, and in due time the lad was restored to his mother. God's resources never fail.

Finally there was Elijah's faith, a faith which was expressed by his unhesitating obedience to God's word. Faith and obedience cannot be separated. He was humiliated and he was perplexed, but he was prepared to go on with God. He trusted God where he could not see His hand. In verse 5, and again in verse 10, we read that "he went." He knew not whither the path would ultimately lead; it was enough for him to follow where God led.

Three times in the New Testament, Habakkuk's declaration that "The just shall live by his faith" is quoted. Faith is not only what we begin with for our salvation; it is the quality we need to exercise every day of our lives.

Do you think that Elijah, in all those circumstances which tried and perplexed him, stood every morning on the bank of his tiny stream, plucking his nether-lip and wondering whether it would still be flowing by the evening? The writer does not think he did. Do you think that when he arose from his couch in the morning, and before he went to it at night, he scanned the horizon, anxiously wondering whether the messengers would bring him his meat? Surely not! Do you think that at Sarepta, had you been there, you would often have seen him peering a little doubtfully and anxiously into the cruse to measure the level of the oil, or lifting the lid of the barrel to check how high up the meal came? Again, surely not! Elijah was a man prepared for whatever God had in store for him, and ready by prayer, humility, dependence and the obedience of faith to learn and follow the will of God in whichever direction it might lead him.

Whilst in specific circumstances the will of God as to particular matters may be known with certainty, is it not so that it is often God's way to permit His children to experience exercise of mind and even to suffer humiliation because they have no clear assurance as to the way they should take? God's design in this is to test and strengthen the faith which honours Him. One hymn-writer has declared, "I do not ask to see the distant scene; one step enough for me." But is it? Each must answer for himself.

We shall certainly experience more of God's goodness in our daily lives if we will but learn some of the basic lessons which God would teach us. Maybe we have learned some of them in part: may we be encouraged to go on to a fuller and richer knowledge of God! Should this mean walking alone with God, may we not falter, but seek to emulate the faith of another Old Testament worthy who, in a moment of dark bewilderment, exclaimed, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

L. A. JONES.

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FULL LISTS UPON APPLICATION

Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

Vol. XLVII

SEPTEMBER, 1959

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL

One or two readers have remarked upon the large number of scripture references given in some of the articles appearing in WORDS OF HELP. They consider the number excessive, and find their reading somewhat impeded thereby.

May we say at once how grateful we are for comments of this kind, because they enable us to obtain some idea of how others view the production of the Magazine. Readers may be interested to know that this question has been raised by several of our writers, and it is the Editor who has pressed for scripture references to be given in order that careful readers may check what they read with the word of God.

It is felt that this is a really important consideration, because the ministry offered is only of value so far as it has the support of the scriptures, and we wish our readers to be placed in a position to verify this for themselves.

If we may make the suggestion, we would recommend that each article be read at least twice. The first time, read it through from beginning to end, ignoring the references, in order to catch the line of thought or drift of the argument. Having done that, go through it again, considering each sentence and paragraph critically, and *reading the scripture reference*.

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

(2 Tim. ii. 15)

FIRST PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH LIFE

IV. THE APOSTLES' FELLOWSHIP

(Read: Acts ii. 42)

Our last article pointed out the significance of the phrase "the apostles' doctrine," used by the Holy Spirit to describe the teachings given to the newly-formed church in which the early believers are said to have continued steadfastly. Linked with this doctrine, and indeed dependent upon it, was the communion in which the members of the church were united, this fellowship being described likewise as "the apostles'."

From this expression it is clear that the authority of the apostles was not limited to the instruction of the early christians in the truths they were to accept and proclaim, but extended to all matters affecting their communion one with another. As might be expected therefore, we find in Acts v. 1-11 the exercise of apostolic authority in the conviction and punishment of evildoers; Acts vi. 1-7 in connection with the orderly conduct of affairs within the church; and again in Acts xv. 1-32, where matters of belief and practice affecting believers generally were considered. On all these occasions the apostles were prominent and leading. These scriptures, only a few of many that could be cited, should be pondered by any who harbour doubt as to the special status the apostles possessed by the ordering of the Head of the church.

Now it follows from the foregoing that those today who accept the apostolic teaching of the New Testament as their final authority for christian belief and doctrine, should look to it also for guidance in matters affecting their fellowship with fellow-Christians. In other words, it is no more permissible for believers to devise their own rules of church organisation and control than it is for them to formulate their own creed.

Furthermore, since both doctrine and fellowship are said to be "the apostles'" it must be accepted that the writings of these men, given by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and preserved down the ages by divine power, were deemed by the Lord to be fully adequate for the direction of His people throughout the church dispensation, and that they continue to be sufficient for the present day. Otherwise the many

misconceptions and mistakes that have occurred might be excusable on the ground that insufficient guidance had been given in the first place, thus calling in question the adequacy of the Lord's provision. No reverent mind however would permit such a thought, particularly as the Holy Spirit has been sent down also to enable believers to understand rightly, not only the New Testament, but the whole word of God, bearing in mind that what happened in Old Testament days was recorded "for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come" (I Cor. x. 11: New Tr.).

It will be seen therefore that it was the design of the Head of the church to exercise His guidance and control by His word given through the apostles (and prophets—see Eph. ii. 20), and that such word should be understood and acted upon in the power of the Holy Spirit. This rules out all the worldly forms of government to be found in christendom, whether autocratic or democratic in character.

Even in apostolic days there were those who had to be rebuked for seeking to gain control and pre-eminence in the church. Simon Magus (see Acts viii. 18-24) was one who saw an opportunity to use his money to obtain power over the Lord's servants; Diotrophes (III John) was another who sought to displace the apostles in favour of himself; Paul foretold to the elders of Ephesus that after his departing "grievous wolves" would enter in among them, not sparing the flock, that from among themselves "shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts xx. 29-30). In this connection it is well to see that the apostle's answer for this state of affairs was not to establish protective ecclesiastical courts, but to commend them to God, and to "the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

It is surely evident that the church of God must have the power to rid itself of any evil thing arising within itself prejudicial to its own purity and purpose. One of the figures used by the Holy Spirit to describe the functioning of the church on earth is that of the human body. Can one imagine a body with no power to eject such poisons as will bring about its destruc-

tion if not expelled? Yet there are persons who take the view that the church of God has neither authority nor obligation to deal with those who by wicked conduct or spurious teaching are inimical to its welfare!

What has the New Testament to say about this? I Corinthians v. records the case of a man in the assembly there who was guilty of scandalous behaviour such "as is not so much as named amongst the Gentiles." In the exercise of apostolic authority, Paul instructs the Corinthians to "put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (v. 13). This then is the Lord's command, through an apostle, calling for the obedience of the church "when ye be gathered together"; the apostle adding significantly "and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ." Stern measures for the expulsion of evildoers are therefore incumbent upon the church with the Lord's own authority through His apostle.

There are local assemblies, and also wider fellowships of believers at the present time, who refuse to obey this injunction, preferring to show what they term "charitable compassion" towards persons guilty of dishonouring God by flagrant sin. Those however who disregard the apostles' command can scarcely expect to be recognised as being within the apostles' fellowship. If Paul rebuked the Corinthians for their inaction, what would he say today to those who disobeyed his precise, unequivocal instruction?

Then what about false teachers? Here it must be understood reference is not being made to mere differences of interpretation, or to alternative opinions on matters which may be open to difference of judgment, but to subversive teachings which strike at the foundations of sound christian faith, even to denying the Father and the Son. In this matter also how strange to find true christian folk who, in the face of the havoc which modernism has wrought, persist in the view that the church possesses no authority to deal with those who pervert its vital faith! How glibly some of them maintain that "it does not matter what one believes so long as one lives the right life," as though there were no connection between belief and behaviour!

If we claim to belong to the apostles' fellowship, let us test our title by enquiring what line the apostles took over the activities of evil teachers. Let them speak for themselves—

Paul says:—

“If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Gal. i. 9).

“ . . . holding faith and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.” (I Tim. i. 18, 19).

“But shun profane and vain babblings; for they will increase unto more ungodliness” (2 Tim. ii. 16).

Peter says:—

“ . . . there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies” (2 Pet. ii. 1).

John says:—

“If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine (i.e. the doctrine of Christ), receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (II John 10, 11).

Jude refers to evil teachers as:—

“ . . . spots in your feasts of charity . . . clouds . . . without water, carried about of winds; on trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever” (ver. 12, 13).

Readers! Do the above verses breathe a spirit of toleration or execration? And if that was how the apostles felt, spoke and acted, how can any company of believers (if such it can be called) which behaves differently be called by their name? May the Lord help both readers and writer to keep the Lord's word, not deny his Name, and thus (only thus!) continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship.

THE ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON

The apostle John uses this form of words, with slight variations, five times; four times in his gospel and once in his first epistle (John i. 14, 18; iii. 16, 18; I John iv. 9). We may therefore conclude that he attached great importance to the description of the Lord Jesus which the expression embodies. Let us consider it with due reverence and humility.

John i. is generally recognised as being an outstanding portion of Holy Scripture, and in verse 14 the apostle makes one of his most profound statements. Referring to what he has written in the earlier verses, he says "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," and this in such a way that he could add "And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father." Asserting that the One who was "with God" (ver. 1) had now come down, in the body prepared for Him (Heb. x. 5), to be with men, John declares that he and others with him beheld the true glory of His person.

"There see the Godhead glory
Shine through that human veil."

(J.N.D. in "Man of Sorrows")

In his New Translation J.N.D. renders verse 14 thus:—

"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us
(and we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an
only-begotten with a father), full of grace and truth";

and the Revised Version reads:—

"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us
(and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten
from the Father), full of grace and truth."

Another, commenting upon the words "we beheld His glory" asks "What was it like?" The answer is that it was "glory as of an only-begotten with (lit. from with) a father."

This brings the matter near to the understanding of the lowly, and suggests that those who beheld the Lord Jesus on earth were privileged to see what had previously been known only in heaven. Scriptures such as Proverbs viii. 30-31 dimly foreshadowed the coming forth of the Son to be seen by men;

and, the Son now having come, John, following the course of progressive revelation, can speak of beholding His glory.

Such a revelation of the Son was God's pure grace to mankind. For we read in verse 18 "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." Human search and research could never discover such things. Only the Son could declare the Father's name. Man's part is simply to behold and listen. In his epistle John speaks of "that which we have seen and heard" (I John i. 3).

In human affairs men value the testimony of an eye-witness, and one who can speak with first-hand knowledge. Such competence the Lord Jesus possessed to make the Father known. He ever dwelt in the bosom of the Father; the very words He used were given to Him by the Father who had sent Him (John xvii. 8. New Tr.—see footnote). As one hymn-writer has said:

"Dwells in His bosom; knoweth all
That in that bosom lies;
And came to earth to make it known,
That we might share His joys."

In John iii. the Lord is speaking to a ruler of the Jews, a master of Israel, who as yet was unable to enter into the heavenly things pent up in Jesus' bosom. Nevertheless he heard wonderful things that day. His thoughts were directed back to the wilderness days when the serpent of brass was lifted up, and was told that the Son of Man must likewise be lifted up. Righteousness required an atonement for sin: man needed saving. So Nicodemus is given the blessed revelation that divine love provides what divine justice and human need both required: the Son of Man is the Only-begotten Son, given in order that men "should not perish, but have everlasting life." The love of God has to be, and can only be, measured by the greatness of His gift.

In Genesis xxii. containing the account of the trial of Abraham's faith to see how far he would go in obedience, we read that God said to him "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest . . ." Whether or not the

expression "only-begotten son" derives from this incident, the circumstances of the story serve to emphasize the nearness of relationship and fulness of affection implicit in the words. Compare also the reference in Colossians i. 13 to "His dear Son," margin, "the Son of His love."

The dignity of the expression is also seen in John iii. 18, which contains the solemn warning that if a man does not believe "in the name of the only begotten Son of God" he is already condemned, while he must also come into judgment according to his works (see Rev. xx 12-15). What an awful contrast between the "everlasting life" which those who believe in the Son receive, and "the second death" which will be the portion of those who do not.

The same phrase is used by John in his first epistle (Ch. iv. 9), where the truth of the love of God is spoken of. He tells us that its manifestation—the making known of something which already existed—was shown in sending "His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (I John iv. 9). In connection with this verse, John v. 24-28, on the subject of "living through Him," should be read. Life was in Him in such a way that He could impart it to others; whilst the same life is in us, though we can speak to others about it, we are dependent upon Him to bestow it. He alone is the blessed Life-giver.

Let us remember that eternal life is not only the believer's security against death and judgment; it is a *quality* of life, the *sort* of life he receives as a free gift from God. The point of the teaching, both of the Lord and His servant, will be missed unless it is seen that every believer possesses, and should in consequence exhibit, eternal life. And how blessed it is to realise that this life is bound up with Him of whom John could say "We beheld His glory."

Lord Jesus, 'tis our joy to think
 Our life is so bound up with Thine
 That nothing can divide the link
 Secured and fixed by love divine.

P. WHITE.

STUDY TO BE QUIET

“We exhort you, brethren . . . to seek earnestly to be quiet and mind your own affairs” (I Thess. iv. 11, J.N.D.)

This undoubtedly is a noisy, screeching age, distracting to the most phlegmatic natures. Years ago, I was struck by the Biblical phrase, “Study to be quiet,” and it comes afresh to me now. The injunction of scripture surely points out a divine panacea for this twentieth-century plague.

But have you really considered what the words really mean? A superficial interpretation of them would possibly be, “Leave off making a noise yourself.” And we cannot deny that such an exhortation as this is needed in the case of some of those loud-voiced, self-assertive persons who sweep down upon quieter folk like a March tempest. Then there are also those fussily-active individuals, always themselves perturbed and in a state of seemingly-perpetual motion, who agitate others by the very sight of their own agitation.

How we would like them to be still just long enough for us mentally to take their photographs and thus to obtain a permanent record of their condition at a given moment. What an agreeable lull in the storm the pause would be!

However, forgetting the weakness of others, it is possible that you and I sometimes, to the discomfort of others, speak and act like the twenty-knot gale rather than the gentle zephyr. But I think the text quoted above exhorts us not so much to abstention from annoying others as to obtain peace for oneself—to “seek peace and pursue it,” rather than to beware of disturbing the peace of others. This is an excellence in itself; and elsewhere we are definitely bidden, “If it be possible as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men.”

But the latter is not our present subject; for there seems no doubt that what is meant in my short text is that we should cultivate a state of inward placidity, unruffled by outward commotions and anxieties. Within the heart, at the very core of one's being, there the hush of the sanctuary should prevail. The peace of God like an invincible garrison should hold the citadel of the soul secure against the contending forces of the world and of the devil. This is a calm of spirit which resists

successfully the multitude of disturbing influences that threaten one from without in every direction. And such a frame of mind we cannot but feel is eminently desirable.

However, whether we recognize the need for this spirit of quiet or not, we cannot escape the fact that we are exhorted to strive after it. To “study” or “seek earnestly” to be quiet is to make it an object of Christian ambition, an object after which we are earnestly to struggle for love’s sake and for honour’s sake. We are called to regard it as the legitimate aim of the new life to preserve the heart within us inviolate from the invading hordes of this life’s worries and cares.

Are not our bodies the temples of the Holy Spirit? Is there not therefore a holy of holies within each of us? How then can we without disastrous results allow the heathen to overrun this sanctuary? Nay, but let it rather be our continual endeavour to keep our secular matters in the court of the Gentiles.

But you, with your love of practicality, are murmuring, “How is it possible to do this? Why speak of the things which are beyond the reach of the toilers?” In answer, I deny that this tranquillity of mind is beyond the reach of any person of faith. I go further, and affirm that if we lack it habitually or periodically or even occasionally, we ourselves are alone to blame. The very knowledge that such an ideal is set before us in the scripture is of the highest value. Next to the possession of a great fortune is the knowledge that it is within one’s reach. Next to having the peace of Christ ruling in our hearts is the knowledge that we may by an effort attain to such a possession.

And the secret of our success in this legitimate ambition, if it be a secret at all, is conveyed in one word—faith. It surely is a simple matter for a believer to believe; and to accept the truth of that unanswerable challenge, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” The unquestioning assurance, which a child may acquire, that Omnipotence guards us and guides us gives us a confident sense of security which nothing can disturb.

The saints at Thessalonica were suffering severe persecution from the enemies of the gospel, while unruly brethren were the

cause of much anxiety in their assembly. They were therefore exhorted to watch that the quiet calm of the heart was not destroyed by these things. Such contrary circumstances would be controlled by Him who dwelt in their midst in His own time and manner. They were to go on doing their duty, and exercising care that these discordant elements did not interfere with their personal communion.

I know some persons are for ever sighing for the wings of a dove to fly away and be at rest. But we are not permitted to fly away from the scene of trial, but we are instructed how to maintain an inward rest in the very midst of trouble. In this manner we follow the Master who endured all afflictions not fleeing from them, but preserving, amid them all, an unbroken peace within.

At the same time, if God be pleased to vouchsafe a season of outward tranquillity, we may not despise it. For as Cowper says,

“The calm retreat, the silent shade,
With prayer and praise agree;
And seem, by Thy sweet bounty made,
For those who follow Thee.”

W. J. HOCKING.

(From “*The Bible Monthly*,” November, 1922)



NOTES OF A BIBLE READING ON GENESIS XLIII TO XLVIII

It is very striking in these chapters that, instead of saying a great deal about the famine, the Spirit of God concentrates our attention upon Joseph personally and upon his brethren. This is an incidental proof of the inspiration of the Bible. God's heart is always with His people, and, in the days that are coming, the world-wide events which are foretold in His word will really be with a view to the restoration and blessing of the Jews, as well as to the public honour and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The chapters not only have a prophetic bearing, but are also full of moral and practical truth and encouragement.

With regard to the prophetic view, the following Old Testament scriptures are striking:—Zech. xi. 12; xii. 10-14; xiii. 6; xiii. 9. The Lord will make Himself known to Jerusalem and the house of David in that day. They that wounded Him will know Him. The One Who has made Himself strange to them in tribulation will make Himself known to them at the end, like Joseph.

Benjamin represents power among the Jews, Joseph power among the Gentiles. In these chapters the two are brought together. Benjamin, as the "son of my right hand," is a type of the Lord.

In chapter xliii. we find Joseph's brethren put through further trials. The question seems to be whether they are really repentant, and whether there is a fundamental change in them.

Jacob seems to think his preparations will make all the difference to the success of their mission. He regards the money left in their sacks as an oversight (ver. 12). But Joseph ignores the money, and all the preparations made. Joseph's purpose is not to *receive* blessing, but to *bestow* one, and to bestow it in their presence. All the while his heart is yearning to reveal himself: yet love awaits the proper time, till their hearts have been thoroughly searched, and their repentance made real.

The brethren made merry with him (ver. 34); the time had not yet arrived for him to make merry with them. So the cup is put into Benjamin's sack (xliv. 2). Benjamin's place here corresponds with Joseph's some twenty years before (xxxvii. 18-28). Joseph's brethren hated him because he brought their evil report to their father, and Joseph suffered in innocence. Now, they themselves are made to feel something of this. When they say to Joseph they are true men, he cannot accept their word without proof. God was going to work in their hearts and produce repentance. The crucial test of Joseph's brethren was whether, when the cup was found in Benjamin's sack, they would allow him to remain as servant to Joseph in Egypt (xliv. 17). But we see how thoroughly the repentance had been effected. Judah's words show tenderness of feeling

towards his father and his brother Benjamin. The work of reconciliation was complete: and so Joseph is able to reveal himself to his brethren (xlv. 1-4). This is very touching and sacred: Joseph makes himself known just at the right time. So our Lord at the well of Sychar does not reveal Himself until repentance is complete (John iv. 4-26).

In the opening verses of chapter xlv. is foreshadowed the intimacy of our Lord with His people in a day to come. All the instructions for the journey to their father come from Joseph, not from his brethren. "Come near to me, I pray you" (ver. 4). Our Lord Himself ordained the twelve apostles that they should be with Him (Mark iii. 14). After the resurrection we are told that, whether we wake or sleep, we shall be forever with the Lord (I Thess. v. 10).

Joseph first tells them, "Haste ye" (xlv. 9): they were not to delay. So that there should be an element of urgency in our service, whether in the gospel, or amongst the Lord's people. The woman of Samaria hurried into the city to tell the men of the One Who had told her all things that ever she did (John iv. 28, 29). Our Lord, before His ascension, told His disciples, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel" (Mark xvi. 15). Joseph says, "Haste ye . . . lest ye come to poverty" (ver. 9-11). What poverty will be that of the unconverted in eternity!

The burden of the message which the brethren were to take back to Jacob was Joseph and his glory. Likewise we are to proclaim the threefold glories of the Lord, namely (a) His personal, (b) His moral, (c) His official glory.

They were given wagons, provision for the journey, and changes of raiment (vv. 21, 22). The wagons were to them a new, unthought-of power. So the Lord's witnesses today are "endued with power from on high." The changes of raiment show that they were not only to *speak* of Joseph's glory to their father, but also to *show* him the change of raiment which that glory had effected. So we should show forth our Lord's glories.

Lastly, Joseph says (ver. 24), "See that ye fall not out by the way." Strife has been a failing of the church since Pentecost. How important that there should be no strife amongst the Lord's people!

No man before or since has ever wielded such tremendous power as Joseph, at his age. Not a single hand was raised against him: the people were absolutely under his control, and were apparently glad to be so. In the world's history many monarchs have arisen and put forth their power, but at the expense and danger of the lives of those who have come under it; but Joseph used his power to the glory of God, and for the honour of Pharaoh. This is another vivid picture of our Lord. People often say "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory." In Joseph's actions we see a foreshadowing of this.

There are three spheres of supremacy, namely (a) angels and principalities above; (b) authorities upon the earth; (c) the devil and his angels. The Lord is far above all these (Eph. i. 20, 21). Whether in the present day of grace, or in the millennial reign, or in the new heaven and earth, the position depends absolutely upon the supremacy, exaltation and glory of our Lord.

When the brethren return to Jacob (xlv. 25, 26), he does not believe; yet, when they brought him a lying report twenty years earlier (xxxvii. 31-35), he believed. Eventually, however, faith triumphs, and he consents to go and see Joseph before his death (ver. 28). So with us: if we wish to see Him by faith *before* we are with Him in eternity, we must "leave those things which are behind."

xlvi. 1-3. Abraham had no hesitation in going down into Egypt: Jacob seems very different. He apparently enquires of God before going down. The journey to Egypt, however, was a part of God's plan.

xlvii. 10. Jacob blesses Pharaoh. The *less* is blessed of the *greater*, for the man of God is greater than earth's greatest monarch at the time.

xlviii. Joseph could have made his two sons princes, and given them wealth and position in Egypt. But he does not do this: he brings them to be blessed of Jacob. He would rather go God's way than have worldly riches.

ANON.

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FULL LISTS UPON APPLICATION

Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

Vol. XLVII

OCTOBER, 1959

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL

We are always pleased to receive readers' comments, critical or otherwise, on the articles appearing in WORDS OF HELP. Should anything you read provoke a helpful thought which you would like to share with fellow-readers, please do not hesitate to write to the Editor.

CORRESPONDENCE

Westcliff -on-Sea, Essex.

July, 1959.

To the Editor, WORDS OF HELP,

I have been interested in the remarks in July issue concerning the Holy Spirit's function, particularly those in the closing paragraph (page 78). He *is* a Spirit of impulse; that is definite: He does direct and prompt: He does inspire. But that is far from the whole of His work in the assembly. For He is also a Spirit of judgment. He leads us into making right decisions; He gives us guidance as to whether or not to give out a hymn or a thought; He bids us take time to consider if what we have been prompted to do fits the tenor of the meeting, and does not strike a discordant note. We come to be sure that "what we have on our mind" would not be untimely if given utterance.

Yours affectionately in Christ,
JOS. DAVIS.

THE SHEPHERD

(see inside back cover)

The following are the scriptures from which the theme of this hymn of praise has been taken:

Verse	1.	The Smitten Shepherd	..	I Peter ii. 24, 25
	2.	Jehovah's Shepherd	..	Zechariah xiii. 7
	3.	The Good Shepherd	..	John x. 11
	4.	The Obedient Shepherd	..	John x. 17, 18
	5.	The Selfless Shepherd	..	Philippians ii. 7
	6.	The Great Shepherd	..	Hebrews xiii. 20
	7.	The Chief Shepherd	..	I Peter v. 4
	8.	The Sole Shepherd	..	John x. 16

FIRST PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH LIFE

V. WORSHIP AND THANKSGIVING

(Read: Acts ii. 42; John iv. 23, 24)

Previous articles have discussed the vital importance of the Holy Spirit and the word of God in relation to church life. In John iv. 23, 24, the Lord Jesus links these two themes together when discoursing to the woman of Samaria on the subject of worship. He declares "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

Unquestionably the Breaking of Bread became the distinctive act of collective christian worship in the church. Yet the worship of God was no new thing. Nor is it restricted to the offering of praise and thanksgiving to God by assemblies of His people. Worship of the Creator is the humble duty and privilege of each individual creature; worship of the Father that of each child belonging to the family of faith.

It would seem there are believers today whose interest in the written word does not extend beyond passages which deal with the soul's eternal security or minister to the practical day to day necessities of christian living. Their point of view is mainly utilitarian, and they have little appetite for the deeper things of God which the Holy Spirit would teach them (I Cor. ii. 12, 13), not merely for their personal comfort and enjoyment, but to awaken within their hearts a due response of worship to God Himself. How much they miss in consequence!

Nor is the worship of God without very practical results, even in testimony to the world. When Paul and Silas were imprisoned at Philippi, their backs bleeding and their feet fast in the stocks, they lifted up their voices, not in groaning, but in praise to God, so that the other prisoners heard them. What a spell their worship cast over all connected with that prison! When at midnight, following the great earthquake, the prisoners found their shackles unloosed, none proceeded to escape, and the keeper of the prison himself was so shaken that he cried out "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts

xvi. 30). Thus was glory brought to the Name of Jesus, and blessing to men, as a result of the praise offered to God from the depths of a dark and dismal dungeon.

Before sin entered the Creator sought worship from the creature His own hands had made. Genesis ii. 19 reads "And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof." Thus did the Lord God, who sought to hear the human voice in exercise, bring before the man He had made His own handiwork, in order to stir Adam's mind and emotions, and draw from him intelligent expressions of delight and worship. Who can doubt also that one reason why God set His creature amidst the beauties of Eden was that the magnificence of everything around him might cause him to worship his Maker. With what deep reverence and awe may the believer sing today:—

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty!

All Thy works shall praise Thy Name, in earth, and
sky, and sea;

Holy, Holy, Holy, merciful and mighty,
God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Again, after the cleansing of the earth from the foul results of sin, the man whom God had saved gave praise and worship to his Saviour. When Noah offered "of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl . . . burnt offerings upon the altar," he had no thought of parading before mankind—he and his family were alone upon the earth—nor of getting something for himself. What he desired was to bring to God a tribute of thanksgiving for his "great salvation." And we read that "the Lord smelled a sweet savour," no doubt because the sacrifice Noah offered spoke to Him of the satisfying work which His own Son would later accomplish at Calvary. Furthermore He made yet another glorious promise to man "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake . . . While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and

cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. viii. 20-22).

The dying Jacob too, as he recalls the many lessons he had learned of the grace, guidance and government of God during a long and chequered life worships "leaning upon the top of his staff" (Heb. xi. 21). Was that staff the self-same one with which he had passed over Jordan (Gen. xxxii. 10), and was it the reminder to him of God's exceeding grace experienced at Bethel, and of the "God which fed me all my life long unto this day" (Ch. xlviii. 15)? Should not the daily experiences of God's goodness produce never-ceasing and ever-increasing songs of praise and thanksgiving to God from the hearts of His people?

Leviticus xxiii. 9-11 prescribes for Israel the waving of the sheaf of the firstfruits of their harvest before the Lord—"to be accepted for you." Is there not a pointer here to the character of the worship of believers in this dispensation as they "wave" or "show forth" the glories of their risen Lord (Christ the firstfruits—I Cor. xv. 23) before the eyes of the Father?

. . . to sound in God the Father's ears,
No other Name but thine.

There was also the rite of the basket of firstfruits, to be observed by the people of Israel when arrived in possession of the land God had promised them (Deut. xxvi. 1-4). Here the emphasis would appear to be on the gathering up of the varied tokens of God's goodness, and bringing them together to the place where God would choose to place His Name, there to recall the grace and redeeming power of Him who had brought them *out* of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm *into* the land flowing with milk and honey.

Is it not remarkable too that the phenomenon of the book of Psalms arises in connection with a people who do not appear to have cultivated or developed any poetical faculty? Was it not by the inditing of the Holy Spirit that God's people of old were given their beautiful collection of songs for the

definite purpose of enabling them to voice their devotions to Jehovah? God *will* be glorified, and as one of the Psalms declares (1. 23) “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me.”

In the New Testament, consequent upon the Lord’s own revelation of the Father, worship is offered to the Father: “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him” (John iv. 23). As one has remarked “The Lord speaks upon this highest theme to a person of lowest condition. His gracious action clearly showed that neither birth, culture, nor worldly advantage of any kind recommends a soul to the favour of God, nor does the lack of these necessarily hinder the reception of the true knowledge of God.”

The Lord’s declaration specifies that worship at the present time, to be acceptable, must be “in spirit and in truth.” In this connection another has written: “Being a Spirit God demands spiritual worship in contrast with carnal or fleshly worship. As the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God (Rom. viii. 16), so it is true that the Holy Spirit works through our spirit in worship (Phil. iii. 3). But in John iv. the Lord speaks of the new nature and the truth “which came by Jesus Christ” as essential features of the worship and the worshippers whom the Father is seeking” (W.J.H.—See Bible Monthly, Vol. I., page 189).

We would like to close this article with yet another relevant quotation:—

“This makes our assembling ourselves together for worship so solemn and serious a matter. We come into the presence of God to give thanks unto Him as the Father Who has made us meet; we present ourselves reverently before this Gracious Giver of every good and give thanks for His unspeakable Gift, the Son of His love and our Saviour and Lord; we bow before the only God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, confessing His adorable Name as we offer the sacrifice of praise by Him; we recognise the gracious presence of the Lord Jesus in the midst of His gathered people; we gratefully count upon the love of the Holy Spirit present, to enable us to utter suitable praises in the right order; and, in proportion as all this is apprehended by us when thus gathered together to His

Name, a reverent hush will come upon our spirits that will make us fear to intrude our own unauthorised words, or hymns, or prayers. The Lordship of Christ by the leadership of the Spirit being duly owned and submitted to by the assembly will bow all hearts in adoring wonder, love and praise on each occasion of being so gathered to His Name.

“The highest and happiest seasons in our lives, fraught with the richest blessing too, are those moments when with spirits overwhelmed by the majesty and grace of God Himself and of His blessed Son our Saviour we realise that we “MUST worship in spirit and in truth.” So with willing hearts and ready minds we come into God’s most holy Presence; we show ourselves indeed glad in Him with songs of praise; we magnify the Lord and our spirits rejoice in God our Saviour. Thus we drink of the river of His pleasure, experience again life’s most thrilling bliss, and worship the Father in spirit and in truth.”

(By W. G. TURNER—see Bible Monthly, Vol. 7, page 178).

May readers and writer alike know more of such blessed seasons of worship and thanksgiving! E. A. PETTMAN.

(Next article—the Breaking of Bread).



LIVING

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Phil. i. 21).

What an intensely personal expression this is! The speaker was not only a believer—he was a lover. To the Lord Jesus there is no one like a lover—one whose affections flow out to Him. “If a man *love Me, he will keep My words*” (John xiv. 23). To how many, since the day of Simon son of Jonas, has the searching question come “*Lovest thou Me?*” and from how many lips has come the reply “*Thou knowest that I am attached to Thee*” (John xxi. 16. J.N.D.)—only an attachment. As for Paul—Christ filled every conscious moment of his life.

Time was running out for this devoted man. Friends at Philippi were anxious for his safety. Jewish enmity was moving insidiously yet increasingly against him. His message was misrepresented so as to produce contention, and he himself

was a prisoner. Yet, in one triumphant expression, he links life with death—but the link is Christ: “To me to LIVE is Christ—to DIE is gain.”

As he wrote to those dear to him at Philippi, memories of his first journey there with Timotheus refreshed him. There was the call from Macedonia (Acts xvi. 9)—the sense of going under Divine direction, the prayer place by the river, the hospitality of Lydia’s home. Even imprisonment and scourging were answered by songs in the night, conversions, freedom and rejoicing in the morning. He writes “I thank my God for my whole remembrance of you” (Phil. i. 3. J.N.D.).

The words we have been asked to consider are the overflowing of a great love for Christ. This love is the power in every impulse for godliness. Conscience may be a corrective, but love alone fulfils. “Love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom. xiii. 10). The thought of life and death is also frequently associated with love in the word of God.

In 2 Samuel xv. 19-22, David the king is a fugitive from Absalom, the outwardly fair yet inwardly corrupt—threatening the throne of Israel as the false angel of light seeks today to overthrow the testimony to Divine principles. The hearts of the men of Israel were stolen from David (ver. 6), but there is one whose love for David brings him among the sorrowing few who “pass over toward the way of the wilderness” (ver. 23). Ittai the Gittite is a type of much that might be best in us in our day. He was an “alien from the commonwealth of Israel” (Eph. ii. 12)—a citizen of Gath. The taint of Goliath attached to him. But he was a stranger and an exile from his people, and he joins an exiled king when all seems lost. “Then said the king to Ittai the Gittite, wherefore goest thou also with us? Return to thy place . . . for thou art a stranger, and also an exile . . . should I . . . make thee wander in going up and down with us? seeing I go whither I may, return thou . . .” In verse 21 we have Ittai’s answer to this testing of his love. “And Ittai answered the king and said, As the Lord liveth . . . surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be. And David

said to Ittai, Go and pass over . . . and all the people passed over toward the way of the wilderness" (ver. 23).

It was the strength of a great love that brought Ittai to "pass over" with David "toward the way of the wilderness." The wilderness does not produce the means of life—but there was no place like it since David was there. For, to Ittai, to live was to be with David. It was Goliath who had said "Choose you a man for you . . . if he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants" (I Sam. xvii. 8, 9). In his submission to this service Ittai had found a perfect freedom and a love for David that transformed his life. It is as we accept death as to the world condition that we touch life; for Christ is not in things characterised by the world. Has He not *died* here? Paul knew what it was to have "Passed over toward the way of the wilderness," and only those with that experience can say with truth "To me, to live is Christ." Ittai's name means "living."

In 2 Samuel xix. 24, Mephibosheth is presented as one who mourns the absence of the king whilst being identified with him spiritually in his exile. "And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace." That the king should have his rightful throne—his own HOUSE—is all that occupies the heart of this servant, waiting in his lameness (ver. 26). As to possessions, he has no love for *them*—his whole love is for David. "And the king said . . . Thou and Ziba divide the land. And Mephibosheth said unto the king, Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house" (ver. 29, 30). So Ziba the slanderer, servant of Saul, has his material possession, but the heart of Mephibosheth is overflowing with a joy only known to those for whom the true David is LIFE itself.

It is our privilege to refresh the heart of Christ as David must have been refreshed by the love of Ittai and Mephibosheth. Shimei had cursed him, but David's submission is in his words

to Abishai "It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day" (2 Sam. xvi. 12). Mephibosheth had his part in this consolation. Neither of these people of the past felt he had much to offer—yet one places his life in the hands of a rejected king, and the other abandons all care for his person that he may publicly mourn the absence of David even in the presence of his enemies. These, like the unnamed woman of Luke vii., "loved much." They saw, in the object of their love, one who, despite surrounding animosity, showed a character of life outstandingly apart.

This objective love characterised Ruth the Moabites. She saw in her mother-in-law, Naomi, the influence of the living God working toward repentance and blessing for a poor widow who should never have left Bethlehem-Judah for the idolatrous land of Moab. Chemoth, the degraded god of the Moabites could never have brought about that character of submissive humility which Ruth saw in Naomi. "It grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me" (Ruth i. 13), and she bowed under the rightness of it all, for she had gone among His enemies for a sustenance which had failed her. "Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me?" (ver. 11). "But Ruth clave unto her" (ver. 14) as to a link in a chain that would bind her in love to Naomi's God. Moabites were excluded from the congregation of Jehovah even to the tenth generation (Deut. xxiii. 3). It was a formidable obstacle, yet her love and faith toward the God of Naomi never wavered. "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me" (Ruth i. 16, 17). Going—or lodging, living—or dying, *all* her love was given irrevocably. For to her, to live, was God—the God who was Himself the answer to departure and disaster, the One who recovers His people for Himself.

We realise all too little how sensitive our God is to departure. Nor are we sufficiently aware of the love that makes provision for recovery. In the closing pages of the life of Moses the protective anticipation of the outcome of departure is evident. Divine love, in warning, makes clear the danger and its cause. Three times the prophet speaks of their affections. "To love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest *live*" (Deut. xxx.). "That thou mayest cleave unto Him: for He is thy LIFE" (Deut. xxx. 20). Departure begins with failing love. Recovery comes with love also. Spiritually it is a matter of life—and death. Thus Moses, at the close of his life-work sets before the people he has loved the two great issues, imploring them to choose life.

In our day of responsibility the same divine observation is upon us. The same love warns us. The ancient people of God are still scattered among the nations. For many centuries their witness has been lost. Today, the church, the ecclesia of His desire, has left her first love and is, in consequence, without that unity of testimony which should have been preserved for His glory. Paul speaks for himself as he nears the close of his time of testimony "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." His words must remain a challenge to us all.

EDWARD T. WOOD.



THE ZEAL OF GOD'S HOUSE

In Psalm lxxix. 9, David, under divine inspiration, gives utterance to those remarkable words: "For the zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up." These words are quoted in John ii. 17 in connection with the action the Lord Jesus Christ took in driving out from the temple with a scourge of small cords the sheep and oxen, and those that sold them, pouring out the changers' money, and overthrowing the tables. It was then that He said to them that sold doves: "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise."

The apostle Paul, preaching to the men of Athens, said: "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with

hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed any thing, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us; for in Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts xvii. 24-28).

In Psalm cxix. 139, the Psalmist says: "My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten Thy words," and did not David show the consuming zeal of which he spoke, and was not his zeal recognised and rewarded by God, even to God's allowing David's son Solomon to build Him a house which He conditionally promised to occupy for ever?

Of Solomon it is written when he was born that the Lord loved him, and when He took the first opportunity to converse with him, He offered him the choice of what He should give him. The offer was indeed a love-gift, and was not God pleased when Solomon asked above all things for a wise and understanding heart, in order that he might be able to act suitably to the position in which God had deliberately placed him? So God gave Solomon not only wisdom above all that went before, or followed after, but wealth of which the wisdom and honour given him would enable him to be a wise steward. Who in all human records is wiser than Solomon, or richer than he? Alas! he was only a man after all, and followed the downward course of all manhood in occupation with the gifts rather than the Giver. But has there ever been a temple equal to that which Solomon in all his glory built, or an opportunity like that given to Solomon and his people of having God dwelling with them for ever even in a temple made with hands?

God's Holy Spirit came into this world to build a temple not made with hands, and He is busy even now with its completion. When it is complete, it will be taken right away from this world to heaven (its Builder with it), to come down from heaven in a visible form for God's millennium.

How sad the history of the temple made with hands! Plundered by Shishak, king of Egypt, restored by Joash, cleansed by Hezekiah, polluted by Mannaseh, repaired by Josiah, spoiled by the Chaldeans: then the decree for rebuilding under Cyrus and Darius, commenced in Ezra's day, suspended by order of Artaxerxes, resumed under Darius, finished and dedicated, purified by Nehemiah, and finally made what the Lord Jesus Himself had to call a "den of robbers" and condemned to destruction by Him, though He Himself preached in it, and His disciples continued there daily (Acts ii. 46), while Paul is assaulted in it (Acts xxi. 26), before its destruction, and "its doors were shut."

Prophecy indicates plainly that the temple will be rebuilt and occupied in unbelief till the "abomination of desolation" stands where it ought not, and the terrible judgments of prophecy take place. The "great tribulation" that will providentially be made as short as possible, otherwise no flesh would be saved, will be a testing time for the whole world. Surely true faith at the present time can say confidently that *IT* will not be here then.

G. S. PURNELL.



FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness of sins is one of the subjects of the Gospel. Others are justification, reconciliation and eternal life. All are based upon the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, where the work of redemption was carried out to God's complete satisfaction, so that "He raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory" (I Peter i. 21). The resurrection is the proof of God's satisfaction, and besides that, it provides the believer with "the answer of a good conscience toward God" (I Peter iii. 21).

Now the Lord after His resurrection told His eleven apostles (as we read in Luke xxiv. 46, 47) "Thus it is written, and thus

it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Note: there is no difference between "remission" and "forgiveness": they are used in the New Testament to translate the same Greek word.)

The apostle Peter (in his first epistle, ch. iii. 18) carries on the thought of the "suffering" by saying, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust"; and the apostle Paul in Acts xiii. speaks about the "preaching" in these words: "Be it known to you . . . that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."

Well, if it is preached to men, this is done so that they may believe it and accept it.

Thus we get these three things:—

1. The suffering of Christ for sins (a work done once for all and never to be repeated) is the foundation on which forgiveness of sins is based.
2. This forgiveness of sins is preached for men's acceptance.
3. When accepted, the believer has it without question or doubt, that is, his sins are forgiven and put away out of God's sight.

To make the position abundantly sure, the word of God uses several expressions when speaking of forgiveness, such as, sins covered, put away, blotted out, washed away, remembered no more; and King Hezekiah uses a very striking one in his "writing" after recovering from his sickness (Isa. Ch. xxxviii.), "Thou has cast all my sins behind Thy back."

These expressions show the grace of God and his desire that each believer should know for certain that his sins are purged and washed away in the precious blood of Christ (Rev. i. 5).

(The late) G. KNIGHT.

THE SHEPHERD

1. O Shepherd that gavest Thy life,
 To ransom Thy loved from the dead,
What anguish, what suffering, what strife,
 Encircled Thy sorrow-bowed head!
2. The sword of Jehovah awoke:
 The storm of His judgment arose;
On Thee, Lord, His Shepherd, it broke
 Engulfing Thy soul, at the cross.
3. But Thou, the Good Shepherd wast found
 Obedient and faithful to death;
That Thine should be free Thou was bound
 And mocked with a thorn-plaited wreath.
4. Thy Father had given Thee command
 To lay down Thy life for the sheep;
And none shall be plucked from Thy hand
 Of those that He gave Thee to keep.
5. For them Thou didst willingly give
 Thy soul unto Calvary's night;
To Him, for Whose love Thou didst live,
 Thou gavest new cause for delight.
6. And Who hath requited Thy loss,
 And brought the Great Shepherd again
In answer to death and the cross,
 Save Him that hath called Thee to reign?
7. And soon wilt Thou come for Thine own;
 Yea! soon the Chief Shepherd appear;
His presence our longings shall crown—
 Our Saviour, unspeakably dear.
8. Ah! then shall Thy flock be but one;
 One Shepherd shall lead it above;
He knoweth His sheep and is known
 Of all who have learned of His love.

J. R. DAVIS,

(For the relative scriptures, see inside front cover.)

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from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

BAPTIZED FOR THE DEAD

This phrase, which has been the occasion of much controversy among scholars and others, occurs in the Bible only in I Cor. xv. 29: "Else what shall they do which are *baptized for the dead*, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then *baptized for the dead*?"

There seems, however, little difficulty in the passage when it is considered in the light of its context. In the apostle's argument in the context concerning resurrection, he is showing the futility of Christian life if the death of the body is the end of it. In that case, he says, "we are of all men most miserable" (ver. 19). Then, in the course of his reasoning, he refers to *Christian baptism*, the initiatory act whereby a person takes a place among the confessors of Christ, filling the gap in their ranks caused by those who have fallen asleep in Christ. What do they gain by their *baptism*? If there is no resurrection, those who have died have perished, and those who are *baptized* will perish in like manner. Why then are they *baptized for the dead*? he asks, to show by his question the folly of such a supposition.

In the following verses, 29-32, the apostle continues his argument, and refers to his own sufferings in the service of Christ. What would be the profit to him for all his endurance, if the dead do not rise? It has been pointed out that verses 20-28 form a parenthesis, and that verse 29 is an expansion of verse 18, while similarly verses 30-32 are an enlargement of verse 19.

W. J. HOCKING.

(See *Bible Monthly*: Vol. XXVII., page 238)

LORD'S DAY REFLECTIONS**XXI. The Grave Clothes**

(Read John xx. 3-8)

Whether or not the gospel of John was the last of the New Testament books to be given to the church, there can be no doubt it was written (see Ch. xx. 31) in view of the spread of antichristian teachings which began at an early date to undermine faith in the basic truths of christianity. At a ripe age the apostle John was inspired to supplement the three synoptic records with a fourth, designed specifically that those who read it might "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name."

Of all the fundamental facts of the christian faith, none was more forcefully and persistently challenged than the resurrection. That the Saviour's body had disappeared from the tomb could not be denied, but the explanation which the chief priests and elders at Jerusalem had promulgated, namely, that while the guard were asleep the disciples came by night and stole it away, had persisted to the day when Matthew wrote his gospel. Nevertheless for many years eye-witnesses who had seen the Lord after His resurrection were alive to testify to genuine seekers after the truth. But with the passing of time few of these were left . So John takes up his pen to place on record his own version of the gospel story. Let us examine his reference to the grave clothes.

On receiving the news that the Lord's body was no longer in the tomb, Peter and John had both run to the sepulchre to examine the situation. John outran Peter and came first. (Incidentally, the writer has often wondered why this detail is given. Was there possibly a deliberate slowing up by Peter as the two men drew near? Should Jesus perchance be alive, might not Peter feel some misgiving over facing the One whom he had denied, judging that it would be better to let John go first?) However, when John arrived he stooped down and "saw" the linen clothes lie.

It has often been noticed that John's reference to "stooping down" marks the record as being that of an eye-witness. No

one inventing the story would have thought to include so trivial a circumstance, which has no apparent bearing upon the all-important fact of the resurrection which it is the evangelist's obvious purpose to establish.

But there is further evidence of the care which John took to be completely accurate in his testimony. He tells us that he "saw" the linen clothes, the word so translated indicating a cursory glance. In the next verse, when referring to what his brother apostle did after *entering* the sepulchre, he says "Simon Peter . . . 'seeth' the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself" (ver. 6, 7). Here "seeth" translates a different Greek word which indicates an intent gaze or close survey.

To many of us there may appear to be but a shade of difference between the meanings of these two words, but John makes the distinction between his own action and Peter's, and this shows the care he took to be strictly accurate in his record. He would not claim for himself the same degree of careful scrutiny that he ascribes to his brother apostle.

Undoubtedly the apostle recalls this circumstance of the grave clothes in order to expose the absurdity of the story which the chief priests had put round. No company of persons stealthily making away with the Saviour's body would have left the grave clothes behind. There would have been neither time nor reason for such an unnecessary operation as their removal. Moreover such clothes had some value, even though small; why *not* take them? Besides, would they not be useful, if not essential, for carrying the body? Furthermore, even if they had removed the clothes, would the disciple-thieves, for the success of whose plan non-discovery was vital, have risked being caught in the very act by delaying their departure to wrap together the napkin in a place by itself? How convincing the facts as given by this eye-witness are, that Jesus rose from the dead in the splendour of a mighty triumph, demonstrating that He had no further need of grave clothes!

The contrast between John's description of what took place at the raising of Lazarus, and the details he gives of the

Lord's own resurrection, is too striking to be missed. Lazarus came forth "bound hand and foot" (John xi. 44), and was dependent upon those standing round to loose him and let him go. Not so with our Saviour: He rose from the tomb in the glorious might of His own power, discarding the grave clothes, and in majestic dignity wrapping together the napkin that had been about His head, laying it down in a place by itself! How completely He was master of the whole occasion!

The blessed Figure portrayed by John is beyond all human praise. We bow in wonder at His feet.

E. A. PETTMAN.



NEHEMIAH'S CALL TO SERVICE

Read: Nehemiah i. 1-ii. 8: Acts xiii. 1-4

(Notes of an address given in London, 16/5/59)

The spiritual conditions of Nehemiah's day were so similar to those of our own that we may expect to find in his book lessons applicable to ourselves.

Despite the measure of revival recorded by Ezra, the condition of things at Jerusalem remained one of lamentable ruin. The report that Hanani and his friends brought was sorrowful and depressing, and its effect upon Nehemiah personally was overwhelming. He sat down; he wept; he mourned; he fasted, and he prayed before the God of heaven. What could he or any man do in the face of such hopelessly chaotic conditions?

Nehemiah took the only course open to him and sought God's intervention in a carefully worded prayer, the remarkable terms of which show that he had been studying such portions of the word of God as were available to him. He addressed God as the "great and terrible" One, and in so doing he was undoubtedly guided by Deuteronomy vii., which describes in these terms the character that God would maintain towards Israel's enemies provided His people were obedient to Him.

But the nation had been unfaithful. So that it was necessary for Nehemiah to confess the sins which "both I and my father's house have sinned." How essential that the people of God today should confess in detail the sins which have brought them to their present condition of humiliating powerlessness!

Nehemiah bases his appeal to God on something which God Himself had said (vv. 8-10). Is not this the secret of prevailing prayer, which others before him such as Jacob, Moses, Jehoshaphat and Daniel had discovered? If God's help can be sought on the ground of His own clear word, may not His answer be confidently expected?

But was there nothing Nehemiah could do to help apart from his prayer to God? The last words of chapter i. seem to indicate where the difficulty lay so far as he was concerned. He says "For I was the king's cup-bearer." Filled with zeal for the cause of God upon earth, and breaking his heart because it languished, Nehemiah was bogged down by a secular calling from which there appeared to be no release. How frustrated he felt! Nehemiah was a man of no mean achievement. The post he occupied was one of great responsibility and honour in the king's household. But the fact was that those gifts of his which could have been devoted to the service of Jehovah and His people were being used in the employ of an earthly monarch who monopolised his time and energies. And the work of restoring Jerusalem, rebuilding its walls and setting up its gates, was a task which required all the time and talent of such as could and would devote themselves to it.

Do not the assemblies of God's people today suffer because there are so few who devote themselves wholly to the teaching, shepherding, building up and edifying of the people of God, not to mention evangelising in the world? Should we not challenge ourselves as to this, some as to whether they are making full use of the gift the Lord has given them, and others as to whether they are prepared to recognise those whom the Lord has gifted, and to do what they can to enable such to exercise their ministry as fully as the need of the moment requires!

Some four months elapsed before there was any development. Nehemiah was still pursuing his normal avocation, when king Artaxerxes noticed his butler's pre-occupation. He carried round with him an unmistakable air of sadness, and the king, who was naturally concerned as to the efficient carrying out of butler duties, finally spoke to Nehemiah about it.

Bearing in mind the despotic power wielded by these ancient monarchs, it was no light matter to be called to account in that way. One wrong word and Nehemiah might lose his head! No wonder he has to admit being sore afraid! But Nehemiah does not hide his light on that account—"Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my father's sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?" Like his noble predecessor Moses, he preferred to suffer affliction with the people of God, and esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of this world. So with commendable courage he takes his stand before the king, leaving his life in the hands of his God.

"For what dost thou make request"? enquires the king. This was the supreme crisis of Nehemiah's life, and it found him in close communion with God, for at the end of verse 4 (Ch. ii.) we read these very fine and significant words: "So I prayed to the God of heaven." There is no suggestion that Nehemiah withdrew to his private apartments to pray. There, as he stood before the king, knowing as he must have done that his destiny was in the balance, he lifted up his heart in silent prayer to the God of heaven. What an example! Then with but a moment's hesitation he gave his answer, asking that he might be released from his court duties in order to devote his whole strength and energy to the cause of his God.

Restraining as a man should any ambition to take up whole-time work for the Lord as an escape from the routine of secular employment such as is undoubtedly the path of God for the great majority of His people (see I Cor. vii. 20-24), let each ask himself whether he would be willing to make the

choice Nehemiah did if the Lord's call came to him. Work for God today calls for harder toil than any human employer would expect, and offers less material reward than any secular employer would dare to offer. The service of the Lord as a whole-time occupation must surely not be taken up unless a man is prepared for disappointment and misunderstanding, not by the world around (which is to be expected in any case) but from fellow-believers, and unless he is prepared to go on with God alone, looking for no reward but the Lord's own "Well done"! which will come to him, if he deserves it, when he arrives in heaven.

It is noticeable that on this occasion, as was usually the case, God chose a man who had been successful in the duties of this life, rather than a ne'er-do-well who turns to the Lord's service only after having been a failure in some other calling. Moses, David, Elisha, Daniel and the apostle Paul are further examples. So the way opens up for Nehemiah because he is in the line of God's will, and he goes on to take up the work that God had for him, leading others also into fields of fruitful service for God.

The question may well be asked, however, How are the servants of the Lord called for special service in the present day? It is submitted that Acts xiii. 1-4 throws light on this.

In christendom today there are two main ways in which these things are brought about. There are those who believe the call of God comes to individuals, and that the individual's own affirmation that he has received the call is enough. The plea is that so long as a man is prepared to declare that he has been called, no one may question the fact. Many an unsatisfactory experience shows how unreliable this method of "self-choice" may prove. Moreover, would any truly humble-minded man, realising the exacting requirements of the Lord's service, push himself forward? (cf. the case of Moses: Exodus iii. 11-iv. 7).

On the other hand, there are those who by general agreement undertake to select and ordain other persons to serve

the Lord. Clearly such feel competent to shoulder the responsibility, and no doubt carry out their task with sincere honesty of purpose, and maybe, no small measure of human ability. But are the results of this method any more assured than in the case of "self-choice"?

Does not Scripture teach that it is the Lord, and the Lord only, Who gives gifts to His church, and that it is the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit only, who divides to every man severally as He will? We do not, and we cannot, accept the practice of human ordination.

In Acts xiii. it was evidently the Lord's intention that the gospel should be preached further afield. Who was to go to preach it? Shall the church at Antioch hold a council (or brothers' meeting) to decide who should go, or is a call for volunteers to be made? The answer is, Neither! It is distinctly stated that the Spirit of God said "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." There were a number of prophets and teachers at Antioch ministering to the Lord, but it was the Holy Ghost who made the selection, and sent forth those chosen. It is true the church laid their hands upon Barnabas and Saul, but who will dispute that they did so as an expression of their acquiescence in the Spirit's choice and of fellowship, and not as conferring authority upon the apostles. And lest there should be any vestige of doubt as to this, verse 4 reasserts "So they, being sent forth by the *Holy Ghost*."

As to how far others in the church at Antioch were concerned, little is said, but the emphasis on "fasting" (verse 2, and again in verse 3) should be noted.

May the Lord direct us more into His holy will as to these matters while He is pleased to leave us here!

SECURITY AND SERVICE

The following enquiry has been received—How are we to understand Paul's keeping under his body lest he should become a castaway (I Cor. ix. 27), compared with his assurance regarding himself in the future, as he expressed it in 2 Tim. i. 12?

No doubt the difficulty in the mind of the querist is that the passage in I Cor. ix. 27 appears on the face of it to suggest that Paul was uncertain as to his own final acceptance, and that it is therefore antagonistic not only to the text in Timothy, but also to many unqualified statements in other parts of the New Testament that the believer in Christ has eternal life and will never perish. It is hoped, therefore, that an examination of the apostle's words may prove helpful to those who are not clear as to their meaning and bearing.

There is, of course, no contradiction between the two passages, and believing in the full inspiration of the word, we dare not suggest even that such a thing is possible. The scriptures cannot be broken (John x. 35).

Nor, in a laudable zeal to show that there is no contradiction, is there any need to weaken the force of the words we find written in them, so as to produce thereby an apparent or superficial agreement. Even if we do not *fully* understand the exact bearing of all God has given, surely we may still say, "Let God be true," and meanwhile wait humbly and patiently for enlightenment, if and when He is pleased to grant it.

(1) First of all, let us consider what Paul wrote to the Corinthians. The text in question reads, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." There is no substantial difference in the translation of the Revisers or of J.N.D. The latter renders it as follows: "But I buffet my body, and lead it captive, lest [after] having preached to others I should be myself rejected."

What meaning is to be assigned to the word variously translated "castaway," or "rejected," or "a reprobate"?

We shall find that there is no sound reason for interpreting it in any other sense than that of being exposed to final perdition. The same word is used by the apostle in his Second Epistle when he deals with the demand of some at Corinth that he should produce a proof that Christ was speaking in him. He says, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates"? (2 Cor. xiii. 5; and carefully note the parenthesis between the words "Christ speaking in me," and the beginning of verse 5). Paul's answer to his critics is complete: they were the fruit of his ministry of Christ in Corinth, for if this was not the case, there was only the terrible alternative—they were reprobates, those who had made a false and vain profession, and would be repudiated in consequence.

Turning back to the passage in the First Epistle, it may be helpful to observe how this interpretation of the word in a full and final sense agrees with the context. And it will be seen that the subject of which the apostle treats throughout the whole of the ninth chapter is that of his own service to the Lord, and particularly that which he had rendered in their midst. Some in that assembly appear to have spoken very disparagingly of him. Jealous lest the honour of Christ's name might suffer through these public charges, the apostle defends himself. He shows what were his rights as a servant of the Lord, although when among them in person he did not take advantage of these rights as he was perfectly entitled to do (verses 12, 15, 18). His service in that wealthy city was characterised by intense self-denial. He made himself independent of any financial help from his hearers, and no opportunity was given them to exercise any form of patronage over his preaching. He became all things to all men, and all things that he did were for the sake of the gospel, that he and they might be fellow-partakers of it (verses 22, 23).

At the end of the chapter, Paul takes up figures, borrowed from the public games, which would be familiar to the inhabitants of Corinth, and he applies them to his immediate subject, the service of Christ (verses 24-27). He points out how self-denial is essential to success in earthly contests where a cor-

ruptible crown is offered to a single winner; it is equally indispensable in striving for the incorruptible crown which is not for one only, but for all who run in the spiritual race (verses 24, 25).

In the following verse (26), the apostle specifies two things with regard to his own service for the Lord, viz:—(1) it was definite, with an assured purpose before him: “I therefore so run, not as uncertainly”; and (ii) it was with manifest results, not mere gesticulation: “so fight I, not as one that beateth the air.”

These qualities had a direct application to the manner of his preaching the gospel, upon which he was dilating. Why had he saddled himself with the obligation to work with his own hands at tent-making (Acts xviii. 3) when there was no real need to do so among so many well-to-do people as were found at Corinth? It was his habit of self-abnegation as a saint and servant of Christ. It was part of the self-renunciation of one who had crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts (Gal. v. 24), and hated his own life in order to be a disciple of the Lord (Luke xiv. 26; see also 1 Thess. ii. 9; 2 Thess. iii. 8. 9).

Then the apostle proceeds with the verse now under special examination. In it he answers the question, Why should he, the foremost of the apostles, introduce the habit of self-restraint into his public service? Was it not sufficient to exercise it in his private walk? Paul accordingly shows that in service, even where exceptional, like his own, there is no evidence of eternal security, and that the effects of an undisciplined life are not to be excused on the ground of zealous labours on behalf of others.

This principle he illustrates by applying it to his own case. He says, “But I discipline my body and lead [it] captive lest by any means having preached to others I myself should be reprobate” (W.K.). The truth he proclaimed to others everywhere he applied unreservedly to himself in self-judgment: there was always the *possibility* of preaching to others and yet be lost after all. Judas the apostle is a solemn case in point—

a preacher and a miracle-worker, yet a son of perdition. High privileges are no substitute for an exercised conscience which buffets the body and leads it captive. Those who preach to others must exhibit the reality of their personal standing before God by a consistent godly walk. Otherwise, they will be but evil servants whom the Lord said would be finally rejected and condemned as hypocrites and unbelieving (Matt. xxiv. 48-51; Luke xii. 45-48).

This truth that holy living is an essential accompaniment of service was of special value for the correction of the selfishness and worldly-mindedness found in the saints at Corinth. And to emphasise it the more strongly, he with rare tact applies the principle to himself, as in an earlier part of this Epistle, he had used Apollos and himself "in a figure" to illustrate another truth (I Cor. iv. 6). Even the adversaries at Corinth could not object to the general application of this standard, if Paul stated that he himself was subject to the same rule as the rest of the Lord's servants. In conformity with the structure of the whole chapter, the recurrence of "I" and "we" is continued to its climax in the last verse. In the next chapter the subject of unreal profession is pursued, but treated differently, examples of "castaways" or "reprobates" being cited from the Old Testament history of Israel in the wilderness (x. 1-12). He finally records the solemn warning to them and to us, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

We believe, then, that the full force of the warning in this text (ix. 27) cannot be appreciated apart from accepting the word "castaway" in the broadest sense. When the subject is that of the complete rejection of any one's service, the apostle adds, "But *he himself* shall be saved" (I Cor. iii. 15). Here the person himself may be rejected: "lest . . . I myself should be a castaway." At the same time we learn in the Second Epistle Paul did not regard himself as a "castaway" or "reprobate" (2 Cor. xiii. 6).

In the passage there does not arise any question of justification by faith, of eternal life, of being in the Good Shepherd's

hands, of sealing by the Holy Spirit. The question is one of service, and service is no qualification for acceptance before God. Service is nothing before Him apart from the love of a renewed heart. Taking up himself again as an example, Paul said to this same assembly, that though he spoke with the tongues of men and of angels, had the gift of prophecy, and understood all mysteries, could remove mountains, bestowed all his goods to feed the poor, gave his body to be burned, it was nothing and would profit him nothing with out the love which is of God (xiii. 1-3). It is the love which condemns sin in the flesh even as God has done, and walks after the Spirit, which counts in His sight (Rom. viii. 1-4).

(2) The beautiful passage from Timothy hardly calls for many words in this connection. It breathes the fullest confidence on the part of Paul in the Lord, for whom he was suffering as a herald of the gospel. Writing after many eventful years full of rich experiences of the faithfulness of Christ, he confesses his inward conscious knowledge of the One whom he had believed and whom he still believed. Paul's confidence in Him was the firm and immovable conviction that He is able to guard securely what he had deposited with Him until that day. The text is: "For which cause also I suffer these things; but I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep for that day the deposit I have entrusted to Him" (New Trans.).

It is certain Paul had entrusted to the Lord Jesus his all—spirit, soul and body, and everything pertaining thereto. And he emphasises the power and faithfulness of the Lord to keep that deposit against the day of manifestation and glory (*cf.* Jude 24).

The difference between the two passages is that the prominent thought in Timothy is the guardianship of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in Corinthians the responsibility of the servant of the Lord.

W. J. HOCKING

(From THE BIBLE MONTHLY—February, 1927).

IN CHRIST

O glorious change! That I, who once was dead,
Should live in Christ, and Christ in me should live;
And one at last, who once His presence fled,
Should learn His love, and grace on grace receive.

No inward doubts! No darkness now within;
No dread of law, no trembling fears abide;
No night of woe, no shrinking, and no sin!
These all have fled, since Christ the Lord has died.

No cleavage now, no distance now from God!
Christ's place is mine—the place of God's own Son;
Mine, every right that follows from His blood;
And mine the life, His cross triumphant won.

O sov'reign love! That gives me such a place;
O sov'reign grace! That brings me, cleansed, so nigh;
All freely given, to remedy my case,
And raise the creature to a sonship's tie.

Nor only cleansed, but freely justified!
As though my guilt, my sin had never been;
Brought nigh to God, at peace, and sanctified—
Such! Such! the change His blood has wrought from sin.

Precious the Love, that thus its all bestowed,
For such as I, its object, to uplift!
O wondrous stream! that thus spontaneous flowed,
And moved alike, the Giver and the Gift.

And this not all—the Son's, the Father's love—
The Spirit now within this temple dwells;
Leading in truth, until caught up above,
'Tis mine to share the glory that excels.

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL

As we enter upon the last month of another year, we wish once again to acknowledge the goodness of God which has permitted the publication of this Magazine to be maintained.

We are more than ever impressed with the duty which lies upon us to uphold the authority of the Scriptures, and to provide a channel by which Bible-lovers may share with one another the fruit of their study of the word of God, thus building one another up in our most holy faith.

This issue includes the final instalment of "Notes of Bible Readings in the Book of Genesis." We trust these articles have not only helped readers in the understanding of this particular book, but will also have suggested further lines of study as well as themes for fruitful meditation.

It is possible that some of our readers may wish to possess the complete series of these Notes, and require certain back numbers of the Magazine for this purpose. The Publisher will be pleased to supply these to the limit of his surplus stock if early application is made direct to him.

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." (The Apostle Paul—Acts xx. 32)

FIRST PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH LIFE

VI. THE BREAKING OF BREAD

(Read Acts ii. 42)

It is by no means without significance that the church engaged in the breaking of bread from the earliest days of its existence. As yet the formal worship of the temple was continuing as previously, but those who believed in the Lord Jesus instinctively recognised that what the Lord Himself had instituted in the upper room in Jerusalem, and had been taught them by the apostles, was a proper replacement for Jewish ritual. So they continued stedfastly, we are told, in the breaking of bread.

This is perhaps the more remarkable when it is borne in mind that the early Christians did not break away at once from all the established religious practices of the nation in which they had been brought up. That came later, as the new and better things of the Christian faith became more fully understood. Acts ii. 46 speaks of their "continuing daily with one accord in the temple," and in chapter iii. 1, Peter and John were proceeding together to the temple at the hour of prayer when they stopped at the Beautiful gate to heal a crippled man, who subsequently "entered with them *into* the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God" (ver. 8).

It is a matter for great thankfulness that the Lord Jesus Himself selected the memorial to Himself that He required. This was in full harmony with what Jehovah did when the people of Israel were delivered from the bondage of Egypt. Exodus xii. makes it clear that *He* chose the way and the day, the ordinance and the time it was to be observed, whereby the children of Israel would remember what He had done for them. Verses 14-20, 24-27 and 43-49 show the importance which Jehovah attached to the annual passover memorial service.

After the people had passed over Jordan, it was again Jehovah Himself who gave detailed instructions as to the memorial Joshua was to erect to mark the precise spot where

“all the people were clean passed over.” Perhaps it was because of the danger that Israel might behave in an idolatrous fashion that Jehovah allowed no opportunity for this. Bearing in mind, too, the wealth that had been forthcoming when Aaron made the golden calf (see Exodus xxxii. 2-4), is it not striking that when Israel had passed over Jordan, the only memorial Jehovah would permit was a rugged heap of stones from the bed of the river, something which would remind them of their worthlessness and helplessness, and would in no way minister to their pride (Joshua iv. 1-9)?

Surely it is in line with this that our Saviour, in the solemn night of His betrayal—something which showed the depths to which human nature can sink—gathered His own around Him for the last time before He suffered, and well before they had any time to devote *their* thoughts to any such thing and conceive their own ideas, made perfectly clear for all time what *His own* wishes were! We invite our readers to compare the general practice of christendom today, involving much that is stamped with the glory of man upon it, and much also that is positively idolatrous, with the simple institution of the upper room.

The whole range of Mosaic ritual was open for the Lord to choose from had it been His wish to adapt an existing religious rite to His purpose. Instead, however, He selected a practice from the intimacy of family life, and gave it the significance He had in mind for it.

Jeremiah xvi. 7 refers to the ancient Jewish custom of breaking bread in times of mourning for the departed. Concerning this one has written as follows:—

“At the death of a relative or of one loved and respected the mourners first fasted as a sign of their deep sorrow (cf. 2 Sam. i. 12; iii. 35; xii. 16, 17). The fast was then followed by a “feast,” prepared for those friends who gathered in sympathy to comfort those who mourned. Only a simple meal of bread and wine, however, was provided in “the house of mourning,” for it was not to be regarded as a “house of feasting,” or banqueting (see Eccl. vii. 2). The bread was “the bread of mourners” (Hos. ix. 4; see also Ezek. xxiv. 17), and the wine is called in the text “the cup of consolation” for those “of a heavy heart” (Prov. xxxi. 6).

(W. J. HOCKING—see Bible Monthly, Vol. 18, page 43).

It should be noted also that the Lord Jesus chose the passover night in which to decree the memorial to Himself. In this way He marked in an impressive manner the "change from the great central and fundamental feast of Israel. A new and different feast was begun for Christians."

As if to remove any possible doubt that the practice of the early church, clearly in obedience to apostolic teaching, was in accordance with the will of the Lord Jesus, the church was given confirmation through the apostle Paul. I Corinthians xi. 23-26 reads:—

"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come."

It is true that Paul was writing to correct certain reprehensible conduct at Corinth in connection with the celebration of the Lord's supper. But if there had been anything amiss with the practice itself, this would have been the time to say so. What he finds fault with, in fact, was the Corinthians' unworthy *manner* of eating and drinking, whereby they incurred the Lord's unmistakable discipline.

Believers today may rejoice that the sad circumstances which called for the apostle's rebuke provided the occasion for the truth as to the breaking of bread to be confirmed.

The Lord had in no way changed His mind as to what He desired His own to do. His command in the upper room on the dark night of His betrayal still held good. And Paul links with it the thrilling thought of the Lord's own personal return—"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death *till He come.*"

May those who know in this day the joy of carrying out the Lord's wish in the Lord's own way, emulate those of Pentecostal days who "continued stedfastly . . . in breaking of bread."

E. A. PETTMAN.

ISRAEL'S ENEMIES IN THE LAST DAYS

In this article we resume the subject of the Lord's dealings with the rebellious nations at His coming again. Now, many scriptures tell us of the hatred of the nations for Israel; so, when God would again take up Israel as His chosen people, He must judge their enemies.

However, God still has a controversy with Israel, and the nations will thus be used as the instruments of His judgments. "And 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 shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on My name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is My people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God" (Zech. xiii. 8, 9).

We will therefore glance at the scripture teaching as to Israel's enemies in the last days. The "little horn" of Daniel viii. 9 (not to be confused with the "little horn" of Dan. vii., who is the Beast) is one whose activity is prominent at this time, although part of the chapter also refers to an earlier oppressor of Israel in the days of the Maccabees, the notorious Antiochus Epiphanes.

But at "the time of the end" this king of bold countenance, and understanding riddles, shall arise. By what seems to be a combination of force with cunning and deceit, he will cause great destruction among the people of Israel, even standing up, in a manner not explained, against the Lord Himself. But he will be cut off by no human agency.

Then there are the King of the South of Daniel xi. 40-45, and the King of the North. These titles point to territories south and north respectively of Palestine, namely Egypt and perhaps Syria. At this present time these two countries are in league, but when the prophecy is fulfilled, though both will attack Israel, they will also be opposed to one another.

Daniel's prophecy describes the whirlwind assault of the King of the North against Israel's wilful king, whom we have

seen to be identical with the Antichrist, and his subjugation of many countries including Egypt itself. Though no details are given, the prophecy gives a vivid impression of great destruction in his train. Then, after an interval, he returns to Israel "with great fury to destroy," but comes to his end there in the Holy Land with none to help him.

A number of scriptures speak of "the Assyrian" in language which, although largely fulfilled by Sennacherib in the day, of King Hezekiah, yet leaves much which points to another Assyrian foe of Israel at the time of the end. In particulars we remember that Sennacherib was not permitted to attack Jerusalem (see Isaiah^xxxxvii. 33-36) whereas Isaiah x. tells us that God will use the Assyrian to punish Jerusalem. But when he has accomplished "His whole work" of judgment on the city, He will then destroy the boastful instrument He has employed (ver. 12).

Again, whereas Sennacherib was slain in his own land, the future Assyrian leader will be destroyed in the land of Israel (Isaiah xiv. 24-26).

Still another enemy is described in Ezekiel xxxviii, xxxix. Gog, "chief prince of Meshech and Tubal," will be accompanied by a great assemblage of nations when he comes up to attack "the land of unwalled villages; . . . to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates," but he will meet with utter destruction from the Lord Himself.

Lastly, Zechariah xii. and xiv. describes a siege of Jerusalem by *all* the nations. The city will be taken, and half its population removed into exile. Why matters are left in this way we are not told, but before another attack can be made, the Lord will interfere on behalf of His sorely tried people. This is not just providential action, but "His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives," indicating His physical presence.

Thus on the one hand we have in Rev. xix. a symbolic account of the Lord's appearing from heaven to destroy the

Beast and the kings of the earth; on the other these various foes of Israel, all of whom are judged *in* the land, and the multitude of nations, against whom the Lord goes forth to fight.

Many attempts have been made to coalesce these various accounts, and it is here that uncertainties arise. We need to be careful that we do not force the scriptures into a pattern of our own devising, which tends to hinder our learning anything fresh. The King of the North and the Assyrian are deemed to be identical, both attacking Israel from the same direction, and being similar in their devastating progress. This may well be correct. The "little horn" of Daniel viii. is also identified with these. This seems to follow because the little horn and the King of the North originate in one of the kingdoms into which Alexander's empire was divided (see Dan. viii. 21, 22 and xi. 4, 5, 6). Also the dominion of the notorious Antiochus Epiphanes—the historical representative of the "little horn," lay mainly to the north of Palestine, so that he might well have been entitled "King of the North."

The invasion of Gog, on the other hand, so graphically described by Ezekiel, is probably later than that of the King of the North. First he is a leader of a company of nations, which the other is not, and he perishes in the land of Israel without any of that passing on and returning that mark the onslaught of the King of the North. Also he comes up when Israel is at rest in the land, dwelling securely. Can this be, until the Lord has subdued the enemies surrounding them? It appears therefore that Gog (probably Russia) is the last enemy to be subdued.

Now from the facts that the King of the North attacks Israel's godless king, with whom the Beast is allied; and that "all the nations" besiege and take Jerusalem, it has been deduced that the nations form a confederacy with the King of the North at their head, but opposed to the Beast and the western powers. This view, however, involves the reduction of the scriptural term "all the nations of the earth" to the

eastern nations only. It also assumes that the Assyrian leader has many nations with him. But where does scripture teach this? Psalm lxxxiii. is quoted, but Edom, Moab and Ammon are there part of the confederacy, whereas the King of the North endeavours to subdue these countries but they escape his hand (Dan. xi. 41).

Hence, however difficult it may be to piece together what the word reveals, let us hold simply to that revelation. Stranger things have happened than that bitter foes should join together to attack the people of God!

It is in no way necessary to suppose that the total forces of the nations will be engaged against Jerusalem—representative forces alone—a kind of “United Nations” army—would fulfil the scripture prophecy. The point is that all the nations will be there.

One objection which might be raised to this simple acceptance of the words of the prophecy is that the Antichrist, as Israel’s king, will himself be in control of Jerusalem. No doubt this is so up to the end of the tribulation. But the sudden cutting short of that tribulation could well involve the giving up of control of the city. We cannot tell what regroupings of the nations will take place. We know that Satan’s one effort is to destroy Israel, and it is he who will gather all the nations against Jerusalem.

But when God’s judgment of the city is complete, He turns on her foes! The Lord will go forth and fight against these nations.

Thus we have His appearing from heaven to destroy the Beast and the Antichrist and the kings of the earth, gathered, apparently, at Armageddon, and His going forth to destroy the armies gathered against Jerusalem.

It appears to involve unprofitable speculation to discuss the interval between these actions, but this much is plain. When the Lord turns His hand upon the armies attacking

Jerusalem, He acts partly by bringing plagues upon the foes of Israel (Zech. xiv. 12-15), and partly by strengthening His people against their foes. And Jerusalem proves to be "a burdensome stone" for all the peoples. All who lift it will grievously hurt themselves.

The spiritual restoration of Israel then follows. It is then evident that the Lord Jesus will act through His restored people in the punishment of some of her most inveterate enemies. Thus Micah iv. 13 "Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many people." And again "The remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep . . . thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off" (v. 8, 9).

Some of the nations are especially mentioned, and their modern representatives will doubtless be found among some of the Arab peoples who even now desire Israel's destruction. There is Edom (Obadiah 18, 19) and Moab (Zephaniah ii. 9-10) and also Ammon in Isaiah xi. 14.

In this connection we may again refer to the double type of the Lord Jesus as God's King, in David and in Solomon. In the David-type the Lord will *through* Israel subdue all her enemies. Gog alone seems to be destroyed by the Lord Himself. And then He will reign as the Solomon-type, as Prince of Peace. Then will the words of Psalm xli. be fulfilled: "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire."

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN.



NOTES OF A BIBLE READING ON GENESIS XLIX AND L

There is a great difference between Jacob's parting messages in chapter xlix. and the bestowing of the birthright by Abraham and Isaac. Till now the heir has been one; but

Jacob's sons all have an interest in the fulfilment of the promise. Messiah's root (Judah) did not coincide with the receivers of the birthright and blessing (Joseph and his sons).

xlix. 1, 2. In Deut. xxxiii., where Moses reviews the tribes, God's mercies to His people are more apparent: blessing is expressed for each tribe named, and exultation in the Lord—though in the preceding chapter their sins are dealt with. In this chapter the immediate future is dark. Jacob did bless them at the end (ver. 28), but what shall befall them in the latter days (ver. 1) is prominent. We thus have here an outline of the whole of the nation's history, particularly its closing times: Judah's history, however, is traced only until Shiloh come. Jacob had to show them the root of wickedness in their hearts—corruption in Reuben, and violence in Simeon and Levi, the sins for which the flood was sent. But when sin is recognised and judged, blessing can come by Judah.

Verses 3, 4. The past is taken into consideration: for Reuben it is disgraceful. Leah called him, "Behold, a son," but, like Cain ("gotten from the Lord"), he proved a sad disappointment. He was unstable like (bubbling) water, and had not learned submission to God's law; but being deprived of the birthright taught him a lesson. Reuben is a type of the nation of Israel setting out well ("my firstborn," ver. 3; cf. Ex. iv. 22), but failing terribly. The golden calf was a forfeiting of their every right: had not Moses stood in the breach (a type of Christ), they would have been blotted out.

Verses 5-7. These sons of promise, Simeon and Levi, are given an opportunity to repent (see Jer. xviii. 6-8). They were partners in crime (xxxiv. 25), and that confederacy needed to be broken. Levi means joined, but in these verses we read, "Be not united—divide—scatter." Though the words, "Cursed be their anger," appear, they will be blessed when they can say it of themselves. The parting between Simeon and Levi is very marked in the incident of Baal-peor (Num. xxv.), which probably led to Simeon's omission from Deut. xxxiii. In Ex. xxxii. 26, Levi answered the challenge, Who is on the Lord's side? and therefore found a place for repentance.

Verses 8-12. Jacob plays on the meaning of Judah's name, as on those of Zebulon, Dan, Gad and Joseph (for Ephraim means fruitful). This is not merely poetical: God goes back to beginnings. Judah would receive ungrudging approval from his brethren and command their subjection. His great power over the enemy is illustrated in Judges i. His brethren's praise may be because he condemned himself, and offered to remain as a slave instead of Benjamin. In this he was a type of the Lord.

The lion is regarded in ver. 9 as a whelp (King as the Lion of Judah is, He is meek), as a lion couched (His strength in rest, preserving peace), and as an old lioness (jealously guarding His young ones).

The "sceptre" (not necessarily kingly) in ver. 10, denotes rule; the "lawgiver," observance of God's will. The royal line was kept up, though not actually reigning, and the Jews did not fall into idolatry even after the captivity. They had semi-independence until they were taxed and incorporated in the Roman Empire in the time of Christ, when they declared they had no king but Caesar. "Until Shiloh come" is the clearest indication in Genesis of Messiah's advent. Shiloh, the Giver, or Man, of peace is not yet known, but the line has been narrowed to Judah, and now we have His name and character.

The "foal" and "ass's colt" (ver. 11) are an early reference to Matt. xxi., whilst tethering to a vine and washing in wine are references to the abundance when Messiah reigns. Judah's blessing goes on to the millennium (cf. "To him shall the gathering of the people be," ver. 10). Does "He washed his clothes in the blood of grapes" (ver. 11) hint at the final judgments of the earth?

In Psalm lxxviii. 9-11, 67-72, Judah takes the place of Ephraim, who showed himself unworthy. Judah had lost his staff and signet ring (chap. xxxviii.), and though God in grace restored it to him, in the meantime all honour was given to Joseph.

Verses 13-15. In Judah we have Shiloh coming, but rejected, and becoming, like Joseph, separate from his brethren, hidden till He comes again; meanwhile Zebulon and Issachar represent Israel mingling and trafficking with the nations. He sees that rest is good, more exalted thoughts pass from his mind, and he is content to come under tribute. What a picture of the present state of the nation! Since Shiloh came, the sceptre and lawgiver have departed, but they are getting earthly good.

Verses 16-18. There is something sinister about Dan: the son of one of his descendants blasphemed, and had to be put to death (Lev. xxiv. 10-14): Dan had craft as well as strength; the tribe was among the first to set up organised idolatry in Israel (Judg. xviii. 30): under Jeroboam, Dan had one of the altars which made Israel to sin (I Kings xii. 30): in Chronicles, the genealogy of Dan is omitted. It is possible that the Anti-christ will rise from this tribe, and that he will be a special tool of Satanic power (cf. the serpent, ver. 17) in that day. See also his omission from the tribes in Rev. vii.; though he will not be entirely wiped out from blessing (cf. Ezek. xlvi. 1, 32). Like Iscariot, the son of perdition, the man of sin is an individual, not the whole tribe. Some of them supported David (I Chron. xii. 35, 38) and made him king, so there is salvation even for Dan. Evil reached its height in their idolatry. Jacob, as it were, sighs (ver. 18), and thereafter the whole chapter is blessing. When all is darkest, Christ will come and deliver His people from their sins and their enemies.

Verses 19-21. An intermediate fulfilment of ver. 19 is found in Jer. xlix. 1, and of ver. 21 in Judg. iv. 5. Barak of Naphtali delivered Israel, but Deborah incited him, and celebrated the victory in song.

Verses 22-26. Joseph is a type of the Lord, Who receives His brethren in repentance at the end (Zech. xii. 10-14): then He will grant blessings unbounded (ver. 26). Judah had enemies (ver. 8); there are none for Joseph except his brethren, and to them he was reconciled.

Moses blessed Ephraim and Manasseh in Deut. xxxiii., signifying fruitfulness in the land, but Jacob blessed Joseph,

representing Christ as fruit for God. Joseph's fruitfulness is a type of the true Vine, Who, when rejected by the people, became the Vine bearing all His fruit for God. Moreover, His fruit was not confined to the Jews—His "branches run over the wall." Though rejected, nothing impaired His glory and might (ver. 23, 24). As the shepherd, Joseph was the nourisher of his people, and provided bread during the famine: in this he is a type of the great spiritual Blessor of His earthly and heavenly people. Moreover, as a stone, Joseph was a foundation for Israel, and spoke of the Corner Stone to come. Yet the Antitype was not of Joseph; He was "from thence" (ver. 24).

Jacob speaks of God as the mighty God of Jacob, Whom he met at Peniel; as the Almighty, Whom Abraham knew; whilst he looks forward to Him Who was "separate from His brethren," an unmistakable reference to the Lord Jesus.

Verse 27. This verse speaks of the millennial cleansing of the earth. "Divide the spoil" (cf. Is. liii. 12). Admonition is not pleasant, but it is essential for repentance, without which blessing cannot be received.

Chapter 1. Joseph did not ask to be taken at once to Canaan (ver. 24), though Jacob did (ver. 5). Joseph had faith that God would bring His people back. The brethren's fear at Jacob's death (ver. 15) reminds us of xxvii. 41. They had not understood Joseph's heart, in spite of what he said and did in xlv. 4-8, 14, 15. But there had been no real confession by them: now, however, they ask for forgiveness (ver. 17): the work of repentance is complete. Before, he had quieted their fears, but their consciences were not set at rest. So it is of great value when a soul expresses repentance for its sins. We may be too ready with our comfort, and gloss over the confession of iniquity.

Both Jacob and Joseph disappear in this last chapter of Genesis. Jacob is to us a beacon, Joseph a pattern of wisdom, meekness and love. The individual now becomes a nation; the twelve tribes are in being. The book of Genesis takes us from the beginning until God deals with nations instead of individuals.

W. S. HOCKING.

“THE LAW OF CHRIST”

(Galatians vi. 2)

You who contend for a legal rule, what, I ask, is this “law of Christ”? Christ was always occupied about others. He never did, in one act of His life, His own will. This is precisely to be holy in love, which Christ was: obedient and truthful in love was what characterized all His existence here below. Supposing we were to do any and every duty merely because we thought it right, it would be always wrong. As a Christian, I should have failed in what is nearest to God, and for this simple reason—that merely doing duty because it is duty, does not put the soul in the attitude of obedience, but may be only proud self-pleasing, and homage to the innermost idol of the heart. To do what *I* judge right may therefore be no better than a subtle rebellion against God. I have no right to choose my own path. I am under obedience, if I take the place of being His creature; and still more, if I am and own myself His child. The question, then, is, What is my Father’s will? How beautifully our Lord shewed this, even before He entered upon the public part of His ministry! He had always, and in the highest sense, the consciousness of His own relationship. “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” And so it was in every case. Take Him afterwards in His ministry. Even in a matter that had so strong an appeal to His affections as a man, when Lazarus was a-dying, why does He stay in that place two days after hearing that he was sick? He acts not only *not* on the ground of mere right, but not on the ground of mere love to the person He loved; He must have the Father’s command before He goes.

W. KELLY.

(From “Lectures on Galatians,” pp. 160/1.)



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