

Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT

In Ephesians iv.30, the apostle says, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." If we own that the Holy Spirit is dwelling in our midst, how careful we ought to be not to grieve such a guest! Is not the whole cause of weakness both in ourselves individually and in the assembly, that we do grieve the Holy Spirit of God? The verses 29-32 mention many things that grieve the Holy Spirit: evil thoughts, words and ways. Some people pray, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." There is no such thought here, for the scripture distinctly says that by the Holy Spirit of God we are sealed until the day of redemption. God has come down to dwell in us, not in our hearts as people sometimes say, but in our bodies, which are the temples of the Holy Ghost. How careful, then, we ought to be lest by careless thoughts and ways we grieve such a guest!

G. F. COX

(continued from inside back cover)

the prison, they departed in their own time in a manner which made it abundantly clear it was the magistrates, not themselves, who had behaved wrongly. Thus the servants of the Lord maintained their superiority. What a triumph all this was for the mighty hand of God!

"He everywhere hath sway,
And all things serve His might;
His every act pure blessing is,
His path unsullied light.
When He makes bare His arm,
Who shall His work withstand!
When He His people's cause defends,
Who then shall stay His hand?"

(P. Gerhardt — tr. by J. Wesley)

May the thought of God's invincible power bring us all
a message of good cheer for 1968!

E. A. PETTMAN

THOUGHTS FOR THE NEW YEAR

As another year passes and a new year dawns, what are the thoughts and feelings that should find a place with us?

For many, the words of Miss Von Poseck's hymn may be appropriate: Looking back, we can but bless Thee, Looking forward, but adore; for Thy present favour give Thee children's praises evermore. Suitable sentiments surely, these, as we come into the presence of our gracious Lord.

For some, however, the recent past has perhaps been dark, painful, tearful. May such be enabled to say, in the words of another hymn-writer, We cannot always trace the way Where Thou, our gracious Lord, dost move; But we can always surely say, That God is love.

Certainly it is a mercy to be spared to see the beginning of a fresh year of grace, and a thrill to realise that perhaps before this year closes, the Lord will have fulfilled His promise to come again and receive us to Himself; that where He is, there we may be also.

What Christian would not gladly exchange this world for the bliss of being with the Lord in the glory, to see His face, and to join in those rich harmonious notes of praise which shall fill yon courts with endless lays when time shall cease to be! Joyfully shall we offer worthy praise to the Saviour Who died that we might live.

At this time many will be making New Year Resolutions, and very suitable this is if our desire is the better to please and serve the Lord. We shall be mindful of past failures and shortcomings, and shall be looking up for grace to be more faithful and fruitful children of God.

When Daniel (the man greatly beloved by heaven) purposed in his heart, was not that making a Resolution — if not a New Year one? His resolution was negative. "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine

which he drank" (Daniel i.8). Let us resolve to keep ourselves unspotted from the world (James i.27) throughout the year, and so answer to our Lord's desire for His own (John xvii.15) that while still in the world we may be kept from the evil.

A positive resolution is given us in Acts xi.23, where Barnabas exhorted the Grecian converts in Antioch "that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." "Cleave unto" here means "continue with." We have come to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation; let us resolve to continue with Him day by day, and so be preserved from backsliding. "Keep us, Lord, oh, keep us cleaving to Thyself and still believing." The converts of the day of Pentecost (Acts ii.) continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. May we resolve to do likewise.

There are two verses in the Psalms which have impressed me, both containing the words "all the days of my life." The first is Psalm xxiii.6, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

Goodness and mercy. A father is good to his children when he acts always for their well-being and never for their harm in any way. God is perfect in goodness. Mercy is first mentioned in the Scriptures in the story of Lot's deliverance from Sodom in Genesis xix., and seems to indicate kindness towards the undeserving. Lot was loth to leave the condemned city, but the angelic messengers laid hold upon his hand, "the Lord being merciful to him." While human kindness to those who do not merit it can easily fail, God's mercy is inexhaustible. In Psalm cxxxvi. each of the 26 verses ends, "For His mercy endureth for ever."

I turn to Psalm xxiii.6 again. I notice it says that goodness and mercy shall follow me — not all my life, but — all the days of my life. So that there can never be one day in the Christian's life, however long he lives and how-

ever dark the times, never one day which will be without the Lord's goodness and mercy. Wonderful! Truly the heart within us leapeth and cannot be cast down.

The other verse to impress me is Psalm xxvii.4, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple."

If Psalm xxiii.6 gives the Lord's side, what He is to me and for me, Psalm xxvii.4 surely shows my side, the response which I make towards Him. A response is certainly called for. And here it is, that every day of this life I desire and seek and realise the Lord's presence and communion with Him. The Holy Spirit is the power for this. "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit" (I John iv.13).

As we read and ponder in His presence the scriptures which speak of Christ, we shall perceive His love and beauty; our love will be the more drawn out to Him, and we shall be enabled to enquire, to commune with Him.

Let us then have this steady purpose of letting not one day of this New Year pass without our realising the Lord's presence, and enjoying communion with Him by the Spirit. Amen.

W. H. L. GRAHAM

THE DIVINE WORKERS

"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John v.17)

Luke vii.36: Luke's record of the Divine Worker continues to unfold under guidance of the gracious Spirit of God. The episode that follows emphasises the truth of the Lord's statement (verse 35) "Wisdom is justified of all her children."

The narrative opens simply and directly: "And one of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him.

And He went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city which was a sinner . . ." So, without preamble, we see two persons in the presence of Christ, utterly dissimilar as to character and associations. The wisdom of God concerning His Son was available to both, yet only one discerned it, and, though she were "least in the kingdom of God" (verse 28), her place was in advance of that of the greatest of the prophets. The Pharisee claimed a piety that set him apart from all who were not of his sect. For more than 150 years his school of thought had separated itself to a course of conduct calculated to approach a standard acceptable to God. The criticism of Simon the Pharisee perceived no glory in Christ. He was not among the "children of wisdom."

Jesus stayed at his table — perceiving his thoughts and suffering the affront of his discourtesy. The Divine Worker never ceased His activity of GRACE.

Luke does not tell his friend Theophilus the woman's name — nor do we know anything of her spiritual experiences — but to be a "child of wisdom" is infinitely superior to all the lofty genealogies of men.

The labour that continually made demand upon the energy of Jesus was wearying to the body and, too often, saddening to His spirit. There were days of contrast — as when simple faith emerged from amid the crowds of the curious. It is comforting as well as refreshing to follow Him on a day of contrast, when the voices of critics are silenced by the worship of the healed.

Simon's house was a scene of contrast. The Pharisee, fortified by a false sense of superiority arising from his own forms of piety, demonstrated his sectarian security. Jesus was subjected to his scrutiny. No mark of respect or welcome awaited the Divine Worker in *that* house; yet, being asked to go, He went. Beside those who were, by custom, free to enter and observe, there was, at the table, a jury of the elite ready to sift the words and assess the actions of

the person whom the common people called "a prophet sent from God." We may well wonder at the humility and patient grace of the Son of God.

The nameless woman was known by her reputation. Her approach was no coincidence. It is probable she was never very far from Him. Where His words were to be heard she was a hearer — though from the outskirts of the crowd. She knew of Him as one who received sinners — His critics declared it. Her soiled life was a growing sorrow, and, though none knows the hour when her slender faith reached out to grasp His promise to the "heavy laden," there is no doubt that her presence behind Him, in the midst of the enmity of unbelief, was her silent telling that she believed Him. No perfunctory kiss of welcome from the Pharisee (had it been offered) could compare with her kisses of worship on His feet, nor could any substitute be found in that house, adequate to refresh Him, as the tears of gratitude that she wept. Her thanksgiving and appreciation of Him welled up into that worship which is not in words.

She became an instrument in the hand of the Divine Worker. "Simon, seest thou this woman?" She demonstrated the possession of some treasure that Simon had never known! His punctilious attempts at perfection left him a debtor still — and the Divine Creditor was present at his table.

There is such beauty in the character of Christ. The behaviour of those opposed to Him brought no reaction from Him that ceased to portray, even momentarily, the character of His Father. The thoughts of the man who had "desired Him that He would eat with him" were as clear speech in His hearing. A man might well be excused from remaining in such unfriendly company. Yet, not His own feelings — far more sensitive than any — but the needs of the "debtors" present were uppermost in His mind.

Consider the perfection of His courtesy as He seeks permission to speak — "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee". Nor does the ungracious response prevent the simple

telling of the impersonal story of a "certain creditor which had two debtors" (verse 41). For, to the holy, dedicated Worker, Simon's need was more desperate than Simon knew! His thoughts proclaimed it aloud. He had no sense of his sin condition — he was bankrupt of personal resource. He owed but fifty pence and still had nothing with which to pay. The simile of the creditor and his two debtors was simple, yet, available within it, were inexhaustible riches of divine grace. The Creditor could not forgive without loss to Himself! Pharisaical confidence in the false currency of religious observance left the whole company bankrupt. Not one among them had any means to discharge his debt. Not one could offer even a proportion of his resources in settlement — he had nothing! Simon and his friends did not accept this position, but who shall limit the outcome of the presence of Jesus in that house of false values? Or who shall say that the day did not dawn when Simon re-appraised the assets of his human endeavour and found them worthless!

Meanwhile the true measure of awareness of debt was shown in the responsive love of the one forgiven. The events of the hour were rehearsed as the Divine Worker compared, without rancour, the two debtors in their personal reaction to Himself as the Creditor Friend. None present at Simon's table could avoid the outcome of that assessment: "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little" (verse 47).

So did Jesus make clear the vast difference between Simon and the weeping woman who "loved much." He who lifts up the fallen had come into her fallen life. "The feet of Him that bringeth good tidings" were beautiful indeed (Isaiah lii.7). She anointed them, and the myrrh of her alabastron perfumed the bitter air of criticism with her humble understanding of the cost of His suffering that such as she might be freely forgiven.

The Lord Jesus brought all His earthly work to a conclusion as perfect as His own character. That which His

Father gave Him to do He never failed to undertake in dependence as Man. It was not always possible for Him to do the "mighty works" that His heart desired. Unbelief, prejudice, the self-will of man, too often hindered. Yet He persisted for, while sinful man needed Him as Saviour, He needed poor helpless man in whom to display His work of grace. Simon the Pharisee was such an one. The Great Worker laboured for his love and would value it as He did the love of the "woman in the city" who was also a sinner. That which Simon failed to do for lack of respect did not deter Jesus from His work of grace. He drew the attention of the Pharisee to the love and worship of a woman who knew she had dealt in sin and had been forgiven. She overflowed with gratitude for that which Simon had laboured to deserve by strict legality. Turning to him, Jesus made the great pronouncement, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven" — her responding love was the outcome! She had a Person, and a theme for her love, and Simon had neither the one nor the other. Should we not pray for a deeper sense of the extent to which we have been forgiven lest we love too little?

His final word of assurance and peace was her parting possession. It was His personal benediction — the pledge of His eternal love — available to all sinners in the city of the world who, in faith, respond to Him: "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

EDWARD T. WOOD

GOD AT WORK IN EUROPE

(Read Acts xvi.6-40)

God's time had now come for the spread of the gospel into Europe by the apostle to the Gentiles, and the purpose of this article is to show how the Lord was pleased to use His servants for the establishment of the Christian faith in face of the inevitable hostility of Satan and his evil hosts.

GOD DECIDES WHERE HIS SERVANTS ARE TO GO, AND THE MANNER OF THEIR GUIDANCE

First of all let us notice the sovereign action of God in deciding where Paul was to go. Evidently he was minded to preach, first in Asia and then in Bithynia, but was directed away from these regions to Europe. It was not, of course, that Asia did not need the gospel, but God intended priority to be given to Europe *at that time*. At a later date Paul was to spend two years at Ephesus, during which period "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus" (Acts xix.10). And lest any should imagine God had no blessing for Asians, it is significant that the first convert to the faith in Europe — the woman Lydia — was of the city of Thyatira, and was therefore a native of the very land in which Paul had been forbidden to preach.

Moreover God was sovereign in His choice of the means by which He guided His servants. Paul was "forbidden of the Holy Ghost" to preach in Asia: the "Spirit of Jesus" (New Tr.) did not allow them to go into Bithynia. Then, while waiting at Troas, Paul was given a vision in the night: "There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us." This vision he reported to his fellow workers, and "assuredly gathering" that the Lord was thereby calling them to Europe, they found this door opened readily, for they had an unusually speedy journey across the sea to Philippi. We are reminded of the lines of a well-known missionary prayer-hymn — "Speed Thy servants, Saviour, speed them, Thou art Lord of winds and waves."

Thus it is apparent the Lord uses various means to guide His servants, and it is interesting to compare the case of Philip in Acts viii. Having been used to do a great work in Samaria, "*the angel of the Lord*" bade him go south to the desert way from Jerusalem to Gaza (verse 26). Having arrived there, "*the Spirit* said unto Philip, Go near and join thyself to this chariot" (verse 29). Are we not to conclude

that it is needful for the Lord's servants to keep alert for His direction in whichever way He may give it?

GOD'S TRIUMPH OVER HUMAN WEAKNESS

God's sovereignty is evident next in His triumph over human weakness. It is difficult to conceive a more unpropitious opening to the gospel "campaign" in Europe — a handful of women gathered by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made: and the first convert, too, a woman!

How clearly God demonstrates that He can use weak things to confound those that are mighty. Possibly Paul had this example in mind when he wrote to the assembly at Corinth — see First Epistle, chapter i., verses 27-29. This is a lesson God has been teaching mankind from the beginning. In chapter 3 of his book "Atonement in Type and Accomplishment," dealing with the Seed of the Woman, F. W. Grant writes:

"Moreover, the Conqueror is the woman's Seed. We are apt to miss the force of this, just by our familiarity with it. Not yet had the mystery of human birth been accomplished upon earth. The lowliness of origin, the helpless weakness and ignorance of infancy, so long protracted beyond that of kindred bestial life around — this by which God would stain the pride of man, was that through which Adam and his wife had never passed. The Seed of the woman implied all this. With what astonishment we may well conceive Satan to have contemplated the childhood of the first-born of the human race; and to have thought of the word, whose certainty he could not doubt (for Satan, the father of lies, is no unbeliever), that the heel of One so born and nurtured was to be one day upon his own proud angelic head!"

WHERE WOULD THE CHURCH HOLD ITS MEETINGS?

The conversion of Lydia solved another problem that has been the preoccupation of christian folk down the cen-

uries, that of where those who believe are to meet for their united worship and witness. There is no reason to think that Paul and his companions had considered this matter before they went to Macedonia. Apparently there was no Jewish synagogue in Philippi. But in any case, the Lord supplied the need. Lydia was a business woman of means, and used her home to entertain the Lord's servants (verse 15), and, it would appear from verse 40, her house was the gathering place of the church at Philippi.

Christendom today is proud of the magnificent ecclesiastical edifices in which it conducts its services, and the humble place of meeting is despised by many. The fact remains, however, that the earliest meeting places of believers, specially in Europe, were normally the private dwellings of converts. As was the case when a burial place was required for the Lord's body during the short interval before His resurrection, God knows where to find men and women of substance who are prepared to place what they possess at His disposal.

SATAN'S FIRST ATTACK

Lydia's conversion was in no way spectacular as was the jailer's later. Her heart opened like a flower to the sun. This caused no public stir; nevertheless it did not escape the notice of the devil, who became active at once.

His first method of attack was, not outward violence, but an attempt to adulterate the testimony of Spirit-filled servants of the Lord with the half-truths of a demon-possessed girl. Was the first trophy of the gospel a woman? The devil will use a woman for his counter-attack.

The language of the possessed girl — "These men are the servants of the Most High God, which shew unto us the way of salvation" — bears testimony to the fact that devils are conscious of the existence and working of God. As James declares, "the devils also believe, and tremble." But she makes no reference to the *Lord* Jesus Christ. When, later, the jailer enquires the way of salvation, Paul tells

him to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Such is Satan's hatred of the One who is to triumph over him finally, that he will not permit those acting for him to use the title LORD.

The apostles, however, as their Master before them (see Mark i.34), refused Satanic witness, and demonstrated the power of the name of Jesus Christ by exorcising the evil spirit. Thus was Satan's initial attack defeated. The first spiritual battle in Europe was a resounding victory for God's servants, and they won it without using the devil's weapons.

Has this incident no voice for our own day? Do the Lord's servants follow closely in the footsteps of those valiant pioneers of the Christian faith?

SATAN RESORTS TO VIOLENCE

As might be expected, Satan immediately changes his tactics, switching from subtlety to violence. If he is to retain his hold on Philippi, these men with divine power must be humiliated and silenced. So he stirs up those whose material prosperity is threatened by spiritual progress, and these take strong measures to retaliate for the loss of their evil means of livelihood. Paul and Silas are arrested, beaten and securely imprisoned. Surely that will quench the spirit of these men, and stop their mouths once and for all!

But will it? The demon-possessed girl had declared these men to be the servants of the Most High God. If that be true, will the Most High God win this second battle as He did the first? He had not shielded His servants from the cruelty of the Philippian magistrates and soldiers. Was it because He could not, or because He would not?

God was able to rely upon the fortitude of these men in the endurance of physical suffering to demonstrate His power. By divine strengthening He was to ensure that His servants would be more than conquerors. So, at midnight, such was the grace poured upon them, that Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God. This was not mere

bravado, but divine power outmatching the worst the enemy could do. Was it true? Yes, the prisoners heard them! After the prison doors had been opened by the earthquake, the prisoners were compelled to stay by to bear their testimony to what they had heard.

What could Satan do against men like these? Once again the Lord had triumphed gloriously! Many indeed since then have laid down their lives for Christ's sake, and it has been proved time and again that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. Little wonder that there are those today who cry out for some more martyrs! Have we to wait for violent persecution to demonstrate the truth of what the apostle John asserted: "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (I John iv.4). Have we?

THE CONTROLLED EARTHQUAKE

Then what could the enemy do about the earthquake? Job i., and other scriptures, seem to indicate that Satan may be given licence to use natural forces to a limited extent, but God is the Upholder of all things, and not a sparrow falls to the ground without His knowledge.

When successive plagues fell upon Egypt preparatory to the exodus, God showed how precisely He controls His own judgments on those who oppose His will, and how surely He can protect His own. The flies, the grievous murrain, the hail and the darkness afflicted the Egyptians, while the Israelites were immune. When the walls of Jericho collapsed, the part upon which faithful Rahab's house was built remained intact. So this great and terrifying earthquake at Philippi, although severe enough to loosen the prisoners' shackles and open the doors, did not collapse the roof and walls so that the prisoners were killed. What a fantastic occurrence it certainly was! Who but the Most High God could keep the situation so completely in hand on behalf of His servants — for His own glory indeed, and the advancement of the cause of His Son!

CONVICTION OF SIN

Then follows an episode which makes our mouths water today. A hard and cruel man is brought under such conviction of sin that he cries out: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" This plea was addressed to men who had suffered humiliation: now appealed to as "Sirs," and recognised immediately as authorities in matters of life and death. Thus the witness for Christ proceeded from strength to strength.

Are we not all too conscious today — in Great Britain at any rate — of the failure of even the most correct gospel preaching to produce the deep conviction of sin which prepares the way for the ready reception of salvation through Christ? Some, indeed no longer look for it. But none can deny the power that was operative in Philippi. Repentance, belief in Christ, baptism "he and all his, straightway," followed by active assistance to the Lord's servants — all these within the space of a few short hours! This surely was the Lord's arm made bare to save.

VINDICATION OF THE PREACHERS

Is that the end? By no means. Are the magistrates to come out on top? Are the strong men of the world to have things their own way? Let us see.

Wisely, the magistrates decided to let the prisoners go. But the manner of their leaving is not to be dictated by them: the Lord's servants will have the last word.

The protest Paul and Silas made against their treatment was not defiance of rulers, but something necessary for the protection of the believers and the promotion of testimony for the Lord in Philippi. A furtive departure, which would no doubt have saved the face of the magistrates, might have left the impression that the apostles had broken the law, and were fortunate to get away. Paul and Silas did not allow any such thing. By compelling the magistrates to come to

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PLEASING OUR NEIGHBOUR TO EDIFICATION

(Note on Romans xv.2)

The exhortation, "Let each of us please his neighbour unto good for edification," expresses a principle of the first importance in Christian conduct in the assembly. The AIM is to be the other's edification or building up, or growth in the truth — "unto edification." The METHOD is to be (a) by regarding him as a "neighbour," not as an enemy; and (b) by pleasing, not provoking, him. The essential QUALITY of our effort should be that we please our neighbour "unto good."

Love only can accomplish this difficult task. Love caused the Samaritan to do the neighbourly part, and the word of Jesus to His hearer was "Go, and do thou likewise" (Luke x.37). Love pleases his weak neighbour in the assembly by a gentle ministry of help and healing. It is wrong to please men by sacrificing the truth of God (Galatians i.10); it is right to "please" one's neighbour by shewing him the abundant measure of "good" God has bestowed on him in grace.

Extracted

(Continued from inside back cover)

last judgment when the dead are raised and judged before the great white throne. "They were judged every man according to their works." "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." It is declared in the same scripture that "the devil . . . was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Revelation xx.10-15).

Taking these passages together, it appears that in the judgment of both the living and the dead the nature of the final sentence agrees. The wicked have their part in the place prepared for the devil and his angels where there is torment for ever and ever.

W. J. HOCKING

(Reprinted from "The Bible Monthly", February 1929)

WALKING TOGETHER

“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos iii.3)

THE MEANING OF THIS SENTENCE. When we examine the other seven verses at the beginning of Amos iii., it is difficult to find any close connection with what seems to be the evident meaning of the third verse.

One suggestion to overcome this is to take verse 3 in the sense of God saying to Israel, As two people cannot go on together unless they are agreed, so I cannot go on with My people Israel, whom alone I have known of all the families of the earth, because their sins are abhorrent to Me. If I go on with them, then I must punish them. This interpretation has much to commend it, but would be more plausible if, instead of following verse 2, it preceded it.

Moreover, on reading further we discover that verse 3 is only the first of a series of questions, which the prophet apparently takes as unanswerable. These questions express one common thought, that every effect must have an adequate cause (verse 6 alone seems different).

The last question “Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?” points out the solemn fact that whatever Israel’s calamities might have been, they were not to be regarded as due to secondary causes; they were God’s doing—God’s punishment, therefore, of Israel’s sins. No cause was adequate to explain why such things befell God’s chosen and beloved people, except that it was the Lord’s own hand raised against them.

Amos adds here, what was evident throughout Israel’s history, that God always warned His people by the mouth of His prophets before He sent His judgments upon them:

“The lion hath roared, who will not fear?

The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?”

There was then, a most sufficient cause why a poor ignorant man like himself should become a prophet—the Lord God had spoken to him. As he said later to Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, “I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son; but

I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: and the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said to me, Go, prophesy unto My people Israel" (chapter vii.14,15).

If then, we are to understand verse 3 in accordance with the general pattern, the Authorized Version must be amended. The Standard Revised Version translates it "Do two walk together, unless they have made an appointment?"—a translation which does at any rate fulfil this condition.

OTHER APPLICATIONS OF THE VERSE

Whether or no the RSV accurately gives the prophet's meaning, a protest must be entered against the practice of quoting this verse to establish the proposition that there can be *no fellowship* between Christians who do not see eye to eye with one another.

The Church of God is not a voluntary association of people holding common views. It was not formed by men gathering round a table to hammer out a set of propositions to which they could agree. It was formed by the Spirit of the living God, joining believers in the ascended Christ of God to Him as their Head, and thus to one another as members of His body.

Moreover He joined, and still joins together, men and women who have nothing else in common but their faith in, and allegiance to, the Lord Jesus Christ. Men and women of all ages, all races and tongues, find themselves united in their love to the Saviour who died for them. In this they are "in agreement," that the Saviour is worthy of their hearts' devotion, and so long as He is really in possession of their hearts they will walk together. It is when Satan is able to insinuate something of themselves into the place which Christ should occupy, that their natural differences cause division and separation.

The way in which the apostle Paul deals with the divisions in the assembly at Corinth is most instructive. When one section claimed to follow Paul, another Apollos, and a third even used Christ as a party name, he asks, "Is Christ divided?"

“Was Paul crucified for you?” “Were ye baptized in the name of Paul?”

Now these questions go to the root of the matter. It was Christ that united them. How absurd then, to act as though Christ were divided! Again, in the name of Christ crucified they stood united against the scorn of a world that called the cross foolishness. What had Paul to do with that, save that it was he who had directed them to Christ?

Thus their differences were irrelevant—they obscured the fact that they were one in Christ. These differences only caused trouble because of the carnal behaviour of the Corinthians. They were “walking as men” (chapter iii.3)—that is, allowing their old, natural, corrupt selves to actuate them, instead of walking in the Spirit.

How contrary then, to all Christian truth, to quote Amos iii.3 as if it prevented fellowship between Christians because of differing views!

The question will of course be asked, in the light of the well known deep divisions between Christians, is not something more required than a simple recognition of their essential unity in Christ? Here we are facing a situation that has grown up over the centuries, and is not easily mended. But the divisions have in fact come about because the principles laid down by Paul in Corinthians have been set aside. When differences arose, people forgot that they were members of one another, and they ignored the Headship of Christ. Instead of waiting on God in patient, united prayer, and searching His word until His mind was known, they had recourse to human methods, to controversy to establish their own ideas, and to reliance on human leaders.

To settle disputes, local elders were appointed to rule over their brethren, in direct opposition to the commands of the Lord Jesus (Mark x.42,43); and this continued until the modern “bishop” was evolved. And though many such bishops were real shepherds of the flock of God, a hierarchical *system* gradually replaced the living relationship of members to their Head, and the Church’s ruin proceeded apace, with one false doctrine after another corrupting the faith.

For scripture does show that the Church would be troubled by men raised up by Satan to cause havoc among the flock—men who had no love for the truth, but would seek to draw away disciples after themselves. But it is readily seen that it was the reliance upon human leaders which gave these false teachers their opportunity.

The Reformation recovered much truth, but the human system was far too entrenched to be overthrown. For church leaders today to attempt to unite Christian sects together because Christians are one body, without even confessing that what the Holy Spirit set up at Pentecost had been betrayed and abandoned, and ignoring all the error that has come in, can only lead to the false church of Revelation xvii.—Babylon the Great.

And what of those who, from time to time since the Reformation, have tried to put right other errors, and to restore the authority of God's word? Most of such efforts have been partial, and have not gone deep enough, and not until the early nineteenth century was the attempt made to get back to, and acknowledge in practice, the original relationship of direct dependence of each member upon his living Head. We are speaking, of course, of church matters, not of the individual Christian life. And not till then was there the gathering together of believers, owning no name but that of Christ, no mouthpiece but the man whom the Spirit of God was pleased to use, as laid down in I Corinthians xii. and xiv.

Those who have tried to continue in such a path can testify to the blessing it brings to the soul, though with much to try the spirit.

However, it is well known that the spirit of strife and division has continued to display itself among such, the more so, one can surely say, because whatever is of God always attracts special attention from the enemy. But when men who *are* equally desirous of pleasing the Lord, men who really endeavour to make this their sole aim, find their differences too great for them to have fellowship together, the remedy does not lie in an agreement to walk apart (which is no *remedy* at all), but in a common humbling of themselves before Him,

in yet more complete surrender of their own will, until the minds of *all* are ready to submit to the truth, and to learn in His presence where they have gone astray.

Unless WE are prepared to do even this, can we be said to be *keeping His word*, Who said "Love one another, as I have loved you"?

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

THE DOMESTIC LIFE OF THE LAW-GIVER

There are four passages in the books written by Moses where mention is made of his wife. Three of these refer to his family also, but scripture is silent both as to the death of Zipporah, and the subsequent history of his sons.

MOSES' MARRIAGE (Exodus ii.15-22)

It says much for Moses' steadfastness of purpose and purity of life that he remained unmarried during his upbringing in Pharaoh's household in Egypt. No doubt temptation abounded in those congenial surroundings, for Hebrews xi. tells us that he chose rather "to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." Scripture itself remarks that Moses was beautiful as a child. We would therefore expect him to grow into an unusually handsome young man, with the likelihood that attempts would be made to pervert him from his fidelity to God to a life of self-indulgence within the royal circle in which his lot had providentially fallen.

Following a premature attempt to liberate his kith and kin from their cruel servitude to the Egyptian monarch, Moses had deemed it necessary to flee for safety to the land of Midian, where, again in the providence of God, he entered the house of a prince, who, in due time, gave him his daughter to be his wife. Thus Moses entered the married estate with its normal obligations. When a son was born, Moses gave him a name which testified to the fact that he regarded himself as a stranger

in a strange land, and had not overlooked his relationship to God's people.

From Exodus xviii.4 we learn that a second son was born, in the naming of whom Moses bore clear witness to God's protecting hand over his flight from Egypt, and for the second time (for the first see Exodus xv.2) he paid a warm tribute to the faith of his own father. Though reared in one ruling household, and married into another, Moses did not despise those parents of his to whom he was indebted for his life, his nurture as a young child, and above all for his knowledge of the one true God (see Hebrews xi.23).

In the light of subsequent events, some might be disposed to question whether Moses was right to marry a woman outside the chosen people of God, to whom he belonged, and with whom he had so positively identified himself. Scripture however gives no hint of divine disapproval. On the one hand there had been Isaac's anxiety that Jacob should not take a wife of the idolatrous daughters of Canaan; on the other, there was the precedent of Joseph, cast away by his brothers, marrying an Egyptian woman. In this connection it may help to remember that both marriages typify the outgoing of God's grace to Gentiles following Christ's rejection by His own people. Is not the present dispensation the one in which Christ as the Bridegroom seeks and acquires His bride—the church—from the world at large? Indeed, it was after discoursing upon the setting aside of Israel, and the bringing in of the Gentiles, that Paul burst into his tribute of praise to God: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Romans xi.33).

PRESERVATION OF HIS LIFE (Exodus iv.24-26)

After the lapse of some 40 years, God's hour struck for the deliverance of His people from Egypt, and Moses was summoned from the solitude of the backside of the desert to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. God was about to fulfil His covenant with Abraham, and bring His people out of their

bondage into the liberty and plenty of the promised land.

The sign of that covenant on the human side was the rite of circumcision—see Genesis xvii.9-14. It appears from this incident that the rite had been overlooked by Moses. Whether or not this was due to the influence of Zipporah, may be open to question. Possibly she would have liked Moses to sever his connection with the Israelites altogether. Why bother about a nation of down-trodden slaves, especially after they had shown such ingratitude and misunderstanding when Moses had sought to help them!

However, it is obvious that disregard of what God had appointed to be the sign of His covenant could not be tolerated in the household of the leader appointed for its fulfilment. God's requirement must take precedence over any merely human sentiment of which Moses had been guilty.

The brief description of the scene indicates a measure of defiance on Zipporah's part, if we are correct in reading verse 24 to mean that God had to threaten to take Moses' life before she would give way. It was as though God said to her, "If you do not yield to what I have commanded, you will lose your husband; either you acknowledge My requirement, or Moses will die."

Under this rebuke and ultimatum, Zipporah was obliged to obey God, and was compelled to carry out the thing so distasteful to her, which no doubt would have been done by Moses had she not objected in the first place. The reading of the A.V. suggests that she complied with bad grace: nevertheless the fact remains that God had His way with them, and Moses recovered from his serious illness to carry out the task to which God had appointed him.

REUNION WITH HIS FAMILY (Exodus xviii.)

It appears that after his recovery Moses proceeded on his mission alone, for Zipporah is not mentioned again until after the Red Sea had been crossed. This supports the view that she was reluctant to support him in his enterprise. For Moses himself, the freedom from domestic preoccupation may wel

have enabled him to concentrate on his work for God free of distraction. At all events, it seems clear that Zipporah and the children returned to the house of her father to await the outcome of her husband's intervention with Pharaoh.

When one recalls the magnitude of what God proposed to be done, we need not be surprised if neither Jethro nor Zipporah had the faith to believe that such an undertaking could possibly succeed. We can imagine the attempt to deliver Israel being described as "sheer madness"—which, of course, it would have been had not God commanded it. What others might regard as the self-imposed task of an over zealous patriot was in fact the project of the great Jehovah God to fulfil, for His own glory, His ancient promise to Abraham.

Passing over the well-known details of what God's strong arm so gloriously achieved, we come to the reunion of Moses with his family at the mount of God. Jethro had taken the lead, and brought the family to see for themselves the marvelous accomplishment. He rejoices, as well he might, in what God had done, and took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God.

On the following day, Moses is at his work—judging the people—from morning to evening. It was a stupendous task for one man, and Jethro suggests to him that, with God's approval (verse 23), he should delegate as much responsibility as he could to others; otherwise he would soon wear himself out.

It is remarkable that this suggestion, prompted by the common-sense of an "outsider" should be approved by God, as undoubtedly it was (Deuteronomy i.9-18). How unwise Moses would have been to reject it, possibly because of Jethro's previous lack of confidence in him and in his mission. Moses might have retorted, with an air of superiority, that "when God wants me to do something He speaks to me Himself!" But, for all his great talents, Moses was a meek man, and accepted the indication of God's will through an unexpected channel. May God give us similar humility of mind, when necessary.

VINDICATION (Numbers xii.1-16)

Careful consideration of this final episode of what is revealed as to Moses' domestic life leaves very little doubt that the "Ethiopian" (or Cushite) whom he had married was Zipporah. The fact that her name is not mentioned on this occasion has led some to think Moses had married again. But the omission of her name may well have been to shield her from calumny, particularly as Miriam mainly, and to a lesser degree Aaron, are held to blame by God for what happened. Nevertheless there were salutary lessons to be preserved for posterity: hence the record.

When Jethro returned home after his visit to the mount of God, it is not stated that Zipporah accompanied him. Evidently she was now prepared to share her husband's fortunes, and remained with him: otherwise the carping of Miriam and Aaron would scarcely have occurred.

In chapter xi. we read of the lusting for flesh by the mixed multitude that had gone along with the Israelites when they left Egypt. Moses was deeply distressed by this, and the protest he made to God—"this people is too great for me: I cannot bear them alone"—seems reminiscent of what Jethro had said to him, "This thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone."

To lighten the burden for him, God took some of the spirit that was in Moses and gave it to the seventy men from the congregation, so that they prophesied (i.e. declared the mind of God), with Eldad and Medad prominent. To the writer, it seems probable that Zipporah resented what she regarded as a threat to her husband's pre-eminence, and spoke out on his behalf. Such a championing of Moses' cause by one who had herself been too faint-hearted to share the hardships of the exodus from Egypt, might well have proved too much for Miriam and Aaron, provoking them to complain to Moses of her behaviour, and to claim equality of spokesmanship for God, thereby slighting Moses and also trespassing against God's sovereign choice of Israel's leader.

However that may be—and others may view the precise circumstances differently—the important thing is to note that God heard what Miriam and Aaron said, and intervened. The situation was a delicate one for Moses, whom verse 3 describes as the meekest of men on the earth. So God takes up his cause, and vindicates him in the most decisive manner, thus re-establishing him in the eyes of all. Then, how beautiful it is to observe this further noble trait in Moses' character—so far from nursing resentment of those who had belittled him, he was ready at once to intercede with God on his sister's behalf.

Miriam and Aaron were honoured persons. Micah vi.4 links them with Moses as those whom God sent before His people to redeem them from their bondage. But God would not allow them to asperse the one whom He declares had been faithful in all His house (verse 7). E. A. PETTMAN

THE PUNISHMENT OF THE UNCONVERTED

We think that in approaching this serious question every believer should be persuaded—

- (1) **that whatever God may do in the judgment and punishment of sin will be absolutely right;**
- (2) **that sin is of such a virulent and deadly nature that none but the Son of God could endure its just penalty on behalf of others; and**
- (3) **that God has revealed sufficient in the Scriptures to indicate with regard to the final punishment of the lost what its duration will be.**

To these three brief statements, the following remarks may be added by way of enlargement and explanation.

(1) The consideration of this subject staggers and perplexes the heart because of the vast issues involved. The only relief springs from confidence in God. No believer could with equanimity contemplate the future of the unsaved human race in the unseen world apart from the unshakeable conviction that everything will be ordered in the strictest accordance with God Who is Light and God Who is Love. Overwhelmed when

we think of the fate of so many of our fellow-creatures, we can only follow the example of the men of God of past ages, and cherish the utmost confidence in the All-wise Governor of the universe.

With Abraham we believe that God will discriminate between the righteous and the wicked, and though we may not discern the equity of His ways, we believe that the Judge of all the earth will do right (Genesis xviii.25). With Moses we can sing that our God is "the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He" (Deuteronomy xxxii.4). In our very souls we echo the words of Elihu, "Surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment" (Job xxxiv.12). When we think of the unrebuked evil against men and the blasphemies against God which are so prevalent around us, we can surely take up the words of Paul, and ask, "Is God unrighteous Who inflicts wrath? I speak according to man. Far be the thought: since how shall God judge the world?" (Romans iii.5,6, N.T.). Moreover, we believe that when, in the purer light of heaven, we see "the rainbow through the rain," and behold the penal overthrow of sin, we shall sing, "Hallelujah . . . true and righteous are His judgments" (Revelation xix.1, 2).

Every reflecting child of God must shudder at any attempted estimate of the awful issues involved by the sins against God committed in a single lifetime. Who among men is in the least degree competent to adjudicate rightly in the punishment of any sinner in respect of his every evil work? We shrink back, confounded by the very thought, and confess it to be a task which only Omniscience can accomplish. But if the task be so stupendous and impossible in the case of one sinner only, how unthinkable is its greatness when all earth's inhabitants since Adam are concerned!

Besides, how is it possible for the creature to form any real notion of the gravity of his own sin against his Creator? Is the criminal in the dock in a position to discuss the laws of eternal equity with the Judge upon the white throne? In any case, it is beyond man's province to know anything with regard to God's

plans and purposes for the future invisible world other than such revelations as He has been pleased to make in the Holy Scriptures.

In face, then, of these impassable barriers to our enquiries we are driven to that haven of refuge for faith which is founded upon the inflexible holiness and righteousness of God, and is illuminated by His everlasting mercy and love. The final awards in the courthouse of Infinite justice will be unchallengeable in their impartiality and rectitude. They will be in fullest accord with the Essential Being of God and with the relative deserts of all those who will stand before Him to give an account of the deeds done in the body.

(2) But if man is of himself and in himself unable to form any true conception of his degree of guilt before God, he is not left without means of knowing that his wickedness is utterly beyond all human reparation. The sinner is a bankrupt debtor faced with immeasurable debts. Upon this dark background the gospel of God is revealed. A ransom for the sinner has been found. A Saviour and a Sacrifice has appeared. An atonement for sin has been made. Here we have the light of truth revealing the provision of divine Love.

Clearly we may form some reliable idea of the heinousness of man's guilt when we learn the nature of the covering for that guilt. No person nor thing in the whole realm of created beings was adequate. Of all the principalities and powers in the heavens, there was none competent to offer adequate compensation to God against Whom man had sinned. Forgiveness of sins, we learn, could only be dispensed consistently with the righteousness of God when Christ Jesus, creation's Head and Originator, became the propitiation for sins. Only on the ground of an infinite Sacrifice could God be just and the Justifier of him who believes in Jesus (Romans iii.25,26).

If then the scales of eternal justice could only be maintained in perfect equipoise when an infinite ransom-price was set in the balance against human guilt, it is manifest that the degree of human guilt is such that it is altogether beyond all finite means of restitution.

↳ The awful character of sin becomes apparent when we con-

temple the essential glory of the Mediator between God and man, of Him Who is Son of God and Son of man; and further, the fact that the Blessed and Holy Saviour **suffered** for sin, the Just for the unjust. The sufferings of the cross could not have been finite or measurable because of the nature of the One Who suffered. Infinite sufferings! Incomparable death! Unerring justice between God and man required nothing short of this in respect of sin. Only by the sacrifice of Christ Himself, the unspeakably Holy One, could sin be put away.

(3) We may now ask what are the words of God with reference to the punishment of those who, despising the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, incur the infliction of His wrath? Such references in the Bible are comparatively few, but unequivocal. In point of fact, however, one passage would be sufficient, while tomes of human reasoning and special pleading would only mystify.

The Lord Jesus, Who will at the appointed time judge the habitable world in righteousness, declares Himself what sentence He will pronounce upon the ungodly before Him. He will say to those who are convicted of their guilt, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." It is added, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew xxv.41,46). It must be remarked in this passage that punishment is definitely pronounced, and that its duration is eternal—a term that is elsewhere applied to the existence of God (Romans xvi.26).

This passage may be compared with another which also speaks of the second coming of the Son of man. We read that "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (2 Thessalonians i.7-9). It will be observed that the punishment awarded is again stated to be everlasting or eternal, both words being renderings of the same Greek adjective.

We find similar terms used in the scripture relating to the

(Concluded at foot of inside front cover)

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from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

(Continued from inside back cover)

when the One Whom he hoped would have set up the kingdom was nailed to the cross and bowed His head in death.

Yet, while we see the trembling fears of Joseph, his mistaken idea of the Lord's mission, his general lack of understanding, we also see that none of these things, nor all of them combined, prevented him from being chosen to carry out God's written word. He was the one who out of love for the Lord, and little though he may have known it, was in the revealed mind of God. Surely this action of his affords one gleam of love, one ray of light, shining in devotion towards the Holy Son of God on that awful day.

What was before the eye of God as He looked down that day upon the awful scene of man's wickedness uprising against His Beloved Son? Denied by one apostle, forsaken by all, civil and religious powers combined in hatred against the Blessed One as He hung upon the cross. But after all had been endured, and the work He came to do finished, the Lord Jesus bowed His head, and gave up the ghost. *Then* humiliation from His enemies ceased, and one of His own disciples came forward unexpectedly and took down the body from the cross, to be laid in a rich man's tomb (his own).

Though disappointed in the earthly kingdom and perplexed beyond measure, as no doubt Joseph was, he was God's chosen instrument to carry out His mind. We do not read of him before this event, and we do not read of him afterwards. He was just, honourable, a counsellor, not consenting to "the deed and counsel" of his fellows, but, above all, he was a man to whom God entrusted the reverent interment of the precious body of His well-beloved Son.

What a mission, what a work, what a unique service! Instead of saying, this is all we hear of Joseph of Arimathaea, let us rather say, what a mighty work God entrusted to him.

G.E.S.

(Reprinted from "The Bible Monthly", June 1928)

THE THOUGHT OF GROWTH

"Grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ;" (Ephesians iv. 15)

The ministry of Paul is here centred upon the believers he loved in Ephesus. The prison walls, from within which he wrote, could not restrict the outflow of his care for them. He pours out rich treasures of inspiration, designed by the Spirit of God for their assurance and comfort — their edification and establishing. To them is revealed, more than to others, the deep and precious purposes of a holy God in bringing them into intimate family relationship with Himself as the outcome of the sacrifice of His Son.

He is, however, far from content to present these amazing truths alone. There is an even greater fulness — an expanding glory — "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians iv. 13). The Mind of the Spirit is set toward the believer's GROWTH, in the things of God. This is abundantly clear as the writing continues (verse 14), "that we henceforth be no more children . . . but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together . . . maketh increase . . . unto the edifying of itself in love" (verses 15, 16).

It is a challenge to every believer to find that this principle of GROWTH is evident throughout the divine record of the life of man. From eternity the heart of God sought representation on earth. The man He created failed — the earthly people He brought from bondage forsook His precepts and crucified His Son. Yet there were those from among them who knew this growth, and entered progressively into an awareness of relationship with God without parallel or even comparison with the greatest loves of men. Today, God desires a people on earth — His own family — representing Him as to His character. Individual GROWTH

is **ESSENTIAL** in this family (verse 14, "That we be no more children"). In writing to the Corinthian assembly Paul takes up the same thought — "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things" (I Corinthians xiii. 11).

To "grow up into Him in **ALL THINGS**" -- what unlimited development is available to us! To be told that her baby is like her, lights a wonderful smile in the mother's face: to **GROW** up into Christ in all things rejoices the heart of **GOD**!

Very simply and beautifully Luke writes of the growth of Jesus. In the second chapter of his wonderful letter to his friend Theophilus he records, "And the child *grew*, and waxed *strong* in spirit, *filled* with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him" (verse 40). The record continues (verse 42) "When He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem." It was there that He was found "in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers." Observe, also, His subjection to His mother and Joseph (verse 51): "He went down with them to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." And at verse 52 we read: "And Jesus *increased* in *wisdom* and *stature*, and in *favour* with God and man."

Thus we are shown His mental and physical growth. He is not suddenly presented to us as a fully grown **MAN**. Even before He was conceived, "Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth" (Luke i. 26). "And the angel said . . . the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that **HOLY THING** which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (verse 35). No other child born into this world merits this description. It is the divine answer to many **Satanic inspired statements** of error. Is not God saying to us, "This is my beloved **Son**" — come, you shall see Him a babe in the manger attached to an overcrowded inn! Join the shepherds there. **Come,**

later, to the house — join the wise men there, and behold their worship and their gifts! Come to despised Nazareth — I will show you MY SON *growing up* — the only living Soul well-pleasing to Me! There was profound reality in the growth of Jesus — His childhood, His boyhood, to His manhood. Were there no lines of sorrow in His face — no tears in His eyes? In his great prophecy Isaiah writes “He shall GROW UP before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground.” It was a “dry ground” indeed, YET HE GREW UP BEFORE GOD, EVEN THERE!

There is no shame in being a babe—but IN REMAINING ONE.

God delights in that which is mature — there is no place for stagnation with Him.

The thought of GROWTH is very pronounced in Samuel. In the first book of Samuel we may see the child of a great love. There was deep affection between Elkanah and Hannah that survived barrenness, and reached on into fruitfulness, and even into the sacrifice of giving — which was, in itself, an act of true worship to God.

The Spirit of God, Himself, records the growth of Samuel from a weaned child to a great prophet — one through whom the mind of God was made known to His people and their kings.

In the opening of the first book of Samuel, Hannah, his mother, fulfilled her undertaking to God (I Samuel i. 24). “And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the Lord in Shiloh: and the child was YOUNG.” Dependence upon his mother ceased — he became dependent upon God. Such was his mother’s faith — and the closing words of the chapter show GROWTH into WORSHIP — “And he worshipped the LORD there” (verse 28).

The day in which he lived and the conditions of the temple life were not conducive to growth — but “the child did minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest” (I Samuel ii. 11). Evil had invaded even to the gates of the house of God — “the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord” (verse 12). “Men abhorred the offering of the LORD. But Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod” (verses 17, 18). Thus GROWTH was sustained by the grace of Him who had received the little life “lent to the LORD as long as he liveth” (I Samuel i. 28), and the faith of Hannah (whose name is Grace) was honoured indeed.

Here follows a word most precious to mothers (verse 19). “Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.” It was only once a year that she saw him, yet no day passed that her faith failed to obtain that support from God without which no true growth for her child would be possible. “His mother MADE him a little coat” — she sat down with her needle and materials and MADE IT. She LINKED HER ENERGIES WITH HER PRAYERS, and they were patterned into the little coat. He was not only the son of her prayers — the answer to her faith — but he must GROW to be a representative for God in a decadent day! Bowed to her task, she stitched on! “The sons of Eli were sons of Belial”— evil, and going on to destruction — but Samuel was to be a witness for God — so she stitched on!

In this present day, of which Paul wrote prophetically to Timothy, “In the last days . . . men shall be lovers of self . . . disobedient to parents . . . having no love for what is good . . . lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” (2 Timothy iii. 1). YOU may take *your* little child to God in prayer of faith — you may give of your love and your example — you may say, “I want him to be for God.” Stitch away, as Hannah did long years ago, for the “little coat” was no ordinary garment — in Hebrew, the word used is “miel”. IT WAS A PRIESTLY GARMENT — the

upper robe of BLUE. It was bordered with "pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet round about the hem thereof; and bells of GOLD between them round about" (Exodus xxviii. 31-34). It was the annual visible emphasis of her faith prayer. There was no pattern more wonderful than that which the mother stitched into that little coat.

Year by year she made it, for "the child GREW before the LORD," and, as shown by verse 26, "the child Samuel *grew on*, and was in favour with the LORD and with men."

DO WE "GROW ON" — does each year need a larger coat? This coat clothed the growing child with that which spoke of the heavenly character of Christ — the purple of His royalty was woven into the border, and there, too, was the scarlet of His coming earthly Kingship. The golden bells will tell his movement in the whole character of the One in whose Name and Cause he would minister.

So Hannah prayed and sewed, and never faltered year by year while her child "grew, and the LORD was with him, and all Israel knew that Samuel was ESTABLISHED to be a PROPHET of the LORD" (1 Samuel iii. 19-20). And this, when "the word of the LORD was precious (rare)" and "there was no open vision" (Ch. iii. 1), and the lamp of God was a dying flame "in the temple of the LORD, where the Ark of God was" (iii. 3).

The closing words of the chapter show the increasing growth of Samuel and of hope in Israel, for "the LORD appeared AGAIN in Shiloh; for the LORD revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD" (verse 21).

The records of scripture show many who have known this spiritual growth. David, "the beloved," grew from a boy shepherd into kingship of God's people. In the first book of Samuel (ch. xvi.), seven sons of Jesse passed before Samuel under the scrutiny of God, but "Samuel said unto Jesse, the LORD hath not chosen these" (verse 10). "And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep . . . and he sent, and brought him

in . . . and the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he."

The Philistines massed against Israel, and their champion issued his challenge. Israel feared and fled, while David declared his confidence in the LORD "that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear" (1 Samuel xvii. 37). Eliab, his eldest brother, demanded, in anger, "With whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?" — and Saul, the king, cast doubt upon his ability to fight with Goliath, saying, "Thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth" (verse 33). But *spiritual growth* in experience of God's power is not allied with fleshly strength or experience. This growth increases with each contest faced and won, for, "greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John iv. 4). So, in face of threats of death — persecution and the life of a fugitive — captivity and war, the GROWTH of the "man after God's own heart" developed. There were failings, and the hindrances of sin, but also humble admission and repentance, which ever find answer from the God of deliverance.

The closing chapters of the first book of Chronicles present a retrospect of the growth of David the king. It had been recorded that "all Israel and Judah loved David because he went out and came in before them" — i.e. he identified himself with them in love. So, in a fuller measure, did the One who came of his line. But the treasure that David had gathered over the years was accumulated for the glory and worship of God. To Solomon he gave it in trust, together with "the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD." Dependence upon God had been joined with meditation upon that which was due to the beauty and perfection of His character, and he was able to say, in the presence of his people, "All this the LORD made me understand in writing by His hand upon me." Out of his own deep experience came his word to Solomon, "Be strong . . . fear not . . . for the LORD GOD, *even my God*, will be with thee; He will not fail thee."

God has a gracious object for us in this growth. It is not in mere knowledge, nor can it be attained by fleshly endeavour. The way is by those lowly paths of submission and obedience to His will, as we become aware of it. It leads to a perfection that He describes "in writing by His hand upon" His servant Paul — "to the perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians iv. 13).

EDWARD T. WOOD

ESTABLISHING A KINGDOM

(Read: I Kings ii.)

Only those convinced of the truth of the apostle's assertion that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning," will expect to find in a chapter like this lessons of value for the present day.

At first sight it might appear that we have nothing more than a lurid account of the way in which a newly crowned king in Israel disposed of three men, possible rivals or their supporters, in order to secure the kingdom to himself. But if we bear in mind that God Himself had appointed Solomon to succeed David on the throne, we shall see that what happened to Adonijah, Joab and Shimei was the inevitable judgment of three men who opposed the will of God.

Solomon's magnificent reign was intended to typify the coming millennial kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, when He will rule the whole world in righteousness, and His glory will fill the earth. But that will not be the successful climax of the preaching of the gospel of the grace of God, as is frequently supposed. The kingdom of Christ will be ushered in by the execution of divine judgment upon all who set themselves against the Lord and His Anointed.

The three men in this chapter who met their doom at the hands of Benaiah, on the instructions of King Solomon,

personify three main types of wickedness that will have to be dealt with before righteousness can reign in this world. Adonijah was a man of extreme subtlety; Joab was violent against the righteous; and Shimei was a man who deliberately flouted the provision made for his safety from the punishment to which his own rebellion had exposed him. Adonijah therefore symbolises the undermining of God's authority; Joab, active opposition to what is good and right; and Shimei, the despising of God's appointed way of salvation.

ADONIJAH

The situation which threatened as David's life drew slowly to its close, and materialised immediately after his death, concerned the succession to the throne. David had several sons. Which of them was to succeed him? Was his eldest son to take over automatically? Was David himself to appoint whichever he thought best fitted for the task? Were David's family to decide amongst themselves which of their number should wear the crown? Or was the choice to be left to the people in some sort of referendum? None of these methods was adopted. God made the choice, and *He* ordained that Solomon should be king after David. He was not the eldest, nor was his mother David's first wife, yet, despite the sin which lay behind David's acquisition of Bathsheba, God decreed that her second son should inherit the throne of his father. We are told that the Lord loved Solomon, and exercised His sovereignty in the matter.

Had David's family and the people realised it, that was by far the happiest way to solve the problem. What a good thing if everyone had been content to leave it at that. But it seems that whenever God expresses His will, opposition must needs rear its ugly head somewhere. And while David was still alive, his son Adonijah made up his mind to seize the kingdom for himself. So, having managed to persuade certain influential persons in the kingdom and priesthood, with a section of the people, to support his claim, he had himself anointed king. Unrestrained by his father, Adonijah fancied himself for the kingdom, and

evidently thought the crowning of himself at Gihon would be accepted generally as a fait accompli.

But the will of God is not to be thwarted like that, and when Adonijah's action was reported to him, David took immediate steps to have Solomon crowned in the very place where Adonijah's followers were celebrating their leader's accession. This firm stand led to the collapse of the rebellion, and Adonijah found himself pleading for his life to the younger brother whose place he had usurped. The plea was successful, and Solomon told Adonijah that his rebellion would be overlooked provided he proved himself a worthy man in future.

Very soon afterwards, David died, and Solomon reigned alone. Then Adonijah's ambition revived, and he conceived a very subtle plan for wresting the kingdom from his brother.

Towards the end of his life, David had taken to himself a beautiful and well-favoured young woman from Shunem, named Abishag. There was no child of this marriage, but from the point of view of the succession that scarcely mattered, since David already had a large number of sons. At the time when Adonijah's defection was reported to David, Abishag was present, and was therefore aware of what was going on. So she must have realised full well she would never be the mother of a king in Israel.

When David died, however, Adonijah saw an opportunity to renew his challenge. Marry Abishag! Such an alliance, however, required the royal consent, and, probably to allay suspicion or to avoid questioning by Solomon, he craftily put his application forward through Solomon's mother.

Remarkably enough, Solomon seems to have been wider awake than his mother, and quickly saw that Adonijah's manoeuvre was the beginning of a plot against himself. So without further ado he had his brother put to death. Clearly there could be no stability for Solomon's tenure of the throne while Adonijah lived.

From the very beginning, Satan's subtlety has been at work to oppose God. The first stricture passed upon him in scripture was, "Now the serpent was more subtil than

any beast of the field which the Lord God had made" (Genesis iii. 1). Under the evil influence and eventual domination of this fallen creature, man has continued down the centuries to use his mental powers to evade and thwart the will of God. Our Lord described Satan as "a liar, and the father of it" (John viii. 44). These devilish methods are adopted by men today, and one feature of the powerful world political figure to arise later, as foretold in Revelation xiii., is "a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies." How can there be peace in a world where subtlety of every kind is employed in hostility to the divine decree (Psalm ii. 6), "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill in Zion?"

Adonijah, certainly, must die! And die he did. Solomon's judgment upon him will find its counterpart in a day to come when the Lord Jesus, who was "manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John iii. 8), will deal summarily with Satan, and cast him into the lake of fire and brimstone for ever and ever (Revelation xx. 10). Thus will the prince of subtlety be disposed of; likewise those of the human race who partake of his evil character (Revelation xxi. 8).

JOAB

Then there was the menace of this ruthless man!

In the main, Joab had been loyal to David, but latterly he had defected to Adonijah. Earlier, in the matter of Absalom, Joab had shown complete disregard of David's explicit instructions, and preferred his own course of action. Now, David warns Solomon that Joab had "shed the blood of war in peace," and Solomon himself declared in his judgment upon him that Joab "fell upon two men more righteous and better than he, and slew them with the sword."

The hatred, and consequent murder, of the righteous is another work of Satan that has been practised from earliest days. This is the "way of Cain" to which Jude refers in verse 11 of his epistle. The full account of it is given in Genesis iv.

Our Lord Himself declared that this was a continuing

evil, when He beheld the hatred and murder that blazed from the eyes of the religious leaders of His day — see John viii. 40. James (chapter v. 6) refers to the same thing, and intimates that the redress of this wrong must await the coming of the Lord. Peter, too, in his first epistle, enjoins upon christians of the present day that they are to expect to suffer for righteousness sake, and are not to count it strange if this happens to them. How often is this forgotten today!

Revelation xviii. foretells the destruction of “Babylon the great,” in whom “was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.” The murder of the righteous goes on, but it will certainly be avenged!

The establishment of the kingdom of the “Sun of righteousness . . . with healing in His wings” (Malachi iv. 2) will require the putting down of all unrighteousness. This is illustrated in the case of Solomon. Joab also must die! And die *he* does.

SHIMEI

Finally we come to the man who brought about his own destruction by his defiance of the arrangements Solomon made for his safety.

Shimei, the Benjamite, had cursed David “with a grievous curse” in the day when David was a fugitive from his rebel son Absalom. But David had shown him mercy, and had sworn by the Lord not to put him to death. 2 Samuel xxi. shows that the breaking of such a pledge is something God does not overlook, and David is particular to charge Solomon to act with care in this matter.

In the exercise of his wisdom, Solomon sent for Shimei, and undertook to continue his father’s clemency on the express condition that Shimei remained under constant surveillance in Jerusalem. Shimei agreed to this, and all began well. But the time came when he no longer felt the need of royal mercy, and broke his promise by going down to Gath. The outcome was inevitable. For the third time

Benaiah is summoned to execute the king's judgment.

The writer's view is that Shimei signifies all those who despise God's mercy, and neglect the way of salvation He has provided in Christ. How can any man hope to escape eternal disaster if he leaves the shelter of the one and only Rock of Ages? Shimei could blame no one but himself for his exposure to the judgment of Solomon. So Shimei also must die. And die he did!

Even so will every Christ-rejecter perish! "For he (Christ) must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet" (1 Corinthians xv. 25). Subtlety, and violence, and the rejection of His saving grace, prove man's enmity of heart and will meet Christ's judgment when He establishes His kingdom on earth.

Let us believers ever keep in mind Peter's exhortation at the end of his second Epistle — "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

E. A. PETTMAN

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHAEA

It is instructive to consider the way in which Joseph of Arimathaea was raised up of God to fulfil His will, recorded centuries before, regarding the burial of the body of His Beloved Son. Isaiah prophesied: "And (men) appointed His grave with the wicked, but He was with the rich in His death" (Isaiah liii. 9, N.T.). This prophecy was duly fulfilled in a remarkable manner.

When the Blessed Saviour bowed His head and yielded up His spirit, the awful treatment meted out to Him by man ceased. No further act of ignominy upon His precious body was permitted. But that body had to be buried according to the scriptures. Someone must carry out God's purpose, and prevent that Blessed One being put into a common grave with the robbers who hung beside Him.

The person chosen of God to fulfil His will in this respect was one who seemed the most unlikely for that service. This is often the case in the ways of God, and proves His unfailling grace in choosing and fitting whomsoever He will to execute His tasks.

We read that Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but "secretly for fear of the Jews." During the life of the Lord Jesus, he was therefore afraid of the consequences of owning himself a follower of that Blessed One. Yet on the very day when all earthly powers were combined against the Lord Jesus, Joseph "went boldly unto Pilate" with a request which might have cost him his life. Nevertheless he went in boldly, and "craved the body of Jesus" (Mark xv. 43).

It is beautiful to note that the Spirit of God has recorded this act of Joseph in each of the Four Gospels. He is said to have "begged," "craved," "begged," "besought," the body of the Lord Jesus. His desire, so earnest, so vehement, was granted. Naturally speaking, everything seemed opposed to his success with Pilate. Yet this was the occasion on which Joseph confessed himself a follower of the One Whom man had crucified. Indeed, he went boldly to the very one who had delivered Him to be crucified, and claimed the One Whom he had secretly loved.

It came about therefore that, instead of, as man appointed, rabble hands taking down the Blessed Son of God from the cross, the loving hands of Joseph of Arimathaea performed this service. Moreover, his boldness and faithfulness stimulated another who had, so far, feared to own his love for the Lord Jesus, and poor timorous Nicodemus joined with Joseph in removing the precious body from the cross, wrapping it in fine linen, and laying it in the new tomb of Joseph. Thus the prophetic word of God was fulfilled: "but He was with the rich in His death."

Note also that Joseph bought new fine linen, which alone was fit to clothe the body of the Blessed Son of God. Thus much did Joseph understand. He must have been a disappointed man, for "he also waited for the kingdom of God," and hence all his hopes must have been shattered

(Continued inside from cover)

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A Monthly Magazine for Believers

(continued from inside back cover)

Old Testament prophecies, the latter character of "fore-telling" is more predominant than in those of the New Testament. There, however, we have the Lord's great prophecies on Mount Olivet, and also the Book of Revelation, dealing with things which must shortly come to pass. Again, in the Acts we read of the prophet Agabus predicting a famine (xi.28), and later Paul's imprisonment in Jerusalem and his deliverance to the Gentile civil power (xxi.9-11).

Prophecy, therefore, is a scriptural word of wide scope. And its importance in the early church is shown by the fact that in the relative order of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, prophets are given the second place, apostles coming first (I Corinthians xii.28). Because of its relative value in supplying the spiritual needs of the assembly, it was a gift greatly to be desired by the saints (xiv.39).

Before the Epistles were written for circulation among the saints, the revelation of the new truths of Christianity was made directly by the Holy Ghost to the prophets for the edification of the various assemblies. As soon as the new doctrines had been embodied in the scriptures or prophetic writings, those in the assembly who had the gift of teaching made use of these doctrines to instruct their brethren, individually and collectively, still further in these written truths.

W. J. HOCKING

RIGHT PRIORITIES

(Read: 1 Kings iii.5-15)

If ever a young man was born with a golden spoon in his mouth, it was Solomon. One might even say the spoon was studded with diamonds! Yet his career which began so promisingly, as this chapter shows, ended with the Lord being angry with him "because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel" (1 Kings xi.9). However, we need not allow the unsatisfactory trend of later years to detract from that which was praiseworthy at the beginning: as a youth, his priorities were right.

The Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream, and the sentiments uttered in reponse to God's invitation were therefore the true expression of Solomon's innermost thoughts. We do not, and cannot, pose in our sub-conscious mind. In any case, the fact that his speech earned God's approval is proof that Solomon was genuine in what he desired.

Solomon's reply to God may be divided into three sections:

1. His recognition of God's goodness to his father;
2. His confession of his own weakness and need;
3. His request for an understanding heart.

Solomon was but a very young man when this incident occurred. He had been reared under the shelter of firmly established authority, and had never needed to fend for himself as his father had done. His own personal experience was therefore limited, and we can scarcely imagine him composing psalms rich in the practical experience of God's providence such as those which had flowed so freely from his father's pen. Nevertheless Solomon had evidently reflected on the events of his father's life, and speaks of God's mercy or bounty, as well as the uprightness of heart which had governed David's actions.

First of all let us recall —

GOD'S SOVEREIGN CHOICE OF DAVID TO BE KING

The youngest of eight sons, the one whom Jesse had not thought it worthwhile to present to Samuel for consideration, yet David was signalled out by God to be the future king of His people. David owed his throne not to Samuel, not to his father or family, nor to the popular vote of his fellows: he received it by the sovereign choice of God. Solomon must surely have had this in the forefront of his mind.

God's sovereignty, exercised in the revelations He makes of Himself as well as the persons to whom these are vouchsafed, is a source of comfort and cause for thankfulness. It was one thing for Simon Peter to declare that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God. But was that the image of his own fancy, or a flight of his imagination? No indeed, says our Lord, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." How strengthening was that confirmation to Simon's faith!

Shortly before the faith of the disciples was to suffer the severest possible test, when they might easily wonder whether their decision to follow Jesus had after all been a ghastly mistake, our Lord told them: "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you" (John xv.16). If they had misgivings as to themselves, they could have none as to Him, for there are no mistakes with God.

A former Editor of this magazine, well known to the writer, used often to remark, "God knew the worst about us before He had anything to do with us!" How thankful we may be for that at times when failure in Christian witness tempts us to despair!

It was so in the case of David. His life was not free of serious blemish, and there were things he desired which God could not grant (e.g. 2 Chronicles vi.8-9). But God never went back on His choice, and when Solomon himself had forfeited part of the kingdom, God said that one tribe would

not be rent away "for David My servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen" (1 Kings xi.13).

Then Solomon would recall —

GOD'S PRESERVATION OF HIS FATHER

The saving of David's life on the battlefield of the valley of Elah might easily be overlooked in the rejoicing over the defeat of Goliath that followed, but years were to come in which he was frequently to be in dire peril. Saul's hatred of him, and instructions to his servants to kill David, drove him to the rocks and caves and wilds for shelter. He was to be hunted like a partridge in the mountains. But God's hand was over him, so that he waxed stronger and stronger until a day came when he could testify that the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies.

God's preserving care day by day — whether of others or ourselves (1 Timothy iv.10) calls for acknowledgment and gratitude on our part. It is worthwhile to read the latter verses of 2 Corinthians xi. to remind ourselves of the way in which the strong hand of God is around and underneath those who are about His business in this world. To such things most of us can add trifles from our own experience, for do we not all derive much from divine care and angelic ministry (Hebrews i.14)?

Then there was undoubtedly —

GOD'S FULFILMENT OF HIS PROMISE

David became king, and reigned over Israel for 40 years. In his churlishness, Nabal had sneered at David. "Who is David?" he enquired, "and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants nowadays that break away every man from his master" (1 Samuel xxv.10). What scornful, stinging words to be conveyed to the man of Jehovah's anointing! Happily Nabal's wife thought differently, and intervened before blood was shed.

All the same, Nabal's view was probably shared by many

others in Israel. But God's purpose must always prevail. Although Psalm ii. can of course be applied in full measure only to Christ Himself, it does reflect David's own experience. He was appointed by God to rule in Zion, and because that was so, no one could thwart the divine decree or hinder David's progress to the throne.

Solomon could scarcely overlook that!

Lastly, would not Solomon recall —

GOD'S FORGIVENESS OF DAVID'S SIN

In point of fact, Solomon owed his existence to that forgiveness. David had been guilty of the death of Uriah in order to obtain Bathsheba, who was Solomon's mother. The first child of that marriage died — as a mark of God's disapproval, because David had given the enemies of the Lord occasion to blaspheme. Nevertheless, God forgave David, and a further child was born. What a signal expression of God's over-bounding grace we find when in due time Solomon came along! We are told, "And the Lord loved him!"

Solomon must have known all this. Little wonder that he speaks of God's great mercy and great kindness to his father! He seems to echo the words of Moses centuries earlier, "my father's God, and I will exalt Him" (Exodus xv.2). Is there any Christian father today who does not wish most earnestly that his children will acknowledge God's goodness to himself?

CONFESSION OF WEAKNESS

Solomon goes on to speak concerning himself, saying "I am but a little child." Born comparatively late in David's life, he was scarcely out of his teens at this time. He had not had long personal experience of princehood, with opportunity to observe over many years and learn the way to govern wisely. So he was particularly ill-prepared by human reckoning.

We can well imagine that after offering a thousand burnt offerings to God at Gibeon, Solomon retired to rest that night pondering the heavy responsibilities God had placed upon him. What a people! What a task! So the God of all grace, who knew full well exactly how Solomon was feeling, appeared to him by night (with an open cheque book, as men might say today) and says, "Ask what I shall give thee." What a magnificent offer by God, and opportunity for Solomon!

In patriarchal days we have another example of a young man destined to be a great ruler — Joseph. As a lad of tender years, at home with a doting father, how unfitted he must have been at that stage for control of a nation's affairs. But, by the all-wise ordering of God, successive changes of circumstances placed him in a position to study Egyptian life at all levels, so that when the day of his promotion arrived he had gained experience that must have proved invaluable to him thereafter.

In Solomon's case, the ordering of God was otherwise. With neither suffering to shape him nor hard experience to spur him on, God bestowed upon him in an unusual way wisdom adequate for his task. Solomon's only preparation for this lay in his humble assessment of his own insufficiency, and confession of his need. But lowliness of mind and truthfulness of this kind leave the way clear for God to manifest His resources. How manifold indeed is the wisdom of God!

Notice also Solomon's recognition that the people over whom he was to reign were God's, not his own. Three times he refers to them as "Thy people." In the apostle Peter's day there was clearly the danger that those who engaged in Christian ministry might lord it over God's heritage, instead of being ensamples to the flock with the thought ever present of being answerable to the Chief Shepherd. This danger persists in our own day. Let us not forget that our fellow believers belong to the Lord, and must be acknowledged and cared for as such.

REQUEST FOR AN UNDERSTANDING HEART

The precise petition recorded in verse 9 is remarkable, and surely shows the operation of the Holy Spirit within Solomon's mind and heart. But for that, we might surely be surprised to find what looks very much like being an old head on young shoulders! But there it is: "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this Thy so great a people?"

How rulers and politicians strive for solutions to world and national problems, and sometimes those of the individual! We have no doubt at all that they would discover what they are seeking if in sincerity of heart they sought wisdom from God, as Solomon did. Does not the promise of James i.5 hold good still?

That Solomon had his priorities right, as the expression is today, is shown by —

GOD'S RESPONSE TO SOLOMON'S PRAYER

First of all, there was God's declaration of His approval, and then the assurance that what Solomon had asked for he would receive — good measure, pressed down and running over! Did Solomon really expect the overflowing bounty given in verse 12? We must always remember that God's giving is not measured by the extent of human need, but reflects invariably the greatness and glory of the Giver. Compare Paul's testimony to the Philippians in chapter iv., verse 19.

There were added also things Solomon had not specifically requested, namely, riches, honour and (conditional upon his obedience) long life. All these bestowals would make Solomon a worthy representative of God Himself to His people, and a suitable forerunner of Him whose glory will one day fill both heaven and earth. Well may we take to ourselves the language of the psalm composed for Solomon

(lxxii.), "Blessed be His glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen and Amen."

This episode in a career which, sad to say, ended in shame and disaster (so much for man!) illustrates our Lord's own word to the people on the Galilaean hillside: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew vi.33).

E. A. PETTMAN

THE EARLY CHAPTERS OF JOSHUA

JOSHUA THE SAVIOUR

On the borders of the land, Israel was obviously dependent upon the saving strength of Jehovah's right arm. There was a great distinction between this present need and the one at the start of their journey. At the Red Sea the people were terrified because Pharaoh with his chariots and cavalry were behind them. Then the word of Jehovah to them was, "Stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah" (Exodus xiv.13). And God gave them a marvellous victory over their pursuers. But here their foes were not behind them but before them to hinder their entrance into the land. The circumstances were different, yet they still wanted the salvation of Jehovah. And Joshua, the son of Nun, becomes the captain of their salvation. His name, Joshua, means "Jehovah's salvation." Forty years before the people had seen how Jehovah saved them out of the house of bondage (Exodus xiv.30). Seeing the dead bodies of the Egyptians, they knew that their deliverance from their former bitter bondage was complete, and, so far as they were concerned, they were saved from slavery to become Jehovah's servants.

But now the natural barrier of the Jordan and the craft and valour of the Canaanites bar their progress; and how are they to get forward into the land of promise? A strong and wise leader must be at their head. They want the "salvation of Jehovah," and this is provided in Joshua, whose name signified it. "Joshua" is the Old Testament form of "Jesus."

The angel said to Joseph, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew i.21). And He is the Saviour, not only from our sins, but also from those spiritual foes that interfere with our Christian progress day by day. We need daily deliverance. The hardest task of the Christian life is to advance steadily and surely. If we slacken our efforts we slide backward, and suffer a reverse in the conflict with our enemies. But we have a competent and never-failing leader in Jesus Christ our Lord. Our Joshua is our daily Saviour from the unseen foes that impede our spiritual advance in the appropriation by faith of our heavenly possessions as revealed in the Epistles of Paul.

THE BOUNDARIES OF THE LAND

It may now be noticed that Jehovah gave to Joshua as the chosen leader of Israel a bird's eye view of the goodly and pleasant land which lay before them for their possession. Moses saw it from the mountain of Nebo, but he did not "go over thither" (Deuteronomy xxxiv.1-4). The people were in the plains of Moab, and unable, even in the clear Eastern atmosphere, to see much of the great landscape before them. But its boundaries were given to Joshua. "From the wilderness and this Lebanon to the great river, the river Euphrates, the whole land of the Hittites, to the great sea, toward the going down of the sun, shall be your border" (Joshua i.4).

Behind them to the south was the wilderness through which they had wandered for forty weary years; to the north was the great mountain mass of Lebanon; to the east was the great River Euphrates; and to the west was the great sea, the Mediterranean. It was a vast expanse of territory. But these were the boundaries of the land which God had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and which He was now about to bestow upon their seed.

The land was shut in or marked off on four sides. The four sides afford illustration of various aspects of the world which surrounds the heavenly inheritance that is ours by

faith now. This inheritance is incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, and is reserved in the heavens for us (I Peter i.4), where we shall eventually occupy it in bodily presence. But we are now considering the truth that by faith we are able to make present use of this inheritance. We can strengthen and encourage our souls by the contemplation of its glories. "My kingdom is not of this world," our Lord said to Pilate. It is separated from it in all its various aspects, whether we look north, south, east or west.

Look at the four boundaries of Jehovah's domain — the wilderness, Lebanon, the great river, and the great sea. The **WILDERNESS** was barren of everything needed for the sustenance of life. There was no daily food in the desert. Manna could come only from heaven. Water to quench their thirst could come only from the smitten rock. But crossing this border into Immanuel's land, there are smiling cornfields and springing wells in abundance. Looking again, we observe another aspect of the world. We see the beautiful mountain of **LEBANON**, a figure of earthly glory, strength and beauty. The world has its captivating aspect, which appeals to our natural senses. There are in the world "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," which we must not love (I John ii.16). They are foreign to the heavenly inheritance that God our Father has given us. See also the great **RIVER** Euphrates. In scripture a river is the sign of worldly prosperity, good for commerce, good for agriculture. As the great things of this life are benefited by broad and deep rivers, so the things of this world are good, but satisfying only for those who have no outlook beyond the present. Those who have no heavenly possessions say: "Let us have the river. Let us, like Lot, have the well-watered plain of Jordan. Let us make the most of the present. Let us eat and drink and be merry; today we live, tomorrow we die." Such is the language of Nineveh and Babylon, on and near the great River Euphrates. Then the **SEA** is a figure of the turmoil and confusion

among the nations of the world, never at rest, always in commotion, and ever striving for greater power and dominion in the political world.

Thus the "borders" of the people of God are clearly defined. The Holy City, Jerusalem, which comes out of heaven from God "lieth foursquare," and has a boundary wall "great and high" (Revelation xxi.). And of His own the Lord Jesus said, "They are not of the world, as I am not of the world" (John xvii.14). The garden of the Lord is a walled garden, shut off for privacy, and shut in for prosperity.

MORAL PREPAREDNESS IS NEEDED

Some features of the moral preparation needed for entering into the land were given by Jehovah to Joshua, and this instruction was equally needed by all the people. Joshua as a type of our Lord Jesus Christ stands alone, but in another sense Joshua was a representative of the people. He was a man of "like passions," with all the twelve tribes of Israel; and what Joshua as a man required in preparation for the occupation of the land, every other man in the armies of Israel needed. Moreover, Joshua was the leader of the people, and he should be an example to all. The first requisite was strength and bravery. Three times, in nearly the same words, Jehovah repeated His command to Joshua: "Be strong and of a good courage" (verses 6-9). The repetition stressed the importance of this injunction. When the people of Israel first approached the land they were filled with fear, and wept for a night (Numbers xiv.1). Sheer cowardice, as Joshua, who was one of the twelve spies, well knew, prevented their going up and possessing the land at that time. They said, There is milk and honey there, and the grapes of Eshcol are there; but giants are also there and cities with walls right up to heaven. We are only as grasshoppers and have no strength (Numbers xiii.26-33). They lacked the faith that would have made them as bold as lions. They forgot the help there was in Jehovah, Who brought

them through the Red Sea; so they were filled with fear.

Now, when the people came again to the land, Jehovah said to their leader, Joshua, "Be strong and of a good courage." Were they, then, in themselves stronger than before? Not in the slightest; but when Jehovah said "Be strong," He meant "Be strong in Me"; "be strong for I am with thee, and I tell thee that no man shall be able to stand before thee. Thou shalt prosper; thou shalt have good success." Why should he have good courage? Because Jehovah would be with him and His chosen people. The lesson of moral strength and boldness in doing the known will of God was to be learned first of all.

KNOWING AND OBEYING THE BOOK

Another lesson given to Joshua was that he was in all things to be guided by the book of the law: "Be strong and very courageous, that thou mayest take heed to do according to all the law that Moses My servant commanded thee. Turn not from it to the right or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. The book of the law shall not depart from thy mouth." There is here a practical lesson for us all. In order to be spiritual conquerors we must discover and obey the written will of God. It is no use making general resolutions to reform our ways, going to our knees and vaguely committing our way to the Lord, trusting Him to bring something to pass. We have God's word as a positive guide, as Joshua had the book of the law and was told, "Thou shalt meditate upon it day and night that thou mayest take heed to do according to all that is written therein; for then shalt thou have good success in thy ways, and then shalt thou prosper." This is always the secret of a believer's victorious conflict: (1) an acquired knowledge of the revealed will of God, and (2) the boldness to do that will in dependence upon Him in Whom all strength and wisdom are found.

Clearly, at this time Jehovah had given to His chosen nation the book of the law to guide them in His worship and in their daily conduct. So far as we know, Abraham had no

such book of reference. He had some record of divine dealings in the past, possibly transmitted to him by word of mouth. But Joshua had a book written by Moses containing what God had spoken and prescribed previously. The law-giver having died, this book was to be his treasure, his continuous guide in the conquest of the land. His plans were to be formed according to this book. It was his business to be familiar with its contents. It was to govern his words and to guide his way. It was to be stored in his heart for hourly meditation. How needful are these habits in Christian walk, worship, and warfare also! If the word of God is treasured in our hearts then the fruit of our lips will partake of the nature of what is the meditation of our hearts. Out of the heart proceed either evil thoughts first and then evil words, or good thoughts first and then good words.

So the spiritual strength and valour for the conquest of our heritage depend in the first place upon the knowledge that God is with us, and in the second place upon the conformity to His word. The word of God is the principal means of our preparation for spiritual warfare. In the panoply of God, it is the sword of the Spirit, while His truth is the girdle of our loins (Ephesians vi.11-17).

W. J. HOCKING

(To be continued, D.V.)

PROPHESYING

In the Epistles, the word, prophecy, describes one of the most important of the gifts of the Holy Ghost in the church. By prophecy, the mind and will of God are made known to the saints so as to act with divine conviction upon the heart and conscience of the hearers. The effect of prophecy upon believers is "edification and exhortation and comfort" (I Cor. xiv.3), and even a simple person or an unbeliever who listened to the prophets would be constrained to acknowledge the divine origin of their communications (verses 24,25).

Prophecy is derived from a word meaning to "speak forth," so that a prophet is one who, in the exercise of his gift, is God's spokesman to the audience. At and after the descent

of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, the prophets were the media through whom especially the truths concerning Christ and the assembly were revealed. Accordingly, the church is said to be erected upon the foundation of "the apostles and prophets" (Ephesians ii.20), and the New Testament writings are described as "prophetic scriptures" (Romans xvi.26, New Tr.).

Throughout the Bible, prophecy signifies the declaration of God's direct message to men by a herald or messenger chosen of Him for that purpose. Accordingly, the words, "Thus saith Jehovah" form the distinguishing mark of the prophetic communications of the Old Testament. Aaron is called the prophet of Moses (Exodus vii.1), because what Jehovah said to Moses, Aaron announced to Pharaoh, thus becoming spokesman for Moses. God called Abraham a prophet also (Genesis xx.7), having made him the depositary of His word and promise, and the medium of blessing to the nations of the world.

God at times has been pleased to make known future events, and this He has done through His servants, the prophets. On this account some have thought that making known coming events is the sole work of the prophet. But it is a mistake to confine the meaning of prophecy to prediction. It may relate to present or past matters, as well as to the future.

For instance, the woman of Samaria recognised our Lord as a prophet (John iv.19), not because He had been speaking to her of some future event, but He showed His knowledge of what was past, personal, and private in her own history. From this instance we learn that the object of prophecy is not necessarily to give information about what is to come, but chiefly to bring the light of God to bear upon the conscience of the hearer. To do this, prophecy may speak of sins in the past, or of judgments that are to come.

Hence the primary meaning of prophecy is something described as "forthtelling," rather than as "foretelling," though as we have seen, prophecy embraces both characters. In the

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from the Scripture of Truth

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(Continued from inside back cover)

condition into which the nation of Israel had fallen through their idolatry.

According to the language of Ezekiel, the usefulness of a wooden pin or peg consisted in its ability to support, possibly, some vessel of far more value and usefulness than itself. If it were sound and reliable, it might even be used as a nail or pin in the construction or service of God's holy temple (*cp.* Ezra ix.8).

In one of the prophecies of the Book of Isaiah, the pin or nail (both translations of the same Hebrew word) is used as a direct type of Christ in Whom all the glories of divine government promised to the house of David will be displayed in the future millennial kingdom. In that day, Jehovah "will fasten Him as a nail in a sure place." Moreover, the prophet says, "they shall hang upon Him all the glory of His father's house . . . from the vessels of cups even to all the vessels of flagons" (Isaiah xxii.23,24). Throughout the thousand years of His earthly dominion, the Lord Jesus will sustain the glories of His reign in perfection and beauty, whether in great things or small things — the "Nail in a sure place."

Thus, in this chapter, which is very full of Christ, He is set out as the One Who will never fail those who trust in Him — a Pin that will never break. Of those whom God gives Him, not one will perish. As a contrast, the prophet, in the last verse, speaks of a nail made, as it were, from the fragile wood of the "vine of the earth." Shebna (verse 15) is a type of Antichrist, who will *seem* to the Jews of that day to be a nail "in a sure place." But all that trust in him will be confounded, for he will "be removed, and cut down, and fall; and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off: for the Lord hath spoken it" (Isaiah xxii.25).

(Extracted)

THE DIVINE WORKERS

“*My Father worketh hitherto, and I work*” (John v.17)

Luke viii.19. As we read this beautiful treatise, written to his friend by the beloved physician, it becomes more and more clear that he draws from among the many scenes of the past those episodes particularly dear to him. The Holy Spirit sanctifies and uses gifts that may have been latent in the servant, newly called, to employ them for the work of God. Luke has the faculty for assembling, in an ordered sequence, events of which he has been made aware. His intention, as controlled by the Holy Spirit, is to emphasize a significant course of the Truth as it flows from the life of Jesus. So he gathers up the precious records of occasions that light up the perfect character of Christ. Some are longer in telling—others are brief. Nevertheless, even the smallest of them is to be brought into the pattern of beauty, for, to Luke, their contribution is essential to the whole.

Such a fragment is contained in the three verses which follow the simile of the lighted candle—the shining of testimony resulting from *effectual hearing* of the Word. The Divine Worker, perfect in all His workmanship, issues His warning, “Take heed, therefore, HOW YE HEAR” (verse 18). It is then that the seeming interruption is introduced (verses 19-21), “His mother and His brethren could not come at Him for the press. And it was told Him . . . Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without, desiring to see Thee.” It is from this that the Spirit of God presents, through Luke, the blessed outcome of true hearing. There is a near kinship—an intimate family association surpassing all the human ties and blood relationships known to man. It is brought about by divine means. The submissive hearer takes in the living Word, and the fruit of that receiving is in *moral activity*. “My mother and My brethren are these which HEAR the Word of God and DO” (verse 21). The best Greek manuscripts omit the word “it”. The effectual hearing of the Word always moves toward life in keeping with that Word. It is that *hearing* in deep sincerity that moves even

the timid believer to bold confession of faith in face of unbelieving opposition. It becomes the enduring motivation of the believer's life—the power to carry him forward into active devotion to the Person of Christ.

The thoughts of Luke are grouped like treasures to display this truth. The weeping woman anointing the feet of Jesus in the house of the Pharisee—the company of women, freed from Satanic power, ministering to Him of their substance as He preached in every city and village—these are exponents of “hearing” and “doing” for which there is no acceptable substitute. The forms and ceremonies of religious man are counterfeit of this holy moral relationship so desired by Christ. “My mother and My brethren” who “hear and do” the word of God are drawn within a family circle of devotion to the Person of Christ. Thus each act of *this* family becomes a ministry to Christ Himself. Mere observances or habits of religious behaviour have no place—the impetus is wholly spiritual. The benevolence of the world ministers to many in need, but it knows nothing of ministry to Christ. The family of which He spoke ministers to Him in every act that accords with His Word.

There is one act of love that, in its devotion, loses sight of itself in ministry of worship. It is an act that responds to love that “passeth knowledge.” It breaks the bread and drinks the cup of memory. It responds to the word of desire expressed. It ministers to the Beloved Himself—“Do this in remembrance of Me.”

At verse 22, the narrative continues by reference to “a certain day.” The better translation is “on one of the days.” It was one of the many days of active self-giving on the part of the Divine Worker. Furthermore, it is noticeable how unostentatiously the great event is introduced, for there is to be an advance into the country of the enemy, and the place of his domination lies beyond the sea. There is no flamboyant speech—only the simple phrase, “Let us go over unto the other side of the lake.” Yet it was a movement certain to meet resistance from Satan himself, since the message of GRACE carried by the Messenger Himself must reach the Gentile

world beyond. The Lord Jesus does not issue commands to His seamen friends though, indeed, He is Lord of the restless sea. He joins them with Himself in a unity of purpose so that they, too, may enter into the ultimate joy of it and know somewhat of the power and security of His word "Let US go." Thus the "family" thought continues—"THEY launched forth." They are in the ship WITH HIM—and HE WITH THEM. So do they "set off from shore" to a place unprepared by any herald to receive them—a country out of range of direct testimony from God.

"But as they sailed He fell asleep" (verse 23). To outward seeming, He became unaware of them. Despite all they had seen of His compassion and His power—even over death itself—they saw Him only as a man asleep! Nothing He had ever done was imperfect. They had trust in Him, but only when He was awake! Yet the current of their experience was in accord with their way of life. They knew the moods of that lake as they changed from calm to sudden tempest. Its position amid mountainous country leaves it at the mercy of sudden and violent wind storms, but the force of this upheaval was outside the bounds of their experience and ability. The waters were engulfing their ship and "they were in jeopardy."

It is possible to read of this episode as an hindrance to His journey—to see evidence of the force of Satanic opposition to His purpose, and to rejoice in the manifest power with which He stilled the storm. But the plan of the Supreme Worker embraced His own who were with Him BEFORE ALL ELSE. They, and we in our day, were to know that, sleeping or waking—seen or unseen—it is Himself with us and we with Him that shall garrison our hearts and assure our safety. His sleeping Form in their midst spoke of the rest of faith—HE WAS WITH THEM—to "the other side" of the changeful sea!

"And they, being afraid, wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for He commandeth even the winds and water and they obey Him" (verse 25). There is fear, and the wondering question of human minds—the outcome of not apprehending His protective love. But HIS question was

the only vital one—"Where is your faith?" It was a question that remained with them and made its answer in later days. It was His purpose this should be so. For storms would come, and faith in Himself as their complete resource would avail to meet them. The record in Acts xii. tells of James, the fisherman, brother of John, "killed with the sword," and of Peter in prison chained between two soldiers—the church in unceasing prayer for his life, which might be ended on the morrow. Yet, Peter had learned the peace of confiding, and the Angel of the Lord found him asleep! The memory of Jesus asleep—the needless act in awakening Him—His great power on their behalf, despite their lacking faith—remained with them. His enquiry—to which they had no answer—"Where is your faith?"—was bound up with the evidence of His power exercised on their behalf.

There are storms that affect our lives in this age; and these are closing days. The power of the enemy is seen, and will remain until Christ comes to reign. Our confidence, and thus our rest, meanwhile, will be in Himself. In His compassion He has stilled great storms at the prayer of His people. He is never absent when a storm comes down upon the "little ship." "The Lord will hear when I call upon Him," is the song of the Psalmist King, and from this confiding comes his REST of FAITH—"I will both lay me down in peace and sleep; for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety" (Psalm iv.).

EDWARD T. WOOD

THOUGHTS ON THE SABBATH AND THE LORD'S DAY

The institution of the sabbath day has a double bearing: it displays God's *claim* on man and God's *care* for man. But these are not contrary to one another; they are complementary. It was the error of the Pharisees to have divorced them.

Though blessed and sanctified by the Creator (Genesis ii.3), the seventh day was not given to man to observe, as far as scripture informs us, until the giving of the manna (Exodus

xvi.23,29). There a double portion of manna fell on the sixth day, and Moses told the people not to go out and gather on the seventh day, because this day was given to them as a sabbath of rest.

The connection is a striking one, for the manna itself, not produced in the sweat of man's face according to the ancient curse (Genesis iii.19), but a free gift from Jehovah, was thus a promise of the eventual passing away of the curse—of the rest that remaineth for the people of God (Hebrews iv.). Hence as the manna spoke of direct dependence upon God, its lesson for Israel was the all-important one that “man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord” (Deuteronomy viii.).

Now, was not this the underlying *purpose* of the sabbath of rest? For six days Israel would have to toil, like other nations, in order to gain their necessary food, and this, because of the entrance of sin into the world. But God would not leave His people without a continual reminder of Himself—of the seventh day when He rested in the contemplation of His handiwork yet unspoiled by sin.

More important than the rest from labour itself, was the opportunity to ponder His words, His promises and His claims. In these their true life lay.

THE SABBATH MADE PART OF THE LAW

When Israel later on at Sinai accepted the keeping of the law as the condition of blessing, the sabbath was made an essential part of the divine covenant (Exodus xix.5,6&8; xxxi, 13-17), and its observance became an acknowledgement of God's claims upon them as His people. It was a sign which separated them from the nations around, “a sign between Me and the children of Israel for ever,” as the scripture puts it.

As part of the law, God's claim had to be established absolutely. To break the Sabbath was to defy Jehovah, and so the offender was stoned. But it is interesting to notice that the command “Thou shalt light no fire throughout all thy habitations on the sabbath day” shows it was intended to

apply to a people in the land of Israel. In colder climates, such a prohibition would cause hardship. One would like to know if those who would lay seventh day observance upon Christians, themselves keep this part of the law!

In forbidding work on the sabbath, however, God's gracious care for His people is shown in the express provision, "save that which every man must eat," a provision which necessarily included the preparation of food.

God's *care* comes out in a remarkable way for those less privileged—for the manservant and the maidservant. Well He knows the selfish heart of man, and we know how often those with power over the lives of others have squeezed out the last ounce from them. But Jehovah took care to ensure that these should have their sabbath. For this reason the sabbath is linked in Deuteronomy v. 14, 15 with the servitude in Egypt, so that the recollection of their own hard labour should lead masters to show mercy to their own servants.

So while in Isaiah lviii. 13 the prophet takes up God's claim on His people to keep His sabbaths, the remainder of the chapter is devoted to the call for consideration of the needs of others.

But if God's claim was absolute, it was in another sense a partial one. The law was, as we learn from Paul's epistles, a temporary dispensation, and its ordinances witness to imperfection, to incompleteness. We may say that God, in taking up Israel as a nation, in pursuance of His plan for man's deliverance, laid claim upon one day in seven, until the time came when He could redeem a people to be wholly for Himself.

It is for this reason, perhaps, that sabbath observance is never claimed from the Christian. Not one day in seven, not *part* of his life, but the whole, belongs to God. "Ye are bought with a price, wherefore glorify God in your body." And, "whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus," is the Christian rule. This has nothing to do with the Lord's day, the first day of the week, which we will consider presently.

THE SABBATH WHEN OUR LORD WAS HERE

In the time when the Lord Jesus was on earth, the meaning of the sabbath, like so much of the law, had been reduced to a mass of pettifogging restrictions which hid entirely God's care for His creatures. Thus when the Scribes and Pharisees saw the Lord's disciples, so hungry on the sabbath day that they sought to eat the grains of corn, rubbing them in their hands (Matthew xii., Mark ii.), they found fault with the action as breaking the sabbath.

In His reply the Lord reminded them of David's action when fleeing from Saul, in eating the shewbread for his hunger. In fact, God's most sacred ordinances became valueless in face of the need and suffering of His anointed king. The moral was clear—it was now God's Christ that was rejected, and He and His disciples suffering hunger. Would God, who in the law of the sabbath had made special provision for His people's daily food, maintain the sabbath ordinance in face of the hunger of those so dear to Him?

Thus the Lord Jesus takes the highest ground in defending His disciples—ground which the sabbath itself, as God's ordinance for man's good, was based upon.

Then He adds the most pregnant sentence, "If ye had known what this meaneth, 'I will have *mercy*, and not sacrifice,' ye would not have condemned the guiltless." There lay the gravamen of the charge against these self-appointed exponents of God's law—they were divorcing God's *claim* from His *care*. Instead of seeing in the disciples' distress a call to their compassion, they sought on a flimsy pretext to make them guilty.

Finally He added, "The Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day"—that is, the claim to man's obedience and subjection of which the sabbath was witness, was for subjection to *Him*—the Lord of all.

Then again, in the following incident in the synagogue, of the man with the withered hand, whom the Lord Jesus sought to heal on the sabbath day, He showed that, sabbath or no, they would themselves pull out their sheep that had fallen into a pit. If they thus cared for a sheep which they owned, much more

did God care for a man! So, He concluded as He healed him, "It is lawful to do well on the sabbath day."

The fact was, that God's people were not in the condition that He had planned for them. Their sicknesses, like their bondage to the Romans, were the proof of their failure to obey His law. Hence, when the Jews sought to kill Jesus because of another sabbath healing, He replied, "My Father *worketh* even until now, and I *work*." That is, true sabbath keeping was impossible while man's need was so great, and so it will always be until the true Rest of God arrives, when "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation xxi.4).

This brings us to the consideration of

THE LORD'S DAY

The phrase occurs in Revelation i., and the word used, "kuriakos," occurs in only one other place in the New Testament, namely I Corinthians xi.20, "the Lord's Supper."

There can be no doubt that the "day" is the first day of the week, because it was on this day that, at Troas, "the disciples came together to break bread" (Acts xx.7), that is, to eat the Lord's Supper. The two things, the Day and the Supper, are thus joined together. But it was on this day of the week that the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, and came into the midst of His gathered disciples (John xx.) on two occasions.

Thus it is not the sabbath, but "the morrow after the sabbath" (Leviticus xxiii.11), when the first sheaf of the harvest was presented to the Lord, that is the Lord's Day. He was indeed Himself the first-fruits of the Resurrection, and His day symbolizes the New Creation, just as the sabbath was a memorial of the Old Creation.

But it is marked out as His day in a wholly different way from the sabbath. There is no law attaching to it. Its observance is not commanded, but the word of God shows us, in a way that appeals to those that love the Saviour, what is His mind about it. It is a day of privilege, when we may come together to

find Him in our midst, to keep His supper in remembrance of Him.

We may note also, that Paul enjoins the Corinthians to put aside their contributions for the relief of His poor saints on that day (I Corinthians xvi.2).

As to the sabbath, Paul exhorts the Colossians to let no one judge them as to its observance (Colossians ii.16). Jewish believers no doubt continued to observe it, but never is it laid upon Gentile believers to do so.

The Lord's Day is not to be thought of as replacing the sabbath. It is not giving the Lord one day out of seven, for we are His, body, soul and spirit, Who has purchased us with His own blood. But this day, the first of the week, He has marked out for special blessing.

Happy are those who are free from other obligations on that day. But if not, whatever labour comes our way, let all be done in His Name, giving thanks to God the Father by Him. And for those who are privileged to labour in the ministry of the word on that day, there is truly little bodily rest; but there is a refreshment of spirit which is invaluable. The privilege, which many people enjoy in so-called Christian lands, of being free to be occupied with the Lord and His things, is just a foretaste of the day when we shall be in His presence, to go no more out.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

THE EARLY CHAPTERS OF JOSHUA

JORDAN AND ITS MEMORIALS

This portion of the book of Joshua tells us of the passage of the people of Israel over the river Jordan, and of the memorials of this great national event which were set up according to divine command. They also provide instruction for us with reference to the inheritance that God has given us, to the way we enter into possession of it, and to the necessity that this instruction should be continually before our hearts.

It was according to God's arrangement that the people of Israel were brought into the promised land from its eastern side. On this account it became a necessity that they should

cross the formidable barrier of the river Jordan before they could occupy the land that God had promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob should be theirs. Looking at the map we see that the Israelites on leaving Egypt might have taken a more direct route to Canaan, and travelled along an easy road by the sea coast, which would have brought them to the southern boundary of the land, with no great river to cross.

But this short and easy cut was not God's will. His will was that when the people took possession of the "good land" He had chosen for them they should ever have before their hearts the marvellous exhibition of Jehovah's power as well as His mercy witnessed by them at the crossing of its borders. The fact was that the people were conducted by the cloudy pillar to the river Jordan at the difficult and dangerous time of its flood. Obviously they could reach the opposite bank only by the exercise of God's power on their behalf. The Israelites were made to feel, even when the land was before their eyes, that they could get into it only if Jehovah intervened in His almighty strength. This He did, and so long as they realised in their hearts what the passage of the Jordan signified, their souls would be uplifted towards God in thanksgiving and worship. As they remembered how Jehovah's name was glorified at the swollen river, they would fear Him and serve Him, and bless His holy name.

THE PASSAGE OF THE RED SEA AND NOW OF JORDAN

The Israelites had had previous experience of deliverance by God's invincible power. At the Red Sea, they had made a marvellous crossing, and there Jehovah's right arm had destroyed their oppressors. But at the Jordan, the circumstances were different. And in Christian edification it is useful to distinguish between the significance of the Red Sea and the significance of the Jordan.

At the passage of the Red Sea, the angel of God and the pillar of the cloud, signifying the presence of Jehovah with the terrified people, went behind them (Exodus xiv.19); here at the Jordan the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of Jehovah

their God went before them (iii.6). At the Red Sea, the foes of the children of Israel were behind them; at the Jordan, their foes were before them in the land of Canaan to which they were going. At the Red Sea, they crossed in the darkness of the night; at the Jordan, they crossed in the light of the day. At the Red Sea, Moses stretched out his hand with the rod of judgment; but there was no rod in the hand of Joshua at the river Jordan, there was just a silent and secret display of God's power, holding back the rushing torrent.

At the Red Sea, the children of Israel were leaving behind them Pharaoh, their enemy, who had kept them in slavery. When they were on the other side they saw the bodies of their oppressors dead on the seashore, and they sang the song of their deliverance from the house of bondage (Exodus xv.). It was the first step in the career of their new life. God had redeemed them by breaking the power of Satan who held them under his control, while the blood of the passover lamb showed how they were screened from Jehovah's judgment due to them on account of their sins. But here, at the Jordan, on the threshold of the promised land, the people look forward not backward. Canaan in all its fertility and beauty on the other side is beckoning to them. There is that pleasant land that God loves. That is the little plot which God has set apart for His chosen and redeemed nation. As, at the commencement, Jehovah set apart and prepared the garden of Eden for Adam and Eve, so He had selected the land of Canaan as the dwelling-place of His people under the beneficent government of their Messiah, His own Son, Who should come to bring the reign of universal blessedness upon the earth. The children of Israel were now on the threshold of that land. God was about to bring in the people whom He had brought out of Egypt. But the tumultuous waters of the Jordan barred the way.

THE RIVER JORDAN

Jordan, though comparatively a small river, is in some respects the most remarkable river in the world. From its source measured in a straight line to its mouth in the Dead Sea it is about the length of our river Thames. But owing to its

numerous windings the total length of the river channel becomes three times greater than that of the Thames. Another striking feature of the Jordan is its rapid descent. Though its source in the mountains is some seventeen hundred feet above sea-level, when the river reaches the first lake (Merom) the waters have descended to sea-level. At the lake of Gennesaret, on the shores of which our Lord spent much time during His earthly ministry, they have fallen nearly seven hundred feet more, and at the Dead Sea another six hundred feet, making a total of thirteen hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean.

The consequence of that is that the Jordan has a rapidly flowing current at all times, and at flood-time the volume of water is greatly increased in width and depth, and also speed.

These facts help us to realise how serious a barrier the Jordan was to the Israelites. Here was a great multitude, not only of men, but of women and children, and they all had to cross this river to enter the land. How could it be done? They might well be dismayed at the sight of the roaring, foaming river. But remember Jehovah's injunction repeated again and again to Joshua, and by him to the people, "Be strong and of good courage" (Joshua i.). And only faith in God would make them strong. To stand there, looking across the valley to Canaan, and to see the swirling river-current ready to sweep them away and all their belongings if they ventured in, would fill their hearts with the fear of death unless they trusted God.

JORDAN AND DEATH

The Jordan is a vivid figure of death; the river flows irresistibly onwards and inevitably ends in the Dead Sea. Death holds the sons of men in the bondage of fear all their lifetime (Hebrews ii.15). It is called in the scriptures, "The king of terrors". Death strikes dismay into the hearts of the strongest men, and the pious king Hezekiah "wept sore" when told he must die. And to-day death apparently stands between believers and that bright, heavenly home to which, even in the infancy of their spiritual life, Christians longingly look. Many forget the New Testament truth that "we shall not all sleep" (I Corin-

thians xv.51), and fall into the snare of assuming that the river Jordan refers to actual death itself, the "death passed upon all men", which stands between us and the enjoyment of the Father's house in that place which the Lord Jesus has gone to prepare for us. We know that Bunyan's famous dream was founded on the supposition that crossing Jordan was the final effort of every pilgrim, and that poor Christian, after a most toilsome journey, was very nearly drowned before he reached the heavenly city.

It is not true, however, that the crossing of Jordan sets forth death for the Christian, that is, the death of his body. But it is a figure of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ for us. It sets forth the fact that He went down into the valley of death to nullify him that has the power of death (Hebrews ii.14); and that, coming into this world, He abolished (annulled) death and brought life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel (2 Timothy i.10). So, through the victory of the Lord Jesus, Christians can say, "Death is ours. It is not a foe, but a friend, no longer a dreaded barrier, but now a welcome entrance into the rest of God."

W. J. HOCKING

(To be continued, D.V.)

THE PROPHETIC PIN

(Note on Ezekiel xv.2,3)

The prophet Ezekiel uses the figure of an unfruitful vine to set forth the sinful condition of the nation of Israel. The usefulness of a vine to its owner depends entirely upon its fruitfulness; it is cultivated that it may produce grapes. Other trees, apart from their fruit, are found useful because of their trunk or their branches, of their flowers or their leaves, or even of their bark. But the barren vine can only be burned as a useless lumberer of the ground. Not so much as a reliable pin or peg can be manufactured from its wood. Hence the force of this figure in illustrating the moral and spiritual

(Continued inside front cover)

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from the Scripture of Truth

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A Monthly Magazine for Believers

DUMBNESS AND DULLNESS AMONG WORSHIPPERS

It is really astonishing at times to witness, and to compose part of, a large group of believers of different ages, all knowing that they are accepted in the Beloved, and that God is their Father, seated like the dumb, around the precious memorials of their blessed Saviour's death! We read in I Corinthians xi. 10, "because of the angels"; and **what must these holy beings think of such a spectacle?**

Yet it is better to be as the dumb than to speak as fools! Periods of silence, when God the Holy Ghost is filling them up by ministering more of Christ and of the Father to the hearts of those gathered to worship, are the golden moments of these hours; but, if otherwise, they are simply the expression of the leaden dullness of our souls. **Is the silence that which is produced by the Holy Ghost? or by our lack of delight in Christ and the Father?**

We all accept that the prayer meeting is for prayer, the reading and the teaching for instruction, and that the only week-day meeting devoted to worship amongst us is that which is now and again specially called for the purpose. Thus we are almost entirely shut up to our gathering together around the Lord's table if we speak of a meeting for worship. As to this meeting, we are, we trust, freed from the thought that we come to the Lord's table to obtain something for our own personal need, or, as we should go to a meeting for prayer, i.e. to make our supplication and wants known to God. **We do not go to the meeting for worship to get, or to supplicate, but to give; that is, we are worshippers.**

(Extracted)

LIVING WATERS FOR THIRSTY SAINTS

(In last October's issue of WORDS OF HELP, we printed an article under the title "A Great Thirst in the Land," which promised consideration later of the remedy for thirsty souls. We regret that this sequel did not appear the following month, as was intended. A reminder of this omission has been received from a correspondent in Greece, to whom we are duly grateful: hence the present article.)

"Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink" (Exodus xvii.6)

At Rephidim, the redeemed people of Israel were in a querulous mood. They were consumed with thirst, which had come about because they had failed to appeal to God. In their peevishness they blamed Moses, the man of God, who showed them the true state of the case. They were tempting Jehovah by their unbelief. They were assuming that God **would** not, and that He **could** not supply them with water to drink in the desert. They even doubted whether the Lord was among them after all, saying, "Is the Lord among us, or not?" (verse 7).

What was to be done with these obdurate people? They had seen the arm of the Lord outstretched on their behalf in Egypt, at the Red Sea, at Marah, in Elim and in the wilderness of Sin. And yet they now said, We shall die with thirst! They had heard, for their fathers had told them, that when Hagar and the lad Ishmael lacked water in the wilderness of Beersheba, God showed her a well (Genesis xxi.). Would the God Who preserved Ishmael, a child of the flesh, suffer the seed of Isaac to perish with thirst? No, Jehovah displayed in Rephidim what is the abiding basis of supplies of refreshment for all His redeemed ones in their wilderness journey.

THE SMITTEN ROCK AND THE FLOWING STREAM

The children of Israel on their way to the promised land had a long track before them through a dry and thirsty land where no water is, and Jehovah commanded Moses to set before their eyes a sight which should live in their memories

so long as they were in the wilderness. Enacted once, never to be repeated, they were to learn the provision Jehovah made for His thirsty people.

Moses was bidden to gather together the elders of the people to represent the whole nation, that they might see what the Lord their God would do for their refreshment. Moses was to pass on before the people, accompanied by the elders, and with him his rod. The identity of this rod was made very plain. God said, "Thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go."

Here in Rephidim memories of Egypt were awakened. There the rod of Moses was associated with the judgments of God. There Moses lifted up his rod and smote the waters of the Nile, and all the waters of the river were turned to blood (Exodus vii.20); it was the first of the series of great plagues upon that rebellious land. Would this rod now be used to bring plagues upon unbelieving Israel? As the Egyptians, at the stroke of this terrible rod, saw the witness of death in all their rivers, their canals, and their ponds, would the rod smite again, and the witness of death visit all the tents of Israel?

If they were not filled with such a dread, they well might have been. But Jehovah was merciful and gracious. The intractability of their flesh had been proved, ever since they crossed the Red Sea, and this incurably evil root of sin within them must be judged. The rod that smote the river in Egypt must now smite also the Rock in the desert. Then the Egyptians could no longer drink of the water of the river (Exodus vii.21); now living waters would gush forth from the flinty rock.

THE PLACE WHERE JEHOVAH STOOD

There were many rocks in the mountainous district of Horeb; which of them was to be smitten? By what feature might it be distinguished? The instructions to Moses were precise, "Behold, I will stand before thee upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock." Note them well: "I will stand . . . upon the Rock . . . and thou shalt smite the Rock." No smiting for Israel!

What did Moses make of this direction to smite with his rod the place where Jehovah was standing? He would remember what happened some years before when he was in Horeb with the flock of Jethro, and Jehovah appeared there in the midst of the burning bush (Exodus iii.). Then he learned that the spot had by reason of the Ineffable Presence become holy ground, and that he must remove his shoes. Now the rock in Horeb is "the place of His feet," and he is bidden to smite the holy Rock with his rod of judgment. "And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel." What a sight for them then! and for us now!

In Rephidim the elders of Israel beheld a typical foreshadowing of the smitten Christ of God. There in figure they saw the condemnation of sin in the flesh, of the root of all their murmurings in the wilderness; for "that Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians x.4). There they saw in figure the adequate cause why they themselves were not smitten with the rod of divine wrath. And more, they saw there the source of that "spiritual drink" provided for their refreshment as long as they were in the wilderness.

THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT

"There shall come water out of it that the people may drink." There was, let it be observed, no smiting with the rod of judgment before the manna came (Exodus xvi.). "I am the Bread of life," said the Lord in Capernaum; "he that cometh to Me shall never hunger" (John vi.35). But when the Lord taught of the rivers of living water for those who believed on Him, He was speaking of the Spirit Who would be given after He was glorified (John vii.37-39) having first been smitten upon the cross.

It was therefore when God had made the crucified Jesus both Lord and Christ that the Holy Spirit was shed abroad at Pentecost (Acts ii.). The ascension of Christ showed the presence of Jehovah upon the smitten Rock, and the living water gushed forth to refresh the thirsty souls in Jerusalem, who for ten days had been lamenting the absence of their

Risen Lord. "And they did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people." Heavenly waters were flowing, and they all were glad, being filled with the Spirit.

And there was gladness too at Rephidim, as parched men, women, and children slaked their thirst with the sparkling, cooling waters from the cloven rock. But the name of the place was called Meribah for their chiding of Moses, and Massah for their tempting the Lord, saying, Is He among us or not? Yet, in spite of this marvellous and gracious rebuke, their sinful unbelief appeared again at Kadesh, and again the people "chode with Moses" because there was no water to drink. Again, they forgot Jehovah, Who gave them water from the rock in Horeb (Numbers xx.).

SPEAKING TO THE ROCK ONCE SMITTEN

This time there was no need to smite with the rod of Moses; it would have been enough to "speak unto the Rock before their eyes" (Numbers xx.8). Have our thirsty brethren who blame the servants of the Lord spoken to the Rock, Who is before their eyes? Have they not forgotten that He is still in the midst? The smitten Rock is the inexhaustible fountain of living water, Whose streams of truth and grace are ever flowing through the wilderness to make glad the children of God. The Good Shepherd has brought us to "the waters of quietness."

Think of it, ye disconsolate ones, and be ashamed of your complaining: the Rock was "before their eyes;" and yet the Israelites said, "Neither is there any water to drink." That Rock was Christ, from Whom the water of life for ever flows abundantly. It was and is wicked unbelief for any of the people of God to say, We are being killed "with thirst."

At the present time, is it not true that, apart from meetings for united worship, prayer, and Bible reading, you have the holy scriptures still in your hand, and they testify of Christ? Read them, then, privately for yourself. Even when quite alone, you may pray to the Father in the name of the Lord

Jesus for the help and comfort you are needing. Pray, then, for yourself as well as for others. The Lord Himself is ever with you. Commune with Him constantly, and do not complain.

So that the living waters of refreshment for which your soul is longing are with you even now, close to your hand. Away then with your foolish, vain, and unbelieving regrets. "Stoop down, and drink, and live." Our "Christ, He is the fountain, The deep sweet well of love."

"Why should we thirst for aught below
 While there's a fountain near,
 A fountain which doth ever flow
 The fainting heart to cheer?
 No good in creatures can be found;
 All, all is found in Thee:
 We must have all things and abound
 Through Thy sufficiency.
 Thou that hast made our heaven secure
 Wilt here all good provide;
 While Thou art rich, can we be poor—
 Thou Who for us hast died?"

W. J. HOCKING

AN ANALYSIS OF ROMANS VII

(A believer under law, with his two natures in conflict, finding a Deliverer in Jesus Christ—verses 1-25)

This chapter continues the subject of the believer's life in its relation to sin. Chapter vi. represents sin as a tyrannical master, whose rule brings forth in us evil fruits which end in death; there is, however, another Master, Christ, Whose service is productive of fruit in righteousness and holiness. But, while sin is there regarded as **apart from ourselves**, in chapter vii. sin is regarded as an incorrigible power **within ourselves**.

Here, there is a vivid description of the inward struggles of a person **who loves good and hates evil**, but who, in spite of his earnest desire to do good, practises the very thing he hates. The person is evidently born of God, because the old man is content with a life apart from God and His will, and this one desires the opposite. Whoever is begotten of God does not practise sin (I John iii.9). The mixed condition which is described is not normal Christian experience, but is the result of looking to self as the source of strength for serving God and overcoming evil. When on the verge of despair, however, a Deliverer is found in Jesus Christ our Lord.

There are five principal divisions in this chapter, which may be briefly summarized as follows:

- (A) Believers are dead to the law by the body of Christ, and are not under its dominion (verses 1-6);
- (B) The law is shown to be, not sinful, but holy; yet it rouses sin to activity (7-13);
- (C) Discovery of indwelling sin by a person who does the evil he hates to do (14-17);
- (D) Discovery of indwelling sin by a person who is unable to do the good he wishes to do (18-20);
- (E) Discovery of the truth about his spiritual case, and of a Deliverer out of his despair (21-25).

There are three words which occur with great frequency in this chapter—(1) the first personal pronoun (**I** and **me**); (2) **law**; and (3) **sin**.

(1) **I** and **me**; the first personal pronoun occurs about 45 times; (2) **law** and **commandment** about 29 times; and (3) **sin** and **evil** about 17 times. These words are all connected with the subject of the victory over indwelling sin, which had been provoked into activity by the law.

(A).—**Death to the law by the body of Christ, and our deliverance from its dominion** (verses 1-6)

The apostle assumes that those whom he is addressing had some knowledge of the law and its claims. But he shows that all believers are delivered from bondage to the law, even as they

have been from bondage to sin. In chapter vi. we are said to be dead with Christ to sin, which no longer has dominion over us (verse 14); in this chapter we are said to have become **dead to the law by the body of Christ**, and law, being operative only during a man's lifetime, has no longer any dominion over us, being dead.

“What, are ye ignorant, brethren, for I speak to (such as) know law, that the law hath dominion over the man as long time as he liveth?” (verse 1). Death is a potent factor in the practical life of the Christian, not his own death, but that of Christ. Deliverance by death is here applied to claims of the law. Human law enforces its regulations and inflicts its penalties so long as its subject is alive, but no longer. If a person is sentenced to be hanged by the neck until he is dead, and dies immediately from natural causes, the law can do no more. The dead has passed beyond its jurisdiction. So by death liberty comes to believers.

DELIVERANCE FROM LAW

In explaining our deliverance from the law of God by the death of Christ, the apostle draws his illustration from family life—that of husband and wife. *“For the married woman is bound to the living husband by law; but if the husband die, she is quit from the law of her husband. So then, while the husband liveth, she shall be called an adulteress, if she belong to another man; but if the husband die, she is free from the law, so as not to be an adulteress by belonging to another man.*

“So that, my brethren, ye also have been made dead to the law through the body of Christ, that ye should belong to another, Him that was raised out of (the) dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God” (verses 2-4).

In illustrating deliverance from the law of marriage, Paul takes the case of a wife, who owed obedience to her husband when he was alive, but who had been made a widow. Apart from any effort of her own, and against her own will, she by death is loosed from the law of her husband. She could not legitimately be under the authority of both at once, but being

made free by death she is at liberty to be married to another.

In verse 5, the application of this illustration is given, but it will be seen that the truth expounded does not tally in all particulars with the figure. The law and the risen Christ are the two husbands which demand our obedience, but neither of these die; **in the doctrine of the Epistle, we die, not the law, nor the risen Christ, Who "dieth no more."** Those who owe obedience to it have died: "ye also have become dead to the law by the body of Christ," Who died for us.

But if we have been freed from former obligations, we are not independent. We should now be to Him Who has been raised out of the dead. Christ, Who was "of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Romans i.3), "made under the law" (Galatians iv.4), has now passed by resurrection beyond the region of law. The law was given for the earth, and to one earthly people exclusively. We belong to Christ in that sphere where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, where grace reigns, not law. The purpose of this deliverance from the law's dominion was that, not ye only, but "we might bear fruit to God," even as we were freed from sin's dominion for a like purpose (vi.21,22).

SPIRITUAL, NOT LEGAL SERVICE

We ought not to attempt to serve two masters—neither sin and God (chap. vi.) nor the law and Christ (chap. vii.). We are called to have a single eye, and to serve in "newness of spirit." *"For when we were in the flesh, the passions of sins that (were) by the law wrought in our members bringing forth fruit unto death; but now have we got quittance from the law, having died in what we were held so as for us to serve in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter"* (chap. vii.5,6).

In verse 5 the past life "**in the flesh**" of those under the law is described, and in verse 6 the new character of service for those delivered is stated—newness of spirit. Since we read, "When we **were** in the flesh," it is manifest we are no longer "in the flesh" (cp.viii.9); now we are "in Christ Jesus" (viii.1).

"**In the flesh**" was the natural state of those to whom the

law applied, but righteousness did not come to any by the law (Galatians ii.21), and the commandment that was ordained to life was found to be unto death (vii.10). For the passions of sins were aroused to activity by the prohibitions of the law, and the inward evil desires were expressed in outward acts by our members (*see* vi.14 also as to members). The result was the bearing of fruit unto death, not God.

“Death” in this connection, as in vi.21, is the antithesis of a useful and godly life of fruitbearing to God. Death is the climax of unfruitfulness. Some that have “a name to live” are without good fruit, because they are dead; the pleasure-loving woman is “dead while she liveth” (I Timothy v.6).

In verse 6, the marginal reading of the A.V. is to be preferred to the text, which implies that the law is dead. The truth here is, as in verse 4, that we have died to the law. And the object of our deliverance from the bondage of the law is that we should serve “**in newness of spirit.**” Compare Romans ii.29.

In chapter vi.4, we read of the “newness of life” in which we are to walk; here it is the new “spirit” of finding a delight in doing the will of God (vii.22), in contrast with a literal conformity to the commandments. Compare the Lord’s teaching in Matthew v.; xiii.1-8; and also Paul’s teaching in 2 Corinthians iii.

(B).—The Law is holy, but Sin is intractable (verses 7-13).

In these verses, Paul vindicates the holy character of the law, and shows that it does not improve man’s evil nature, but it aggravates his guilt because of his disobedience to it. There are four main features in this demonstration:—

- (1) Law is not sin, because it forbids evil desires as well as acts (verse 7);
- (2) Law by its commands brings to light the obdurate will, which is latent in every man (8-11);
- (3) Law is therefore proved holy by its prohibition of sin (12);
- (4) Law did not bring death into the world, but its effect was to make sin exceeding sinful (13).

(1) The apostle propounds one of his characteristic

questions, which he then answers. *“What then shall we say? (Is) the law sin? Let it not be. Nay, I had not known sin unless by law; for lust also I had not been conscious of, unless the law had said, ‘Thou shalt not lust’.”* (verse 7). A Jewish believer might say, If I am delivered from the law, it must be because it is an evil thing. But this cannot be, for by the law is the knowledge of sin (iii.20). The law cannot be evil, if it rebukes evil.

But the apostle is dealing with the inner root of sin, and he refers to the one commandment which unveils man’s rebellious nature. *“Thou shall not covet”* placed a restraint upon man’s will, and he thereupon became conscious of an overpowering impulse to disobey it. The law revealed his inward perversity to him, though he refused to acknowledge it, until he received a new nature, and became conscious of the old propensity.

(2) The practical effect of the law upon a person in awakening his rebellious nature is next described, sin being personified as a deadly enemy waiting for an opportunity to destroy him. *“But sin, having taken occasion by the commandment, wrought in me every lust; for apart from law sin is dead. But I was alive apart from law once; but, the commandment having come, sin revived and I died, and the commandment that (was) unto life, this was found to me unto death. For sin, having taken a point of attack by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew (me)”* (verses 8-11).

As in chapter vi. sin is pictured as acting apart from the responsible person. **Without the law**, “I” was alive, and sin was dead, that is, inactive. **But with the law**, sin revived, that is, became active, and “I” died, incurring sin’s penalty, which is death. Thus, the commandment, which promised life to the obedient (Galatians iii.12), brought death to those under it, because of their disobedience.

(3) The vindication of the law is now declared. In reply to the query, *“Is the law sin?”* (verse 7), he has already shown that the law condemns sin even in its desires: *“So that the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good”* (verse 12).

Holiness is the abhorrence of evil and the approval of good;

and holiness is the character of the law as a principle. Also, each particular injunction is “**holy**,” since it rebukes sin; and “**just**,” since it is consistent with man’s responsibility to God; and “**good**,” since it enjoined man to love God and his neighbour, and love is of God, Who alone is good.

(4) Law did not bring death into the world; death is sin’s wages, and was in the world before the law was given. But the law brought into the light the terrible nature of sin. “*Did then the good become death to me? Let it not be; but sin, that it might appear sin, working out death to me by the good that sin might become excessively sinful by the commandment*” (verse 13).

Sin, not the law, is to blame, for sin works out death to me, using even the law which is good as well as holy. By the law, sin (a) is made to “appear” sin, for under it sin becomes a defiance of God’s will; and (b) is made “excessively sinful.” It is the servant, knowing the master’s will, yet disobedient, who is more guilty than the one who sins without law.

(C).—**The Unwilling Slave to Indwelling Sin** (verses 14-17)

After treating the subject of sin and the law in an abstract manner, the apostle becomes intensely personal in his manner. This transition is noticeable in the verbs, which are now employed in the present tense, not in the past as formerly. “I was alive;” “I died” (verse 9); but in the remainder of the chapter, it is “I am carnal;” “I do,” “I hate;” and so on.

First, there is drawn a living picture of a person doing what he hates in spite of himself—a state of detested bondage.

“*For we know the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I work out I own not; for I do not what I will, but what I hate this I practise. But if what I will not, this I practise, I consent to the law that (it is) right. But now no longer am I working it out, but sin that dwelleth in me*” (verses 14-17). Here we have the experience of a renewed man, realizing and valuing the spirituality of the law, but **finding himself powerless to overcome the lusts of indwelling sin.**

The person speaking is on the side of the law, loves what the law enjoins, and disapproves of what it disapproves. But he discovers in himself an utter contrast between his desire

and his practice. Studying his own inner experiences, he discovers that

- (a) I work out what I own not
- (b) I fail to do what I wish to do; and
- (c) I practise what I hate.

The truth, therefore, is that he is a slave to sin ("sold under sin"), and although he hates evil, he is obedient to the sin that dwells in him. He discerns experimentally two natures in him but he has not learned how to serve God "in newness of spirit."

(D).—The Helpless Slave to Indwelling Sin (verses 18-20)

Both sections (C and D) end with the words, "**sin that dwelleth in me.**" One experience is the converse of the other. In (C) sin is too strong for him, and he unwillingly does what he hates; in (D) he is too weak to do what is good, and so the practical result is the same—he does what is evil. "*For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, no good dwelleth; for to will is present with me, but to work out the right (is) not; for I practise not good which I will, but evil which I will not, this I do. But if what I will not, this I practise, no longer am I working it out, but sin that dwelleth in me*" (verses 18-20).

The great discovery here is his own helplessness; he has **the will to do what is right and good, but has no power to work it out.** What he lacks is not the desire, but the strength. Meanwhile, he is learning the dreadful lesson of impotency. He keeps on doing what he does not wish to do; and this is because no good dwells in him, but sin dwells there, and rules him. Soon, however, we shall read of the Holy Spirit as the Indweller (viii.11).

(E).—Desperation and Deliverance (verses 21-25)

We now come to the conclusion from the twofold experiences, both leading to the fact of indwelling sin. There is first (1) the desperate case of possessing two opposed natures, and captivity to sin (verses 21-23), and then (2) a deliverance from his wretched bondage is found through Jesus Christ.

"I find then the law for me wishing to practise the right, that the evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God according to the inner man, but I see a different law in my

members warring against the law of my mind, and making me captive to the law of sin that is in my members.

“Wretched man that I (am)! who shall deliver me out of this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then I myself with the mind am serving God’s law, but with the flesh sin’s law” (verses 21-25).

(1) The final result of this introspection is summed up. There are three ways of describing himself. He speaks of (a) **himself, the responsible person:** “I find,” “I delight,” “I see,” “making me captive;” (b) **the new nature,** “the inner man;” and (c) **the old nature,** “sin that is in my members.” By experience he finds himself captive to (c).

“Law” occurs five times in the passage—once in the phrase, “the law of God,” and four times in the sense of “uniform experience,” or “an inveterate habit.” Whatever acts uniformly may be described as a law; and the “law” he finds in himself is the invariable propensity of doing evil.

(2) When he abhors himself, like Job, repenting in dust and ashes, he no longer struggles with himself, but cries out, Who shall deliver me? He then abandons the policy of self-help, and seeks a deliverer. Jesus Christ our Lord frees him out of this body of death, which is like a millstone about his neck. So the Lord imparted strength to the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, hindered by his very weakness from availing himself of the relief offered by the pool, a figure of the law (John v.).

The final words of the chapter teach that the two natures remain unchanged in character even after deliverance is known: the mind (cp. Hebrews viii.10) serves God’s law, and the flesh sin’s law. The works of the flesh are named in Galatians v.19-21. Whenever and in whatever way the flesh acts, it is in order to sin. The power to walk according to the Spirit, and not according to the flesh, is revealed in chapter viii.

(Quotations in italics are from the translation by W. Kelly)

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THE GATES OF HELL

(Note on Matthew xvi.18)

The text "And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" means that the unseen powers, so hostile and destructive to what is of man because of his sin, shall not overcome the church of Christ. In other parts of scripture, the term "gates" is used figuratively for the exercise of power and dominion over men. Thus, God's promise to Abraham was, "Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies" (Genesis xxii.17), that is, subdue his foes and exercise dominion over them.

Again, describing the conflict between the Canaanites and the Israelites, Deborah and Barak sang, "Then was war in the gates" (Judges v.8) of their strong cities, implying that there the battle was either won or lost. Then, again, those about to die are said to be drawing near to "the gates of death" (Psalm ix.13; cvii.18; see Job xxxviii.17), that is, death claims the victory over the body which enters his domain. So Hezekiah in his illness lamented, "I shall go to the gates of the grave (*sheol*)," the O.T. equivalent of *hades*, that is, the gates of sheol or hades would prevail over the king, since he felt he would be cut off in the midst of his days, and consequently his hopes of establishing the promised kingdom of his father David would be destroyed (Isaiah xxxviii.10).

Now the usage of this figure of speech in the Old Testament throws light upon the passage in Matthew's Gospel. The Lord's promise delivered to Peter was that, unlike the earthly kingdom, the gates of Hades should not triumph over His assembly. In regard to that company peculiarly His own, He hereby guaranteed an entire security against the hurtful powers of hades and darkness. Later in Patmos the Risen Lord said, I am the Living One, and "have the keys of death and of hades" (Revelation i.18, New Tr.).

(Extracted)

THE DIVINE WORKERS

“My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (John v.17)

Luke viii.26: “And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes.”

At the time of which Luke wrote, this land had been in Gentile hands for nearly seven and a half centuries. It was on the east side of Jordan and an area of danger. Reuben and Gad “had a very great multitude of cattle . . . and, behold, the place was a place for cattle.” They preferred it to the land of divine promise on the west side of Jordan (Numbers xxxii.). The half tribe of Manasseh chose land adjoining, to the northward of Gad. The infiltration of the idolatrous world gradually infected the two and a half tribes, and, thus, they were the first to be carried away by the kings of Assyria (I Chronicles v.26). It was on arrival in this land that Jesus was met by a naked demoniac. So did Satan hoist his flag of dominion—an unholy emblem of possession. With foreknowledge of this, the Divine Worker had said, “Let us go over to the other side of the lake,” and, spite of the storm of Satanic opposition, “they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes.”

In grace, God was reaching out to the Gentile world. The spectacle of the hideous power of the Adversary in his possession of man did but serve to emphasize this grace. In Judea there was a certain semblance of propriety—a cloak of religious formality—but Gentile moralists and philosophers had failed to restrain the licentious corruption symbolized by the poor naked dweller in the tombs who said his name was Legion.

It was very beautiful to see the *delivering* power of God’s grace as shown in each act of Jesus. The man had become identified with an evil possession that enchained him. His periodic seizures were uncontrollable by chains and fetters. There could be no *human* deliverance for him. Luke shows him at Jesus’ feet, and the voice that now speaks through his marred body is that of evils controlled—dispossessed of their habitation. The unclean herd carry them into the sea! Like the Gentile world

of our day, the people of Gadara fear disturbance of their lives and possessions, but the Divine Worker had, now, a witness in their midst, and that witness remains today.

Luke retains and develops the thought of the Presence and Peace of Jesus. This is more significant by contrast with the storm and with the poor demon-torn man writhing in his chains. The Lord leaves His peace as a footprint where He has passed. This is felt again amid the sound of thronging sight-seers who press around Him on the way to the house of Jairus. The woman who struggles to reach Him has striven for twelve years—with despair! Her life was bereft of peace, indeed, though her circumstances were not those of the man from the tombs. Without doubt the Divine Worker has been aware of her tortured life—the flux that never ceased—the outflow of her means of living—the ebbing of her hope! She had a deep awareness of God, yet her uncleanness forbade her partaking of the Peace Offering on pain of being cut off from Israel (Leviticus xv.). Not for her were the spiritual privileges of communion with the Altar of God. Yet she had spent all to obtain them!

With what earnest effort she had sought the removal of her disability! The avenues of her endeavour had opened with promises—only to be closed in futile failure, yet the grace of infallible mercy had brought her weakened body with a confidence assured of healing could she but touch His garment. Like the woman in Simon the Pharisee's house, she had faith in the Person of Christ. For her, there was in Him all that perfection she had never found in herself. He was an inexhaustible treasury of ALL that could ever be needed. IN THAT FAITH SHE TOUCHED HIS GARMENT—SHE TOUCHED THE RIBBON OF BLUE (Numbers xv.38).

Luke opens for his friend these pages from human lives. They bear the impress of the Divine Worker, for He has touched them. The significance of this perfect work was evident to simple faith amid the uncomprehending darkness of that day. Its message remains—over nearly two thousand years of time. The overflowing grace that reached out to the demon-possessed man is the same unmerited favour that is available *now*. There

are still those who, like the woman held apart by her bodily defilement, have intense desire to take part in the Peace Offering. They echo the cry of one portrayed by Paul in his epistle to the beloved of God in Rome (Romans vii.), "the good that I would I do not . . . O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" For them the touch of FAITH is available that brings contact with Christ as a LIVING PERSON. All who are at the end of human resource may press forward to Him despite the throng of human hindrance. So shall they make *contact* with the Heavenly One—their human hands shall touch on earth the "ribbon of Blue"—the border of His garment.

THERE IS A DIVINE RESPONSE TO EVERY HEART THAT LONGS FOR NEARNESS TO GOD—the security and holiness of His sheltering Presence.

Luke continues his narrative concerning the child daughter of Jairus the ruler of the synagogue. We see the Divine Worker responding perfectly to need on every hand. Yet each episode is not only historically accurate—it is the portrayal of a *soul condition* as in the discernment of God. Jairus at the feet of Jesus needs no eloquence to display the love of a father which finds sweet response in his daughter's affection, and fears the loss of it. When death reaches his house, in advance of Jesus, the human sense of final loss dominates the ruler. There is no *human* antidote for this condition of soul. "Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master." The man may well be dumb with grief, but "Jesus answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole" (verse 50).

Thus, again, FAITH is to cling to a Person—even in the face of death! Association with the synagogue—that refuge of the Jew in the presence of Roman overlordship—found no answer to the demand of death. The child had a life associated with observances that brought her into contact with the Synagogue. Yet she was not immune from the death condition. The father, though ruler of the synagogue, was deprived of his daughter's response in living affection at an age when he could expect it to be expressed in increasing intelligence. How often, in our private experience, do we become aware of a lessening of that living affection for which the Lord Jesus seeks! Various pres-

tures to which we are submitted, move toward this condition. The child reaches the point of death. The *living* relationship ceases. She is his daughter still, but the messenger brings the sad news—"thy daughter is dead." Luke shows us the sorrowing people: "all wept and bewailed her." Their tears flow in helpless sorrow. At so great a loss they beat upon their breasts in grief—he uses the same word to convey the grief of those who followed Jesus to Calvary. Yet, with what relief they could have welcomed the assurance and sympathy of the Divine Worker: "Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth."

The Lord looks at the little daughter in view of what He is able and willing to do. The helplessness all about Him is confession of that condition which only He can change. The quickening word—the life giving touch, must come from Him alone. Association with His people, however correct, is no substitute for personal love to Him. This lives on in conscious relationship to Himself. His great love looks for our response, and though, in a sense, we may not be deeply touched by it, yet He regards us as sleeping and would awaken us with His touch and His word.

He comes in Person—His touch is with a view to contact with Himself. It takes a form suited to our condition. He speaks to the little daughter as when her mother called her to awake. He uses the affectionate language of the home—the Aramaic words, "Little lamb, arise." Do we love Him less than first we did? Must He say of us, as of His ancient people, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown" (Jeremiah ii.2)? Even so, He would awaken our affections with His touch of nearness and His voice of love that, perhaps, we used to hear with responding affection.

EDWARD T. WOOD

DEVELOPMENT IN CHRISTIAN LIFE

(We are indebted to Ian S. Bull, of Carbis Bay, for the following summary of an address given by his father, the late J. P. Bull, at St. Ives, Cornwall, on Christmas Day, 1951).

Read 2 Peter i., verses 1-9

These verses deal with the development of what God has already given to every believer.

In the earlier verses of this chapter, we are told that we are given by God, according to His divine power, all that pertains unto life and godliness (verse 3). The life referred to is the life initially received, without which we are not Christians, and God has given us not only all things pertaining to that life, but those which pertain to godliness as well. So that at the threshold of our christian experience we possess all that love could give us. No more could we ask, except that what has already been given may be developed in our lives.

Next to our birth, growth is the important thing. Very often parents have great difficulty in finding the food which will be suitable to a particular child: they try many sorts, but none seems to be the right thing. So the child tends to dwindle, and the parents' distress increases, until at last they light on a food that perfectly suits the child, who then begins to make constant growth. That is, of course, in the natural realm, but it is true also in the spiritual. Once one has eternal life, the next thing is the growth of that life under the Father's care. Earthly parents would be very grieved if their children did not grow. And as our Father looks down upon us, one wonders how many of His children He sees who are undeveloped—children who have life, but in whom there is no expansion. This is a very sad state of things. When Hannah went to see Samuel at the temple, she took a new little coat every year. She expected growth. When she took the coat, she would not have expected him not to have grown.

The very reason that God has given us faith is that we might add something to it. This is the part *we* have to play. The sovereign quickening of God by His Holy Spirit is God's work entirely. The injunction comes to us as "beside this" (verse 5), which means "for this very reason." Since God has given you

all things (verse 3), that is why you should give all diligence to see that in your faith there is "virtue."

The word "add" does not fully or adequately express the thought here. Take the figure of a flower. Everything lies in the bud: everything is already there. When it opens out in its glory, you could say, nothing is there which was not there when it was in the bud. So is it with the life that God has given to us. In that life there lie all the things spoken of here in our chapter. Just as the flower bud has all the parts you see later, so in the faith is the exercise that brings God into our hearts and lives, the principle by which we live.

It is one thing to have faith, and another thing to have virtue. It is not that we have to learn anything which we can add to faith. In true faith there are already these precious ingredients (verses 5-7). The perfect pattern of this is in our Lord Jesus Christ. In Him everything was in due proportion—the "fine flour" mentioned in the Levitical offerings. God wants that life to be developed in us, that is, to be manifest in our mortal bodies.

"Virtue" appears to mean, as it generally does when the word is in the singular, the soldier's virtue. The apostle wrote this letter in the days of the great Roman Empire, when men thought of the soldier's virtue only as courage. So Peter says, see that your faith has virtue in it . . . see that your faith is a courageous faith.

In the first epistle of Peter (chapter ii.9) we have the word in the plural: "showing forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light." "The praises" there is really the plural of the word virtue. It is the excellencies of God that are spoken of. Here in the second epistle, the word is in the singular, and there is a great call that the Christian should have the courage of his convictions. We are placed in this world that our faith should manifest itself courageously. The more we fear God, the less we shall fear men. So let us really see that our faith is not the coward's faith, but the soldier's faith: steadfast in the midst of opposition. Lack of faith closes the door upon our own development.

The apostle continues, "add . . . to virtue, knowledge." There

are those who are wonderfully courageous, but are lacking in knowledge—a very needful ingredient. It is the knowledge of God, of Christ, and the knowledge of ourselves. We cannot know ourselves by contrasting ourselves with others, but only as we are in the presence of God shall we come to know what the Lord intends us to do, as well as our weaknesses. A man should know his own measure, and never do anything that is above his faith or below his conscience. Faith will grow by use: in the expenditure of it there is the increase. The knowledge of God is a most essential ingredient in the development of christian life.

“. . . and to knowledge, temperance.” The word temperance has come to mean something different today. In our chapter it means much more: temperance is really self-control. It is very much like charity; it starts at home. Unless we control ourselves we shall never control anybody else. The Christian is called upon to add the great ingredient of self-control, that is, he is to be master of himself. It is a lovely thing for a person to be in control of himself: to say No to those things which he is well aware will not help him. This strengthens moral fibre. A bad conscience makes cowards of us all. Nothing strengthens so much as really knowing that we are masters of ourselves through God’s grace. We are under obligation to render our members instruments of righteousness, and our daily prayer should be that we may be strengthened within “by His Spirit in the inner man.”

Then, not temperance only, but patience is called for. Patience is another of these choice virtues. It is not patience of a kind which inactively waits: it means patient endurance that has the ability to go through, without chafing or murmuring. Endurance and courage are not the same things. Courage is called for in the face of opposition, but endurance is a quieter thing. Some are called to pass through sorrow for long years. Some wait long years for answers to their prayers. Whatever you do, never give up. God tests us, and this is a proof of His love. How glorifying to God when you pass through it all with Him, and endure.

“Godliness” is another very necessary ingredient. It does not

mean being like God, so much as a quality for the direction of my life. It is that which brings God into everything. The Lord Jesus in all His pathway brought glory to God. His whole heart was toward God. Let that be true of ourselves. Do not let us become occupied with what things might have been, but let us be habitually looking towards God. This will produce godliness.

“Brotherly kindness . . .” “by this shall all men know that ye are My disciples if ye have love one to another.” We ought to love one another deeply: we owe more to one another than we ever dream of: we are all debtors to each other.

However, because that love flows through me it may degenerate: the object—the “brother”—becomes prominent because there is something in him that attracts my heart. So the apostle writes, “and to brotherly love, love.” Love never breaks down: “it bears long, and is kind.” It is the divine nature, and is a much greater thing to have than brotherly love. God wants me to have a love that goes out to all because they are precious to Christ.

Then the apostle says, “if these things are in you and abound, ye shall neither be barren (i.e. idle) or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” What we all need is a balanced life, that we may be lifted out of the angry passions which run through us, and that God may rear in their place something for His praise. The result will be nothing less than the life of Jesus. We rest our eyes there.

THE NEW CHRISTIAN STATUS

(Read: Romans viii.1-4)

There are, according to subject, three divisions in this section of the chapter. (1) Those in Christ Jesus are exempt from condemnation (verse 1): (2) freedom from the law of sin and death is secured for them also (verse 2): (3) the law's requirement is fulfilled in those who walk after the Spirit (verses 3, 4).

NO CONDEMNATION

(1) Verse 1 reads, “*There is therefore now no condemnation to*

those in Christ Jesus.” In the latter part of Romans v., it is shown that **condemnation** is the result (verses 16, 18) of our being in Adam by natural descent. In contrast with that natural state, it is here declared that “now” we are delivered out of that state, and that because we have been placed in a new position—**“in Christ Jesus.”** God, in His Son, Who became a sacrifice for sin, **condemned** sin in the flesh. But Christ has risen from the dead, and is beyond all condemnation; and because we are in Him—Christ Jesus—we are beyond condemnation too.

“Therefore” indicates the connection of what Paul was about to write with what he had written before; in this case with chapter v.12-21, not with vii.1-25. The qualifying clause, “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,” is omitted in the Revised Version. It is not taught in verse 1 that our exemption from condemnation depends upon our walk; this rests entirely upon the fact that we are “in Christ Jesus.” The clause appears properly in verse 4, where it describes the normal Christian habit of living.

THE FREEDOM OF THE SPIRIT

(2) In chapter vi., we learned that through the death and resurrection of Christ we have been delivered from bondage to sin and from death, its wages. In verse 2 this truth is re-stated in connection with our life in Christ Jesus: *“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath freed me from the law of sin and death”* (verse 2).

As in chapter iii.27 and vii.23,25, “law” is used here in the sense of a principle which works uniformly, and not with reference to the Mosaic code. The **“law of sin and death”** expresses the fact that sin always acts in hostility to God, and sinning invariably ends in death. On the other hand, the new **life in Christ Jesus** acts uniformly in obedience to God, and this is the **“law of Christ”** (Gal. vi.2).

The Holy Spirit has only been mentioned once before in this Epistle, and that passingly, in chapter v.5. Here He is introduced as the power of our new life in Christ Jesus. The Lord Jesus after His resurrection breathed on His disciples,

and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John xx.22). This was the impartation to His own of spiritual life in the power of the Holy Ghost, which was outside the sphere of the dominion of sin, being in resurrection.

SIN IN THE FLESH CONDEMNED

(3) In chapter vii. we learned that our old nature is incurably evil, and the law of God only brought to light its worst features. In these verses (3,4), we are taught that God in the sacrifice of Christ condemned sin in the flesh, with the result that the righteous requirement of the law is now fulfilled in us. *"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, having sent His own Son in likeness of flesh of sin and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us that walk not according to flesh but according to Spirit"* (verses 3,4). Here we see God's remedy for the failure so vividly portrayed in chapter vii.

The law of Moses failed to secure obedience, not because of its own imperfection, but because of the material on which it had to work; it was **"weak through the flesh,"** and it could not give life (Galatians iii.21). "Flesh" is man regarded in his natural state. It occurs about fourteen times in the first seventeen verses of Romans viii.

God's remedy is presented in two stages, viz. (a) the incarnation; and (b) the sacrifice. The first fact is that God sent His own Son **"in the likeness of sinful flesh."** He "became flesh," but not "sinful flesh," though He was in its "likeness." But "in Him is no sin" (I John iii.5). He, being "in the likeness of sinful flesh," fulfilled the will of God, which man in the flesh never did, for love is the law's fulfilment (Romans xiii.10).

But there was more than the incarnation of God's own Son: there was also (b) His sacrifice. The phrase, **"for sin,"** is a technical one, used in the sacrificial regulations to describe the sin-offering. This may be seen in Hebrews x.6,8,(18), where "sacrifices" and "offering" are in italics, indicating that there is no corresponding word in the original, which gives **"for sin"** only, in both instances. This O.T. phrase occurs about fifty times in the Book of Leviticus alone.

On the cross, God's Son was **"for sin,"** the sacrifice for it, being there **"made sin"** (2 Corinthians v.21). There God **"condemned"** sin in the flesh. Now, Christ Jesus, being risen from the dead, admits to His company all who believe in Him, and we become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians v.21), and there is no condemnation for those in Him.

Under grace, therefore, the **law** is not made void, but is established (Ch.iii.31), and **"fulfilled"** in us (viii.4). Those who are **"in Christ Jesus,"** and follow Him they love, carry out the law's requirements; they love not only their neighbours, but their enemies, even as He did. Love is the fulfilling of the law (xiii.10).

The word **"walk"** signifies motion or activity with a purpose. Walking **"after the flesh"** is to be actuated by the ordinary motives found in an unconverted man, and may not imply walking in positive sins. **Walking after the Spirit** means the course of conduct which is under the direction of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is the Helper provided for the Christian man. He is the One given to meet the desire of vii.24 for deliverance. There the man thanked God through the Lord Jesus, for the work of the Spirit is not revealed until chapter viii. The one who walks according to the Spirit no longer walks according to the flesh.

THE EARLY CHAPTERS OF JOSHUA

THE DIVIDED WATERS OF JORDAN

We see how marvellously a path was made across the Jordan for the children of Israel. God had His own plan of teaching the people how He could overcome this insuperable difficulty. The priests whose duty it was to carry the ark of the covenant were to take it, and go before the people towards the river, while the people were to remain at a reverential distance from the ark, by which a way would be made for them; there must be two thousand cubits between them and the ark. So soon as the feet of the priests bearing the ark touched the brim of the overflowing river, the flow of the waters failed. The waters on

the left-hand of the priests going towards the Dead Sea went on their course. But no more came down from the upper reaches of the river. For miles, as far as the city Adam, near Zaretan, the waters were piled up in "a heap". Thus a clear way was made for the people's crossing. On their left-hand, as far as the Dead Sea, about four or five miles, there was no water; the great water-course was dry. Jehovah had made a way for His people where there was no way. They saw His ark covered with blue borne on the shoulders of the priests, and as the feet of the priests touched the brim of the river its rushing waters had disappeared. It was the power of God. He had wrought marvellously for His people at the Jordan, as He did forty years before at the Red Sea. Only at the Jordan the ark of the covenant of Jehovah stood in the river bed until the people had all passed over.

DEATH WITH CHRIST

The figure points forward to the believer's association with Christ in His death. "As many as have been baptized unto Christ Jesus, have been baptized unto His death;" and "if we have died with Christ, we shall also live with Him" (Romans vi.3,8). With the eyes of faith we see in the midst of the Jordan of death the ark, typical of the incarnate Son of God—the shittim wood signifying His humanity, the gold upon it, His divine nature. Christ Jesus has gone down into death, and has robbed death of its victory. Death has lost its sting. The grave has lost its terrors for all who have died and risen with Christ, for we know that "Christ having been raised up from among the dead dies no more: death has dominion over Him no more" (Romans vi.9).

Because of our association with the death and resurrection of Christ, we are able to enter into the blessings of the heavenly places now and here in this world. We do not wait for the death of the body to do so. We can by faith make them our own at once; the Epistle to the Ephesians opens with the fact that we are blessed "with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ." We cannot understand this revealed fact,

but we must believe it, for it is written plainly in the scriptures. We believe the record that Jesus our Lord was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification, and we are justified by faith (Romans iv.24-v.1). In like manner, we are to believe that being dead in our offences, God has quickened us with Christ, raised us up with Him, and made us sit down in the heavenlies in Christ (Ephesians ii.5,6). Faith enables us to take possession of both these blessings, procured for us by the death of Christ.

W. J. HOCKING

(To be continued, D.V.)

LIFE MORE ABUNDANTLY

The Lord was speaking (John x.10) of what would be the result for His sheep of His coming into the world. In contrast with "the thief," who came "to kill and to destroy," the Good Shepherd came to bestow life, and, not only so, through Him they should "have it more abundantly."

The "abundance" of life was owing to the personal glory of Christ, the Son of God, and to the immeasurable efficacy of His atoning work, about to be accomplished. Never was such a Person as He; never could there be such a work as His. And the greatness of His gift was due to His own greatness Who was the Giver.

On this account, believing souls received, after the Lord's death and resurrection, a fuller measure of life than had ever been given previously. The Old Testament saints possessed life, but the Lord bestowed upon the New Testament saints "life more abundantly" in the power of the Holy Spirit. It was the same life, but in a higher character and an ampler degree. We see in the Acts how much more "full of life" the disciples of Christ were than they were as we see them in the Gospels. They had "life more abundantly."

W.J.H.

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from the Scripture of Truth

Vol. LVI

SEPTEMBER 1968

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

(continued from inside back cover)

he wrote, "I am conscious to myself of nothing"; but he at once added, "I am not justified by this" (I Corinthians iv.4, W.K.). Hidden things of darkness and all the secret counsels of hearts will be brought to light and manifested in the day of Christ. Hence, while we should always strive to have "a good conscience" (I Peter iii.16), we should also bear in mind that unconsciously we may be blinded by some selfish influence within, making us call good evil, and evil good, light darkness and darkness light.

Because of the possibility of such a dangerous delusion as this, each believer should seek that his heart and ways should be governed by the word of God. His cry should be, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" Psalm cxxxix.23,24). The word of God is the Spirit's sword for our enemies, but the Spirit's dissecting knife for our own inner being (see Ephesians vi.17; Hebrews iv.12,13).

Some have deliberately and avowedly set up their own consciences as their guide, accounting them superior to the word of God, and interpreting scripture according to this inward light. Accordingly, they have, under the plea of "conscience," done many things dishonouring to God and without support in the scriptures. What is "written" is always the safe guide, but conscience alone is not always reliable, and may be but a will-o'-the-wisp luring the soul into danger and even into destruction as the enemy of Christ.

W. J. Hocking

(Reprinted from "The Bible Monthly" — November 1935)

GLORYING AND REJOICING

“Finally, my brethren, REJOICE in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and REJOICE in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Philippians iii. 1-3)

Our understanding of this and other scriptures will be increased if we understand that the apostle is really using two different words, though both are translated “rejoice” in the above passage. The two words are closely connected in meaning, yet essentially distinct, and the second is better rendered “glory” or “boast”.

The first speaks of the **joy** which we have, and ought to have, in the Lord Jesus; the second, of Him alone as our **confidence**. It is when we learn not to put any trust in ourselves, our own goodness or religious attainments, but to rest ourselves solely upon Christ Jesus and His atoning blood, to glory in Him only, and not in anything of man, that we become part of what Paul calls **the circumcision**, i.e. the true or spiritual one, which alone is acceptable to God.

Judaising teachers were trying to get the believers from among the Gentiles to submit themselves to circumcision, so that they should be able to **boast** of the number of adherents they had made; but Paul, in a famous passage declared “God forbid that I should **glory**, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,” for in the cross all such fleshly distinctions are brought to nothing.

After surveying the whole field of his own outstanding Christian service, Paul concludes that only in his infirmities could he fittingly **glory**, because they called forth the power of Christ on his behalf.

In Romans v. 2, he says that the believer **rejoices** in hope of the glory of God, and here again the thought is **glory** or boast or triumph — the translators naturally avoided the word “glory” in two different senses. We triumph in the certain hope of sharing in the glory which shall be revealed.

But we **glory** in tribulations also, he says. Here the distinction is very plain. We could hardly **rejoice** in tribulation itself, though we may rejoice in the midst of it, rejoice and sing as Paul and Silas did in Philippi in the prison. But we **can glory** in tribulation, by faith, because we know it is all part of God's purpose to turn everything to blessing for His children. As Paul continues, "knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

Finally, "we **joy** in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation." Here it is important to know that the word is really **glory**.

Nothing could bring out more clearly the ground of the Christian's confidence. It is **God Himself** that we make our boast. Once we were His enemies because of wicked works, but now, having received the reconciliation through our Lord Jesus, we know that God is **for us**. The righteous God declares **us** to be righteous because of the work of Calvary, so that our glorying is in what God Himself is. We cannot go higher.

In a number of other scriptures the A.V. translators have themselves used the word "glory" or "boast", and to mention some of these is enough to show that the thought is the same as in those already considered. So, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (I Corinthians i. 31), because He is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. And again, "Let no man glory in men" (I Corinthians i. 31), for God knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

But then in Hebrews iii. 6, "We are made partakers of Christ if we hold fast the confidence and the **rejoicing** of the hope firm unto the end" — the word is again "glorying".

It is not meant, of course, that rejoicing is out of place: far from it. Indeed, the two things are closely allied. But we begin with faith, and from faith springs confidence and the sense of triumph in what our Lord has done that is

implied in "glorying". Then joy and rejoicing come as the fruit of our confidence.

Not that we can **rejoice** in ourselves or in any man at all, any more than we dare **boast**, though we often rejoice to see the fruit of God's working in a believer. So Paul in Colossians ii. 5, "joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ." And again, John in his second epistle writes, "I rejoiced greatly that I found thy children walking in the truth."

Indeed, God gives us many, many occasions for rejoicing. The apostle Peter exhorts persecuted believers to "rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings." This, of course, is not rejoicing in suffering itself, but in the privilege, for such he counted it, of following in the Master's footsteps in this respect. In this he had set a good example, as, with the other apostles, after being beaten in the synagogue, he "departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts v. 41). We may wonder whether we ourselves would be found as ready, either to suffer or to rejoice.

However, our deepest, richest joy must be, not in the fullness of our deliverance, not in daily mercies, however grateful to the soul, not in the privileges of service or suffering, but in the Deliverer Himself. **This** joy increases without limit as we learn more of him. We need to look away from self, its trials and its blessings alike, to dwell upon the graces and perfections of the blessed Saviour. In Him we can both glory and rejoice.

"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."

(Habakkuk iii. 17,18)

E. H. Chamberlain.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WITHIN THE BELIEVER

(Read: Romans viii. 5-17)

The apostle next dwells upon the walk after the Spirit, contrasting it with walking after the flesh, and shows that finally even our mortal bodies will be quickened into new life. There are three main subjects in verses 5-11:—

- (1) Contrasts between the flesh and the Spirit (verses 5,6);
- (2) Hatred of God by the mind of the flesh (verses 7,8);
- (3) The believer's deliverance from the flesh (verses 9-11).

FLESH AND THE SPIRIT CONTRASTED

(1) **“For those that are according to flesh mind the things of the flesh, but those according to Spirit the things of the Spirit. For the mind of the flesh (is) death, and the mind of the Spirit (is) life and peace”** (verses 5,6). In the New Testament, **the flesh and the Spirit** are seen in opposition to one another; see, for example Galatians v. 16-25; as **Christ and sin** are opposed (verse 10). Our conscience might condemn an act of sin, but might approve an act of the flesh because the latter seemed right from a human standpoint, and according to traditional standards.

Thus, Simon Peter's confession of Christ, the Son of the living God, was **“after the Spirit”**; it was not a revelation **“of flesh and blood”** (Matthew xvi.). But shortly afterwards, Peter spoke **“after the flesh.”** When the Lord foretold His sufferings and death, Peter **“began to rebuke Him.”** He viewed the sufferings of Christ from a human or fleshly standpoint; and his well-meant remonstrance opposed the will of God, and the Lord said, **“Get thee behind Me Satan.”** Peter was then minding **“the things of the flesh.”** He judged **“after the flesh”** (John viii. 15).

“The mind of the flesh is death;” so that there does not arise from the flesh a single vital movement Godward. It is the negation of Christian life and godliness. But **the mind of the Spirit is life** (such as Paul described in Galatians ii. 20; Philippians i. 21) **and peace** (arising from subjection to the will of God, in contrast with the mind of the flesh which is

at enmity with God). **"Life"** or living is the sum-total of our activities as those that are **"alive to God in Christ Jesus"** (vi.11).

THE ENMITY OF THE FLESH

(2) The antagonistic attitude of the flesh towards God is next summed up, in explanation why **"the mind of the flesh is death"** (verse 6); **"because the mind of the flesh (is) enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, for indeed it cannot be; but those that are in flesh cannot please God"** (verses 7,8).

This is a salutary truth concerning the flesh for every believer to accept, in order that he may no longer in any wise trust to himself in seeking to please God. How can he trust in flesh any more? It has three features which forbid it: (a) the hostility to God of its mind; **"enmity against God"**; (b) its insubjection to the known word of God; **"not subject to the law of God"**; and (c) its impossible reform; **"indeed it cannot."**

The conclusion is that **"those that are in flesh cannot please God."** Those **"in flesh"** are those who are not **"in Christ Jesus."** Note the distinction between **"in flesh"** (status) and **"according to flesh"** (practice). The latter phrase may apply to a believer, but not the former.

DELIVERANCE FROM THE FLESH AND SOME RESULTS

(3) The apostle next dwells upon **the deliverance from the flesh** possessed by those who are **"in the Spirit"** (verses 9-11). There are three aspects (a, b and c) of this deliverance presented, one being named in each of the three verses.

(a) We are delivered out of the state of being **"in flesh,"** by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. **"Ye however are not in flesh but in Spirit, if so be God's Spirit dwell in you. But if anyone has not Christ's Spirit, he is not of Him"** (verse 9).

Hitherto in this chapter the Spirit has been mentioned in a general way as One according to Whom we should walk.

Now He is named as an indwelling Person: **“Ye however are . . . in Spirit if so be God’s Spirit dwell in you.”** He dwells in our bodies as in a temple (I Corinthians iii.16). This divine indwelling is the answer of grace to the sin that indwells according to vii. 17,20. His presence is the assurance to faith of victory (I John iv.4). The consequence of the Spirit of God dwelling in us is that we are **“in spirit,”** which means that the line of our conduct is directed, morally and spiritually, by God’s Spirit. John was **“in spirit”** on the Lord’s day (Revelation i.10). Moreover, the possession of the Spirit is a guarantee that we belong to Christ: He is the seal (2 Corinthians i.22; Ephesians i.13). Those who do not bear this mark of differentiation are **“none of His.”**

The Spirit is here called **“the Spirit of Christ.”** He is the same Spirit Who wrought in Christ, and Who works in believers to produce in them a likeness to Christ, thereby to show that they belong to Christ.

(b) The next verse is descriptive of our practical conduct. Our position or status before God is **“in Christ Jesus”** (verse 1); while in our Christian life here **Christ is in us.** **“But if Christ (be) in you, the body (is) dead on account of sin, and the Spirit life on account of righteousness”** (verse 10).

The practical result of the Spirit being in us is that an image of Christ is formed in us, and Christ is manifested in our walk. Christ should dwell in our hearts by faith (Ephesians iii.17). If we abide in Christ, He abides or dwells in us (John xv.4). Then **the body is dead** (fruitless, inoperative) as the instrument of sin. On the other hand, when the Spirit is active and unhindered in the production of practical righteousness, **the Spirit is life.**

Thus, when Christ lives in me (Galatians ii.20), the body is inactive as the bondsman of sin; the Holy Spirit has been working in me that Christ may be **“formed”** in me (Galatians iv.19). This is righteousness in our walk, and is practical evidence also that the Spirit is our life.

(c) The third truth concerning the deliverance from our former state is that eventually **our mortal bodies** will also participate in the life beyond resurrection. **“But if the Spirit**

of Him that raised Jesus out of (the) dead dwell in you, He that raised Christ out of (the) dead shall quicken your mortal bodies also on account of His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (verse 11).

The Spirit Who now dwells in us is the certain pledge that our mortal bodies will be quickened. That will be in the day of redemption, unto which day of redemption we are sealed (Ephesians iv.30). The Holy One Who now dwells in us will never abdicate His claim to the mortal body which is His present temple. This redeeming act will be the final and complete deliverance from "this body of death" (see Romans vii.25).

"Jesus" is the personal name of the Lord in His lowly service. **"Christ"** is His title as the risen and glorified One, with Whom we are associated. There could be no such association with Him before His death. We are now in **Christ Jesus**.

There are in these verses three aspects of the Holy Spirit:—
 (i) the **"Spirit of God"** in contrast with the flesh (verse 9);
 (ii) the **"Spirit of Christ"** in connection with our walk in the world (verse 9); and (iii) the **"Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead"** in view of the future quickening of our mortal bodies (verse 11).

THE SPIRIT'S INDWELLING AND ITS CONSEQUENCES TO US

Further teaching immediately follows (verses 12-17) relating to the effects of the personal presence of the Holy Spirit within us. The apostle shows (1) that the flesh has no claim upon the believer (verses 12,13); (2) that the sonship of believers is in contrast with slaveship under the law (verses 14,15); that the children of God have certain privileges and responsibilities (verses 16,17).

(1) The Spirit of God brings those whom He indwells into a state of **liberty** from that of bondage to the flesh; they no longer owe obedience to the flesh to walk according to it. **"So then, brethren, debtors we are not to the flesh to live according to flesh; for if ye live according to flesh, ye are**

about to die; but if by (the) Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (verses 12,13).

HOW TO LIVE

The believer is not in the flesh (verse 9), and therefore he is under no obligation to obey its lusts and live **"according to flesh."** If he does so by following his natural inclinations, he acts of his own accord, and in result, he is **on the point of spiritual death.** "He that sows to his own flesh shall reap corruption from the flesh" (Galatians vi.8, New Tr.). Indulgence in the flesh may under God's government lead to physical death (I Corinthians xi.30; I John v.16).

The antithesis is that if by the Spirit we **put to death the deeds of the body,** we shall live, because the Spirit is life on account of righteousness (verse 10). When, therefore, we walk according to the Spirit the flesh is quiescent.

SLAVERY AND SONSHIP

(2) To be "in the flesh" is to be in a state of **bondage**; to be "in the Spirit" is a state of **liberty.** To be "in the flesh" is to be a **slave**; to be "in the Spirit" is to be a **son.** **"For as many as are being led by God's Spirit, these are God's sons. For ye received not a spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye received a Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father"** (verses 14,15).

The law imposed upon the Israelites **"a yoke of bondage"** too heavy to bear (Acts xv.10), enforcing obedience to it by dire penalties; from this bondage the Spirit-possessed believer is **delivered,** as Galatians shows (chapter iv.,v.). But all, both Jews and Gentiles, were under bondage to sin (vi. 20); now this abject slavery is exchanged for the freedom and energy of the Spirit, Who leads us into filial desires according to the will of God and, moreover, bestows power for the accomplishment of those desires.

Grace reigning through righteousness receives returning prodigals, **not as hired servants, but as sons** (cf. Luke xv.). The Spirit induces emotions proper to that new relationship by adoption, and we cry, Abba Father (Galatians iv.6).

THE SPIRIT'S WITNESS

(3) Another aspect of our new relationship, besides that of sons, is that of children, the Spirit being the power in both. **"The Spirit itself jointly testifieth with our spirit that we are God's children; and, if children, heirs also; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; if at least we suffer together, that we may also together be glorified"** (verses 16,17).

The Christian believer is both a son of God and a child of God; he becomes a son by adoption, a child by new birth. The relationship of son carries with it a thought of dignity, importance and representation (Ephesians i.5, New Tr.); that of child the thought of love, intimacy, tenderness and permanence (I John iii.1,2, New Tr.). Life is the basis of the latter relationship, and John presents only this in his Gospel and Epistles, where there is no mention even of "sons", for "children" is the correct translation in John i.12; I John iii.1,2.

THE EARLY CHAPTERS OF JOSHUA THE TWELVE STONES IN GILGAL

In the fourth chapter we find the miraculous crossing of the Jordan by the nation was to have its permanent memorial, lest Israel should forget what Jehovah had done. For as soon as the priests bearing the ark went up on the western or Canaan side of Jordan its waters resumed their ordinary flow, and to the natural eye the river was as it always had been. Should it be forgotten that God had dried up the waters of Jordan for His people Israel? No, they should have a constant memorial of it before their eyes. Accordingly, Jehovah commanded Joshua to choose twelve men, one from each tribe, thus representative of the whole nation of Israel. Not only were the nine and a half tribes that would dwell in the land represented, but also the two and a half tribes that had chosen the land of Gilead (Joshua i.12-15).

Each man was to take a stone from the place in the river bed where the priests' feet stood firm, and carry it on his shoulder to the place where they lodged for the night. Afterwards these twelve stones were to be erected in Gilgal

as a monument and a sign to the people of Israel and to their children for all time, of what Jehovah their God had done. He had brought them into the possession of their land by cutting off the waters of the river Jordan.

The memorial in Gilgal has its application as "a sign" to ourselves also. To the Israelites, the cairn of stones spoke of what Jehovah by almighty power had brought out of the Jordan He had divided. Typically, He had brought the tribes out of the place of death. Clearly, this memorial has an application to those who died with Christ, that is, those who attributively shared His death on the cross. There is "now no condemnation", the apostle says, "to those in Christ Jesus" (Romans viii.1). God there, upon the cross, attributed to the Lord Jesus ourselves, as well as all that we had done, and He suffered there for us, and for our sins. He died for us, and what we were naturally came to an end judicially at Calvary in our Lord Jesus Christ. We have, the apostle says (Colossians iii.1), to "seek the things which are above," because we "died with Christ," and also have been raised with Him. How do we know we died with Christ? In precisely the same way as we know that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins: we believe it. We accept what God says about it. Our old nature, this old man, was "crucified with Christ." The old man cannot enter into the things of God, because the natural man neither receives the things of the Spirit of God, nor can he understand them (I Corinthians ii.14).

How does it come about that we understand the mystery of our heavenly calling and inheritance which is revealed in the Epistle to the Ephesians? In our natural estate, as stones in the Jordan, we could not. But God put an end to us in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, and there is a memorial of that death in the inheritance that we have in Him. There, in the heavenly places, is the recorded fact that those who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ died with Him, and that those who died now live with Him and have a share with Him in that new life which He possesses as having passed through death (Galatians ii.20).

These twelve stones in Gilgal were to be a memorial to Israel for ever of Jehovah's victory in the Jordan. Joshua said to the people, "When your children ask hereafter, saying, What mean ye by these stones? then ye shall say to them, That the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of Jehovah, when it went through the Jordan" (iv.6,7). They had been as dead as stones buried in the river, but they had been brought out of the place of death. They had been made, as it were, living stones to show forth the praises of Him Who had called them out of darkness into His wonderful light in the land of promise.

The Christian memorial witness for God is of a higher order than that of Israel. Because we live with Christ Who died, and because of the link given us with Him in His death, we are destined to share with Him the glory that God has given Him because of His death upon the cross. We had no conscious share with Him there. We were as unaffected by the waters of judgment that came upon our Lord Jesus Christ as those stones under the feet of the priests in the bed of the river. But, in the divine estimation, we were there that day when the Lord Jesus Christ was under the rod of judgment. And as we have part in His death, so we have part in His life Who was raised up from among the dead. The apostle write, "Ye have died, and your life is hid with the Christ in God" (Colossians iii.3). In our new life, therefore, we are memorials of the triumphs of Christ in His death.

THE UNSEEN MEMORIAL IN THE RIVER

Another memorial was set up by Joshua. The first one erected in Gilgal was the work of the children of Israel. Each of twelve men representing the whole of the nation, took up a stone on his shoulder, and carried it to Gilgal, where the twelve stones were deposited as a public memorial.

But we also read, "And twelve stones did Joshua set up in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the covenant had stood firm; and they are there unto this day" (iv.9). As the ark of the

covenant is a figure of the Lord Jesus Who went down into death, so Joshua is a type of the risen Lord, Who, by His Spirit, brings His people to victory in the heavenly places over all the foes that are there (Ephesians vi.10-12). It was the work of Joshua to put these twelve stones in the bed of the river in the place where the priests stood that bare the ark, and from whence the twelve stones for Gilgal had been taken.

This memorial stood in the place where the victory over death was obtained, and had more of a private and personal character than the one at Gilgal. It was to be seen and known by faith. And so believers are "always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body" (2 Corinthians iv.10). So also in the Lord's supper we show forth the Lord's death (I Corinthians xi.26). The Lord Himself is present at that remembrance. The eating and the drinking constitute His memorial: "This do in remembrance (literally, for a memorial) of Me" (Luke xxii.19). This is the memorial, unseen of men, set up in this world to the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the private cenotaph which He desires to be maintained in the hearts of His people.

We can imagine some of the children of Israel visiting the banks of the Jordan, and as they looked at the flowing waters, remembering that once the holy ark of the covenant stood there, and held up the mighty stream that they might pass over on dry ground. Each one had his share in the victory that overcame death, because twelve stones were there, representing the whole nation. So in the Lord's supper we have the loaf and the cup which speak of the death of the Lord Jesus. And the loaf which is the symbol of His body, in which He bare our sins on the tree, also sets forth the spiritual body of Christ. "For we being many are one loaf, one body" (I Corinthians x.17). And "the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of the Christ?" We all died with Him, and are represented in the memorial of His death. Only there were twelve stones to represent the tribes of Israel, but one loaf to set forth the body of Christ.

(To be continued, D.V.)

IS CONSCIENCE A SAFE GUIDE FOR CHRISTIAN CONDUCT?

No; conscience is not a safe guide for a believer unless it acts according to the revealed will of God. Conscience is the inward faculty of the soul which distinguishes between right and wrong, but it requires the infallible word of God to point out what is right. Apart from the guidance of Scripture, conscience may call evil good, and good evil, like those denounced by the prophet (Isaiah v.20).

Conscience was acquired by man at his fall, after which God said of Adam, "Behold, the man is become as one of Us, to know good and evil" (Genesis iii.22). It was then inherited by Adam's posterity. Consequently, even the heathen have a conscience witnessing within them and thoughts accusing or excusing themselves (Romans ii.14,15). Conscience, however, gives no power to withstand evil, though it condemns the one who commits the sin.

The word of God gives ample light and truth for the correction of man's ways, so that by means of its teaching, the conscience uncovers even evil lust in the heart where its presence is unsuspected. Thus Paul wrote, "I had not had conscience also of lust unless the law had said, Thou shalt not lust" (Romans vii.7, New Tr.). But the word of God must be used in its true character as a witness of Christ, otherwise the conscience may mislead, and wrong be done as if it was right. So Saul of Tarsus, who had a knowledge of scripture beyond most of his day, was one of those who thought he was doing God service by persecuting Christ in His saints (John xvi. 2; Acts xxvi.9). Hence he said to the Jewish council, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day," that is, both before and after his conversion (Acts xxiii.1; see also xxiv.16).

While conscience has its important uses, it is not an infallible guide for believers. It is a common illusion that when the conscience is clear, all must be well. Paul spoke of having a good conscience with regard to his own conduct when

(continued inside front cover)

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

Vol. LVI

OCTOBER 1968

No. 10

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

(continued from inside back cover)

the Old Testament we have the books of Kings and Chronicles, both narrating the history of the nation of Israel to the Babylonian captivity. Each, however, was written with a distinct object or moral purpose. The books of Kings give the history of the whole nation of Israel as the centre of God's public government. In the books of Chronicles prominence is given to the royal house of David from whence the Messiah would spring in the fulness of time. Similar instances of duplicate accounts or deuterographs, as they are sometimes called, may be found on examination of the various books. See, for example, the account of King Hezekiah's sickness which occurs both in the Kings and in the prophecy of Isaiah (2 Kings xx.; Isaiah xxxviii.); and there is brief reference in 2 Chronicles xxxii. 24.

Now the four Gospels are instances of a four-fold narrative supplied for the purpose of showing the readers of the word of God four distinct aspects of the life of our blessed Lord Jesus. They all present the same general biographical facts, but each evangelist is induced by the Spirit of God to lay stress on the particular features which illustrate the special theme of his Gospel.

No doubt you have in mind the significance of "four" as a number. Without presuming to speak too positively on the subject of the meaning of numbers in scripture, "four" often appears to set out something which has an application to the world at large. Thus the four winds blow upon the earth from all four quarters. There were four rivers which went out of Eden to water the whole earth (Genesis ii. 10-15). Reference is also made to the four corners of the earth. The four Gospels certainly exhibit One who was manifested to bring blessing to all parts of the world.

(Extracted)

LORD'S DAY REFLECTIONS

XXXIX "PEACE BE UNTO YOU"

(John xx.19-21)

"Peace be unto you" was no doubt the usual form of greeting, and among those who loved salutations in the market places, it had degenerated into a mere conventional phrase. Nevertheless, its form is a tribute to the universal desire for peace, though it must be admitted that from the lips of man it never amounts to more than a fervent wish, whatever the passionate sincerity of its utterance.

But let those who have ears to hear, hearken to these self-same words as they came from the lips of the risen Lord "that same day at even, being the first of the week." Here is no conventional greeting, no idle wish, but a divine benediction from One Who speaks with authority and not as the scribes.

It is the voice of Him Who on the evening of the first day of another week had spoken those words of majesty and might "Let there be light," and there was light in a darkened world. He spake and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast.

Yet, blessed as it is for us to think upon the illimitable power that lay behind the words, "Peace be unto you," uttered by the Lord to His disciples that day of His resurrection, He gives us still deeper themes for our meditations.

"When He had so said, He showed unto them His hands and His side." The peace He brings rests not only upon the glory of His person, but also on the perfection of His work. It is real peace, the fruit of righteousness. All that stood in the way has been confessed and judged; the acceptable sacrifice has been offered; and the holy Sufferer reveals to their adoring gaze the evidence of what He had borne upon the cross that they might know peace with God and enjoy the peace of God.

"That all was borne, that all is done,
Thine agony, Thy cross can tell."

May we often gaze by faith upon His hands and His side, that we too may be glad as we see the Lord, and may give Him the praise and worship of our hearts!

“Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.” Truly it is not as the world gives, nor yet as it desires, that the Lord provides for His own. The peace which the world longs for is very different from that which the disciples enjoyed.

Were Peter and John now to look forward to a life of ease and comfort? Could they retire to some quiet spot where they would be free to live “peaceably” in prosperity and without anxiety? We know it was far otherwise for the eleven. But in their busy lives of service and suffering, there was nothing that could disturb that peace which the Lord had secured for them and bestowed upon them. “These things I have spoken unto you that IN ME ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

L.C.H.

(Reprinted)

THE DIVINE WORKERS

“My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (John v.17)

Luke ix. This chapter, together with that which preceded it, and the one that follows it, form a series in the expanding service of the Divine Person of whom Luke writes.

In the eighth chapter there is the Lord’s own activity as Worker—living example to the twelve who were with Him (verse 1). Legion possessed the demoniac, despite human attempts at control. The power of Satan was demonstrated and overthrown. From within this human ruin—symbol of the world of men—there came, under the divine Hand, a realisation that the place designed for him was where his Deliverer moved and worked, and, though he could not be with Him, he could be *servant* and *representative* till his Lord returned.

Touched in the crowd by an enfeebled hand, He answered to faith in a woman who would have been ever grateful to Him as debtor to His healing, yet found herself in that relationship which raises the debtor to the family circle of faith. “Daughter, be of good comfort.” To know Jesus as One from whom the virtue of healing flowed was wonderful, but to be brought into

the family of God as a present reality is to know that calm security of spirit which the world never knows.

In the sad house of the ruler of the synagogue, the fading and dying of the little daughter was a presentation of failing affection passing into the coldness of no response to the one who loved her. Among the sorrowing people, genuine or merely formal, the One who had long worked for affection from the Israel He loved, spoke the only word of confident hope—"She is not dead but sleepeth." Voices of scorn may seek to drown the declaration, but the Divine Worker scanned the centuries and saw the awakening of an Israel recalled from a death distance (Ezekiel xxxvii.), and of a Judah that would ask in wonderment, "What are these wounds in thine hands?" (Zechariah xiii.6).

In chapter ix. the Lord *sends out* the twelve He has chosen. Luke tells of His choice in chapter six. There is significance, indeed, in His expression "The disciple is not above his Master, but everyone that is perfect shall be as his Master" (Luke vi.40) It is the accepted principle of the pupil and his teacher, but, as Jesus unfolds the divine principles of His Kingdom, it becomes clear that His desire is that His pupils shall go on to perfection—to be as their Teacher. Nothing less than this would be acceptable. Are they not to *represent* Him! to present His character likeness to those among whom He will send them! There were, in their day, many about them learned in the law and the prophets—skilled in the *letter* of the ancient Word—but they were not, in any way, like the Son of Man. It is not sufficient that we learn—we are to be LIKE Him if we would REPRESENT Him in a world where He is unknown. This is, clearly, the Christian's responsibility. In sending out the twelve, the Lord Jesus did not isolate to Himself the work of representation of God to those that were without the knowledge of Him. The twelve have a distinctive place as representing divine administration in a future scene, but the principle of presenting the message of God to man remains and we are in responsibility in regard to it.

One thinks of the twelve observing Jesus, the Divine Worker, in all that He did as they followed Him. Sent forth in His name,

they did what *He* did; they said what *He* said. Stored with awareness of His message, they preached the Gospel of the Kingdom with the power of which *He* was the Source. The great message began with One Man—it extended its circle to twelve, and on to the seventy! The moral responsibility of us all is surely the extension of this REPRESENTATION OF HIMSELF.

The effect of this representation by the twelve reached the ears of Herod the tetrarch. How could it be otherwise? The foundations of the demon world were disturbed. Prisoners of Satanic domination were released, and the outcome of sin, in disease, was healed. It was done without trappings of human glory. They went at His charge—with nothing for the journey. His power worked through them—they were HIS REPRESENTATIVES. Herod was “in perplexity” (verse 7). The word indicates mental alarm. The upsurge of memories of evil—the murder of the last and greatest of the prophets—the fear of the aftermath of sin. To REPRESENT JESUS, and Himself alone, has effect upon the world without as well as blessing among the seekers of His healing.

At verse 10 we read of their return: “They told Him all that they had done.” How good to report to Him—and to find He knows already! to realise His sympathy with our weakness! to sense His love in commendation! “And He took them and went aside into a desert place.” It is here that the Divine Worker would continue His unfolding of this representation of Himself by the twelve. He had already given them power to do what He Himself had done, “Power and authority over all demons and to heal diseases” (verse 1). Now He would bring them still further into accord with His thoughts. What intimacy of representation was known to them as they took from His own hands the loaves with which to feed “about five thousand men”! They came to Him without thought for the need for such a service. And when He suggested they should perform that act of His representatives saying “Give ye them to eat,” they replied with calculations and assessments, exhibiting five loaves and two fishes as evidence of inadequacy—instead of being the slender means from which He could provide, to

overflowing. Thus they learned, as we must learn, their human insufficiency which, wholly connected with His Person, becomes an abundant sufficiency, not only for the present desert conditions in which His own must be fed, but for the need of Israel—twelve handbaskets of abounding grace—the perfect administration of bounty from the Hand of God.

How blessed to place in His hand the five small loaves of our own insufficiency, to leave them with dependent faith, as their number implies, and to find that, with the two small fishes, the seven of divine completeness is in movement to multiply our poor giving to His purposes of plenty. We may have a very limited awareness of His character, but, brought into touch with Him, there is no limit to the food He can provide for His people. With what joy may we then become the humble bearers of His bounty! The scarcity of spiritual food in our “desert place” is depressing to contemplate. Too many of His people are offered that which does not come from His Hand—the food thoughts of men concerned with the reformation of a world from which there can be no spiritual reaction apart from acceptance of the Gospel. Is there no challenge for us in His request, “Give YE them to eat”?

The loaves represent that which we have apprehended of Himself—the experiences of our lives, varied and personal, have brought awareness of divine resource—the outcome of bringing to the Lord the burdens of our day—the intimate perplexities of the path. There are many activities that combine in production of a loaf of bread. The two fishes may be considered as indications of His hidden resources. Are they not those sovereign expositions of Himself in which we have had no part save to receive them—often unexpectedly as though awakened on the journey with the words “Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for thee” (I Kings xix.5-7).

“And He took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude. And they did eat, and were all filled.” We treasure the record of it, and something of the fulness of what it represents. Taking all into His hands, and looking upward to the Source of all blessing, He blesses

and dispenses that which is of Himself as apprehended by those whom He loves.

EDWARD T. WOOD

LETTER ON THE LORD'S SUPPER

(The following is a letter written by Mr. William Kelly to a company of believers whom he had never seen, showing the truth he held in regard to the Lord's Supper. It was published in "The Bible Treasury" of June, 1897.)

Dear Brethren in Christ,

I salute you in the Lord, having learnt that you have received the gospel by faith; and that you have left the world-church to follow Christ, not the tradition of men, whether Romanist or Protestant. You have been called to liberty. Hold it firmly then, and be not drawn anew under a yoke of bondage. Though your faces are unknown to me in the flesh, I have not ceased to pray for you since the day that I heard of your earnest desire to celebrate the Lord's Supper in a manner conformed to scripture.

Allow me to write to you a few words on a subject so dear to our hearts and so important for the glory of Christ. In Christendom some regard the Lord's Supper as the principal means of obtaining eternal life; others neglect it, far preferring a fine discourse.

What says the apostle of the Gentiles? "I have received of the Lord that which also I have delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and, when He had given thanks, broke it, and said, This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me. Likewise also (He took) the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye announce the Lord's death till He come" (I Corinthians xi.23-26). The best text is here followed and translated faithfully.

The evangelist preaches the good news of God; he proclaims the gift of life eternal and remission of sins to all such as believe

in Jesus. The pastor and teacher, publicly and privately, tells the whole counsel of God to the faithful; that they may be built up in the truth and filled with the knowledge of His will, so as to walk worthily of the Lord and to please Him in all respects.

But as often as the children of God take the Supper in accordance with the Lord's institution, they announce corporately the capital truth of Christianity, "the Lord's death till He come." Doubtless, when thus gathered together, they read God's word prayerfully; with adoration in the Spirit they praise the grace of the Father and the Son; but in the midst of all else we may say that the Supper has a very distinct voice. The death of the Lord is there remembered; and the believers announce His death every time they are partakers of the Supper. It is true of those whose voice is not heard in the assembly, yea, even if some were dumb. What an immense privilege, dear brethren! Jesus alone could confer it on us, Jesus exclusively in virtue of His sacrifice, so precious to God, and so efficacious to blot out our sins.

Before those symbols, faith recognises that all was evil on our part, but sovereign grace on the part of God. We feel profoundly humbled, and yet more by our Saviour's love and His death than by our own sins, numerous and shameful as they were. There Christ in His death is the real and direct object of our souls. That it is that attracts and suffices us, that absorbs our minds and fills our hearts. The Son loves us, as does the Father too; and we honour the Son as we honour the Father. But it is Jesus, the Son of God and the Son of man, Who alone suffered for our sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. And God in His wisdom has here willed our joy, founding a feast on the great Sacrifice, a feast the most blessed on earth, where in communion one with another we recall the death of Jesus. We there proclaim also the unity of the body of Christ, with thanksgiving to Him Who loves us without bound or end to the glory of God the Father.

Search the scriptures, and scrutinise the ways of God from the beginning to the end as they are therein made known to us; you will find that, in fact, as in divine purpose, the person of Jesus, the Second man, eclipses all others born of woman; and

Jesus is also the last Adam. There is, there can be, none comparable with Him. He answers to all the thoughts, to all the affections, and to all the counsels of God. All the acts of Jesus are perfect, each in its place; yet is there one which is distinguished from the rest and rises above all. It is "the Lord's death." There was nothing but evil and pride in the creature. We were even conceived in sin, we were dead in sins, one quite as another. But in Christ God in His love went down below our sins to take them away; and Christ is exalted above all to send us pardon and peace. Where sin abounded, grace much more abounded; that, as sin reigned in death, so also might grace reign through righteousness unto life eternal by Jesus Christ our Lord.

On this basis of righteousness God sends the good news of His grace in all the creation that is under heaven. The same Lord of all is rich toward all that call on Him. Whoever believes in Jesus is justified by Him. Thus it is that God saves. And the Supper is the privilege of the saved, not the means of saving; it is the happy portion of those who believe and know that they have life eternal (I John ii.12; v.12). As for such as believe not in the Saviour, they remain responsible for His death, as well as all other sins of theirs; but for those that believe in Him, their sins are forgiven for His name's sake, themselves are justified by faith. So speaks the word of God. We receive now the end of our faith, soul-salvation (I Peter i.); by-and-by at His coming our bodies will be saved (Romans viii.).

Also the Lord instituted His Supper, to which He invites all that are His. His name is their passport and guarantee. His Supper is the constant feast for the family of God; they break the bread, they drink the cup, in remembrance of Christ. Before inaugurating this feast, Jesus had already in His view the dangers His own must meet, the difficulties they have to surmount, the decline and the fall of Christian profession; and He had consoled the disciples with those words of love, "Where two or three are gathered together unto My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew xviii.20). This is His real presence; it is our need, and His assurance. His word ever abides, His love never fails.

The Supper then is the common privilege conferred by Christ on all His members, excepting those that justly incur His discipline for bad morals or evil doctrine. If the blessed institution of the Lord is perverted or neglected in Christendom, none the less does it subsist in all its reality for such as adhere to scripture; and faith appropriates it when observed accordingly, which alone carries the stamp of divine authority. In man's hands, with this institution were soon mixed worldly elements, which altered its character so that it was no longer His. Nevertheless His Supper is not lost for those who submit in humility to the revealed will of our Lord. When the Corinthians tampered with its nature, the apostle (verse 20) denied it to be the Lord's Supper. It became their own supper, not His.

The Lord's Supper is not a question of administration or of presidency; still less is it a ceremony wherein the priest stands between the faithful and God. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth" (John iv.). The Lord Jesus is the sole High Priest; and we who believe are His house. God no longer has, as in Israel, a people His, yet kept at a distance. "Through Him (Christ) we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." The Epistle to the Hebrews teaches explicitly (chapters vii. and x.) that, the priesthood being changed, there is also of necessity a change of the law; and that as holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, we have full liberty to enter into the holies by the blood of Jesus, the veil being rent and the two now making only one.

Reversing the Jewish rites generally, the Supper is a "Communion," and even specifically *the* communion. It has nothing of a ministerial charge. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, the many, are one bread, one body; for the whole of us partake of the one bread" (I Corinthians x. 16, 17).

Therefore scripture, as all may easily see, leaves the Supper open. In presence of the Head, the distinctions among Christians vanish from view. It is good for the most honoured servants

to have a time and place to efface themselves in the presence of Jesus; this time and this place are found in celebrating the Supper. After thanks are given, one breaks the bread and eats in remembrance of Him; and a similar thing with the cup. *He* gave it to them, we read (Mark xiv.23), and *they all* drank of it. For the believer it is the most simple, the most touching, and the most solemn of observances. How incomparable an occasion to contemplate the infinite humiliation and the perfect grace of our Saviour! What happiness for the saint to rejoice, with all saints round him in spirit, not only in their blessings, but in His presence, the blessed and the Blesser, conscious that they are objects of perfect love to the Father and the Son, and knowing all things in the power of the Holy Spirit Who dwells in us! (I John iv.).

There is also in the Lord's Supper a moral bearing on which the apostle insists, because of the profane levity of some at Corinth. Let us never forget it. "Therefore whosoever eateth the bread or drinketh the cup of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let each prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup; for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh judgment against himself, not discerning the body. Therefore are many weak and sick among you, and some fall asleep. But if we discerned ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (I Corinthians xi.27-32). That is not the damnation of unbelievers, but a judgment which the Lord exercises at present over His own. They had treated the holy feast unworthily; they had not distinguished His body, for this is what the breaking of bread means. Accordingly the Lord now judges those who fail to discern themselves. In view of His supper, in remembrance of the Lord's death, each of His own is called to search himself, and thus to eat and drink: if not, he does it unworthily, and this is irreverence toward the Lord Who judges those that do not judge themselves. But even in this case it is not His eternal judgment. On the contrary it is His chastening, "in order that we should not be condemned with the world."

As for the time when the Supper should be celebrated, it is clearly indicated in Acts xx.7, "And the first day of the week, when we gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed to them," etc. His discourse was a great boon, but purely casual. The Supper, in which the breaking of bread took place, was a thing fixed, not only for the disciples at Troas, but for all the saints wherever they might be. The confessedly right reading is "when we were gathered together," here implying that "the first of the week" was the day now settled for the Supper everywhere. At Pentecost and for some time after, the saints broke bread every day "at home" (not of course in the temple), because all the blessed of the Lord were then found in the same city—Jerusalem. But this passed away when the call of God's grace went forth and souls believed everywhere. In Acts xx.7 we have the regular order henceforth applicable to the church anywhere, as recognised by the Holy Spirit. It is for us, in the evil day, to act in faith and in obedience, with thanksgiving. Have faith in God, beloved.

Ever yours in Christ the Lord,

W.K.

THE EARLY CHAPTERS OF JOSHUA

(Chapters iii.1 to iv.14)

(Continued from page 108)

THE EYE UPON THE ARK

Before leaving the account of the parting of the waters of Jordan, it is well to observe the instructions given to the people. In the first place, the people were to have their eyes set upon the ark. "When ye see the ark of the covenant of Jehovah your God . . . remove from your place and go after it" (iii.3). Though the people of Israel must stand a distance from the ark, the eyes of all were to be centred upon it. There were the cherubim and the mercy-seat. There Jehovah manifested Himself in righteousness and majesty. It was a symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were to learn that their entrance in the land depended upon the ark. Their eyes must wait upon the ark.

In like manner, the eye of faith on Christ is essential for our entering into and valuing rightly the spiritual blessings that we have in Him. In fact, if we fail in our recognition of Christ as the Centre and Substance of our heavenly inheritance, we shall get thoroughly astray in the revelation given us, say, in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Indeed, it is there Paul prays that the saints may be “enlightened in the eyes of your heart so that ye should know what is the hope of His calling” (Ephesians i.18). What a place we are given in this great scheme of God’s in the fulness of times to head up all things in the heavens and upon the earth in the Lord Jesus Christ! (Ephesians i.9, 10). If we attach importance to ourselves, such exaltation is beyond our comprehension, but when we believe that God chose us in Christ before the world’s foundation (verse 4), we see the truth in its heavenly perspective. Christ fills the vision of our hearts as we read the Ephesian Epistle, and we perceive that the riches and glory of our inheritance are what is due to Christ, not to ourselves apart from Him. The eye must be, not upon ourselves, but upon Christ, the True Ark.

TWO THOUSAND CUBITS FROM THE ARK

When the Lord Jesus went into the shadows of Gethsemane to pray, His disciples were about a stone’s cast away. Even Peter, James and John must not kneel down with Him, though the Lord asked them to watch with Him where they were. Later, the disciples were all scattered, and the Lord was left alone. “Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now” was His word to impulsive Peter. Death must first be vanquished, then His disciples should follow, and share His victory (I Corinthians xv.57). But until the corn of wheat died it abode alone (John xii.24). And a distance of about two thousand cubits by measure was to mark off the people from the ark of the covenant, as the suburbs of the Levitical cities were marked off (Numbers xxxv.5). “Ye shall not come near it (the ark)”, Jehovah said, “that ye may know the way by which ye must go; for ye have not passed this way heretofore (Chapter iii.4).

PERSONAL SANCTIFICATION

Thirdly, the people were to sanctify themselves, preparatory to the crossing of Jordan. "Hallow yourselves; for to-morrow Jehovah will do wonders in your midst" (iii.5). The Israelites were about to pass over Jordan and take possession of the holy land of their inheritance. They were to put away all defilement (cp. Revelation xxi.27). We, too, must sanctify ourselves in order to understand the revealed mystery of Christ and His church and the heavenly inheritance. "Let us," says the apostle, "purify ourselves from every pollution of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in God's fear" (2 Corinthians vii.1). And in the Epistle to the Ephesians, we are especially exhorted to put off the evil ways of our nature (Ephesians iv. and v.). The spiritual truths of our heavenly calling and kingdom are spiritually discerned. Let us "sanctify ourselves," keeping ourselves from all defilement of mind and body that we may be led into the knowledge of God's truth.

In conclusion, let us give heed to the instruction afforded by this history of the Israelites at the Jordan. As the ark opened the way for them into the land of promise, so Christ by His death and resurrection has opened the way for us into the heavenly inheritance to which we have already come by faith. Moreover, our apprehension of this present standing in Christ depends upon our reception of the teaching of the Holy Spirit and upon our holy walk "worthy of the calling wherewith we are called."

W. J. HOCKING

(To be continued, D.V.)

A GOLDEN RULE

We must adhere to this golden rule in reading the word of God—never to force Scripture in order to make it bear upon ourselves or others.

(From "The Great Prophecies of Daniel" by William Kelly)

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(continued inside front cover)

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Words of Help

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Vol. LVI

NOVEMBER 1968

No. 11

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

THE ANCIENT OF DAYS

(See Daniel vii.9)

Daniel's vision was of a great assize, the Ancient of days occupying the throne or seat of judgment and the books opened before him (verse 9). There were many thrones, for others were delegated to judge also (verse 22). Note that in verse 9 we should read, "thrones were" not cast down, but "set" or placed in position to sit upon judicially (New Tr.).

God as Judge of all the earth is seen, and the underlying conception of the title under which Daniel beholds Him is that of extreme old and venerable age or length of days, with which other scriptures associate the unerring wisdom which should accompany the dispensing of justice. Speaking of his prayers for deliverance from his foes, the Psalmist says, "God shall hear, and afflict them, even He that abideth of old" (Psalm lv.19). He is the eternal God (Deuteronomy xxxiii.27), and from everlasting to everlasting, He is God (Psalm xc.2). Wisdom was set up from everlasting (Proverbs viii.23). And the Judge of Israel Who was smitten on the cheek with a rod is He Whose "goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah v.1,2).

The title, then, is specially appropriate to God Who will judge the governments of the world in due time. He Who is unaffected by the changing years will deal righteously with the great ones of the earth who have risen and fallen in rapid succession.

W.J.H.

SHUT IN WITH GOD

(Read 2 Kings iv. 1-7)

How tragic the opening of this story! The breadwinner was dead, the widow was encumbered with debt, and those who in the circumstances might have been expected to show mercy and compassion proved utterly callous. The moneylender, seeing no hope of getting his capital, let alone any interest, had come to demand that the woman's two sons be sold to pay her debt. Thus the widow was to be left desolate indeed.

We may, without undue exercise of the imagination, fill in some of the likely details of the events leading up to this.

The house, as she declared to Elisha, was **empty**. How plainly this tells of the difficult past—her husband being unable because of illness to meet their needs, so that, bit by bit, the contents of their little home had had to be sold. In the end she had been compelled to resort to borrowing to keep things going.

Had she hoped against hope that her husband would soon be well again, so as to be able to extricate them from their dangerous position? And instead of this, he had grown worse, and now was dead.

Thus while it was no sudden emergency, difficulties and dangers that had long threatened had now descended upon her, and she appeals to God's prophet Elisha.

To him she speaks, not of her own faith, but of her husband's. She says, "Thou knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord." Perhaps she leaned on her husband's God at second hand, instead of trusting Him for herself.

Thus it is that, not until her husband had been taken from her, does she turn to God's prophet for help—help which, assuredly, she might have obtained earlier, before things became desperate. She is so like many of us in this, is she not? How many leave God out of their lives entirely till some need or difficulty arises, and then again forget Him as soon as the emergency is past! But should His own people treat Him like this?

Yet the help comes immediately she seeks it. "What shall I do for thee?" says God's messenger, "What has thou in the house?" The question, as we have already noticed, brings out the confession of her desperate plight. "Thy servant hath not anything in the house, save a pot of oil."

It was little enough, indeed, but it seems to be a principle with God to make us start with what we have, so that faith can be seen in action, in however limited a way. It has been said that faith can never be real until it has been made a basis for action. We can see this constantly in scripture. Israel has to go forward before the Red Sea divides. The man with a withered hand must first stretch it out to obtain healing. And the dying thief on the cross, helpless as he was in every way, showed his faith by appealing to Jesus as the coming King.

Elisha then tells her to go to all her neighbours and borrow empty vessels—"borrow not a few," he adds. No doubt in the past they had given her such help as they could, but they had not the resources to deal adequately with the situation. Empty vessels is all they are now asked to supply, and that temporarily. But her faith is tested every time she approaches a fresh door. "What a strange request" they would say, and she would be tempted to give up. But Elisha had told her what to do, and it was plain that the blessing she received would be no greater than the capacity of the vessels she collected.

Then she was to bring her sons in with her, and **shut the door**. There was to be no gaping crowd of sightseers. Elisha himself would not be present. But **shut in with God**, dependent wholly upon Him, she was to experience His mighty working. And God wants each of us to know this immediacy of access to Him—to know His response to our calling upon Him.

Thus she pours out from her own little stock of oil, and now faith's obedience is rewarded. The oil flows, the vessels are filled one by one, until none is left. The blessing of God is without limit, but her capacity to receive it is soon saturated.

Oh, that our faith were more active, to bring every kind of need (of ourselves and others) to Him who has said "Everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Certainly He Himself in

His public ministry never refused a request, except the request of **unbelief**, "Show us a sign."

So she comes and tells the man of God, and he says "Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and **live thou and thy children of the rest.**"

This is ever God's way. He does **more** than we ask or think. The immediate need was to get rid of her debt, and save her sons. But though perhaps she had not looked any further, God had. He knew her continuing need, and provided for it. Does it remind us of the Good Samaritan, "Whatsoever thou spendest more, I will repay thee?" He is a loving Father, Who not only gives His children good things when we ask Him, but provides also for needs which we are unconscious of. Yet it remains true, as this story so well illustrates, that His blessing is often hindered or limited by our lack of capacity to receive it. Therefore, when we seek help from God, let us remember that we come to One Who is unlimited in power and grace.

God meets the need of the sinner also after the same pattern of overflowing goodness. Not only does He remove the burden of debt—the burden of obligations unmet and which we cannot meet. He also provides all that is needed for a life of holiness—a new Spirit-born life, and then the Spirit Himself to indwell the believer, to work in him all that which is well pleasing to God. Likewise the sinner must begin by being **shut in with God**. Whatever influence others may have had upon us, whatever help parents, friends, or ministers of God may have given us, this is essential—that we find ourselves all alone before Him, as the only One Who can cleanse us and forgive us. It is thus that we begin to know Him, and to know Him is eternal life (John xvii. 3).

We may perhaps remark here that scripture is much clearer and more consistent in its use of analogies than some expositors.

Thus there are two ways of freeing a person from debt: the debt may be forgiven, or it may be paid by another. But it is impossible to **combine** these two. Yet we often meet the statement that our debt of sin is forgiven because Christ has paid our debt! But where scripture speaks of forgiving our

debts, as in the story of the two debtors in Luke vii., or in Matthew xviii., no question of payment is introduced.

According to the teaching of these parables, God freely forgives all that we have done to dishonour His name, and He calls upon us to forgive those who are similarly indebted to us. The servant who demanded payment of his debt showed an unforgiving spirit. God does not demand payment of what is due to Him, but freely forgives it where repentance is shown.

This, of course, is only one aspect of the matter. Where sin is spoken of as the breaking of law, whether the law of God or the law of nature (see Rom. ii. 14, 15), all scripture witnesses that atonement is essential. "Without the shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22). Not otherwise could a righteous God justify the ungodly.

Moreover sin has put us in the power of a remorseless enemy—Death. In this respect a **ransom** is needed, and this our Saviour's death provides (Mark x. 45).

We need to ponder all these varied aspects of our need and of God's salvation, but not to combine them in one simple "scheme" of our own, a procedure which often leads to error.

In 2 Kings iv. the debt is paid through God's gracious working, and the woman is delivered from her adversary—her creditor, of course. How utterly incongruous and wrong it would be to compare the creditor with God, just because in other scriptures sin is spoken of as a debt to Him! But this is apt to be the **tendency** of thought (no more than that, of course) where the wrong analogy spoken of above is used. We must at all costs avoid the thought of God as a harsh exactor of what is due to Him. That is not the meaning of the Atonement, which is concerned rather with the **penalty** of sin. Here **righteousness** is in question, and man is simply not competent to judge. The need of atonement is a matter of **divine revelation**. But human reason is quite competent to understand that it is not unrighteous for a creditor to remit a debt. "He **frankly** forgave them both", the Lord Jesus said.

E. H. Chamberlain.

THE ADVENT OF THE SON OF GOD

(Notes of an Address)

“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.” (I John v. 20, 21).

I feel I have taken a large subject, although it is here comprised in a verse or two. I do not, however, propose to say much in the way of exposition, but rather to bring it before you for your meditation and enjoyment. We have in this short passage the summing up of Christianity: “We know that the Son of God is come.”

This communication is not the presentation of the truth to poor sinners; it is a letter written to the whole family of God; to you and me, to every Christian in the world. It is the unfolding of that Divine Life that came down from heaven to earth, to be seen, to be looked upon, to be touched. It is no flight of the imagination, it is no idea of man. “Great is the mystery of godliness.” He was manifest in flesh. It was a wonderful thing for an angel to come down from heaven to earth, and visits of the angels were not uncommon in Old Testament times. But here no angel is in view. Here we have the plain and distinct and astounding fact that the Son of God is come.

Now in this sentence more is implied than the presentation of an historical fact. The great results of Christ’s coming are to be considered. The coming of the Son of God into the world for the establishment of God’s glory has not been in vain. He laid a righteous foundation for the display of that glory to the ends of the earth. The day is coming when righteousness shall not only reign but dwell here below, and all shall see the complete results of the work of redemption wrought through the sacrifice of Himself. We do not see these things yet, but the issue is sure and certain. Are not our sins now put away? Yes, our sins are truly gone, but we are waiting for sin itself to be banished. For at Calvary the Lord Jesus

laid the foundation for this as well as for every blessing for you and me, both for time and for eternity.

I want to call your attention to the Person brought before us—the Son of God. May the words enter our hearts: “We know the Son of God is come.” We know that He was born in Bethlehem’s manger as a Man and as Son of God. The One that is the eternal God deigned to become Man. Truly He was the Man Christ Jesus, but the Man Christ Jesus was the Son of God, the One who was from all eternity, the One who came—what to do? He came, as I have already said, for the putting away of sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He was the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

But, beloved friends, the Son of God is come to give us an understanding. What a boon to have the forgiveness of sins! We might have been left to do the best we could in this world, but what poor creatures we should have remained. The remission of sins is a wonderful gift, but it is not all our blessing. Besides forgiveness, God has given us to know that we are indwelt by the Spirit of God, and that thus we have a power we had not before. But is that all? By no means; He has given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true.

Does the significance of this great fact enter into your soul? I feel how little it enters into mine, and I feel ashamed for myself as I reiterate those words, “The Son of God is come.” As I said, there had been of old visitations of angels, but now the Son is come. There never was such a fact before in all the world’s history as God and man in one person seen here on the earth. “Great is the mystery of godliness.” “God manifest in the flesh.” To this great wonder the apostle referred when he spoke of that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life; for the life was manifested and we have seen it and have told you that your fellowship might be with Him, and that you might know the Father and the Son in intimacy and communion.

If I were to ask the majority of believers, “What is the great thing for which Christ came?” they would probably answer, “He came to save me.” But He came to make the Father

known. Now, is not that what suits your new life? It is not enough that we should be saved. We are here to know the Father, we are here to know the Son, we are here to be the companions of the Lord of life and glory. Is not this a greater blessing than the forgiveness of sins? What could be a greater privilege than that poor miserable sinners should be brought to have fellowship with the Father and the Son? Who could accomplish that? The Son of God alone.

We know the Son of God is come, and that He has changed everything for us. He not only turned our darkness into light, our misery into joy, our sorrow into peace, but He has made the Father known, and has given us to know that we are in Him that is true. When the Son of God came unto His own possession, His own people cast Him out. But the apostle wrote, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth . . . and of His fulness have all we received, and grace upon grace."

An understanding is given us to know Him that is true. Are you falling short in this knowledge? Is it not your life, shall I say, to be growing in the knowledge of Him? Does not the feeblest believer know Him? And what does the apostle say of the fathers? They have "known Him that is from the beginning." There is no possible advance upon such knowledge. Nor could he say anything higher of any of them than this.

The natural man cannot receive the things of God. I might say even an angel knows not this revelation, but God has given us an understanding that we may do so. Our natural understanding is incapable, not because it came to us imperfect from God, but because sin came into the world. How soon man fell from his uprightness, and turned the very trees of the garden into a hiding-place from God. To think that man used the very trees for such a purpose! Does not this illustrate the sad effects of sin?

Man rejected the Lord when He came to earth, the Son of God, the eternal God, the very Son that was in the bosom of the Father, who is come to give us this understanding. Should not this declared purpose of God encourage us to seek to know more of this One? Even the Apostle Paul longed that he might

know Him.

The Thessalonians were converted to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven. Here the apostle says He has given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true. John says, "Him that is true," for is He not the true God and eternal life?

Oh, what a wonder—the greatest of all—that the Son of God is come! The Son of God came to suffer and to die. How blind the world is to this stupendous fact! "There is no God," is the language of the fool's heart. But we can say, "We know," because we have the testimony in our own hearts, the witness within ourselves.

Did not Paul know Him that is true? Yes, but he wished to know Him more. "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection," he said. If such was the earnest desire of the great apostle, surely it should also be your aspiration. Remember you will spend eternity with this One in the joy of heaven. Seek therefore to know Him now.

The Son of God has made known the Father, as He said, "I have declared unto them Thy name." I sometimes think that we are too engrossed with our own mercies and with the great and wonderful blessing of the forgiveness of sins, and we forget that the Father is seeking worshippers. It is not enough that you should be saved; are you a worshipper? Are you not dishonouring the blessed Lord if you fall short in this? I feel for myself that our worship of the Father often falls short.

The Son's joy and delight are in making the Father known. He has come to give us an understanding that we might know Him that is true. Such knowledge is in itself beyond the creature, but there is a Divine Person who has come to take possession of our body and to make our body His temple. And He, the Spirit of God, would lead us into the truth, into the comprehension of the wonderful fact that the Father and the Son are One.

They are One in Their care of the family of God. When about to depart out of the world, the Son committed His disciples to the care of the Father. Hitherto He Himself had

watched over them and protected them, but He said, "I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own Name those whom Thou has given Me, that they may be One, as We are."

The Son could rejoice in the gift of the Father, and the Father could rejoice in the gift of the Son. "All Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine." We are thus brought into the fellowship of the Father and of the Son. I pray you, therefore, not to rest satisfied to pass through the world with the knowledge only of your sins forgiven, but to say, "I want to grow in the knowledge of the Son, and I want to grow in the knowledge of the Father." The Lord said, "I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it." To Mary, He said "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father; and to My God and to your God." And the apostle Paul wrote, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

John goes on to say that "we are in Him that is true." Does not this show the nearness of place into which we have been brought? What a wonderful relationship it is that "we are in Him." Such is the mighty effect of the work of the Spirit of God that it is said, "we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ." Does not this allay our fears and awaken our hearts' desire to know more of the blessings of this place? The Son of God revealed the Father that we may now enter into this intimacy and communion with Him.

John iii. 16 reveals a wonderful blessing, but not all that God gives. Here we read of Him of whom it is said, "This is the true God and eternal life." And of the believer it is written elsewhere, "He that hath the Son hath life." He is our portion and we are His, as He said of His disciples, "They are Mine."

What more appropriate conclusion could there be than the apostle's exhortation, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Let us allow no substitution in our hearts for the One whom God has given to be the Supreme Object for our lives. How many things there are to lure away from Him the eye and the ear and the heart. To Him alone may we look, to Him may we listen, from Him may we receive. May God grant that

we may keep ourselves from idols, so that we may know more than ever the manner in which we have been brought to the Father and the Son.

F. E. Race.

THE EARLY CHAPTERS OF JOSHUA

GILGAL AND ITS LESSONS

(Chapters iv. 15 to v.12)

Our subject is Gilgal and its associations, and also the profitable lessons we may draw from the incidents. At the outset we see that the children of Israel were slow in beginning their conquest of the land of Canaan. After crossing the Jordan there was a halt. We have not yet come to the first of their sieges, that of the city of Jericho. There was a time of much-needed preparation by the people for the stern conflict that lay ahead of them.

Making ready to meet our spiritual foes is a necessity applicable to us all. We refer, of course, solely to those redeemed by the blood of Christ. Our happiness in the inheritance we have in the Lord depends to a very great degree upon ourselves. A certain preparation must be made before the good things and spiritual blessing that God has given us in Christ can be apprehended and enjoyed by us through faith.

I think it perfectly safe to say that not a single Christian upon earth enters practically, so far as he or she might do, into the present value of the things of priceless worth that God has given us in Christ Jesus, and revealed to us in His word. The reason for this general lack of appreciation is that the preliminary stages of moral preparation are passed over. The study of scripture involves much self-denial and painstaking effort. Many persons think we have only to open the Bible and read any chapter that comes to hand, and we shall be sure to get something good. Probably this is perfectly true. God never disappoints those that wait upon Him, however casually, for instruction and comfort out of His word; but it is the diligent soul, not the sluggard, that is made fat (Proverbs xiii. 4). The person who, in the pursuit of divine truth, rids himself of

encumbrances is the most successful in this conflict. He presses forward to overcome every foe, and to take possession of all the spiritual gifts of God's grace.

The people of Israel were told at the very commencement (Joshua i. 3) that Canaan, to be enjoyed and fully possessed by them individually, must be trodden upon. The sole of the foot of every man must press the soil of that pleasant land. Such thorough appropriation required method and labour and perseverance; but the reward of the fight of faith was great. And there were some who went forward in the strength of the Lord like Caleb. Such valiant warriors towered like giants above their fellows, because they fought not in their own strength, but in that which Jehovah gave them, to conquer the powerful adversaries preventing their occupation of the land of promise.

Let us not lose sight of the fact that we all must resist with steadfastness in the faith a most powerful adversary, the devil who "walketh about seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter v. 8, 9). Satan knows he cannot rob us of the eternal life we have in Christ Jesus, but he does know very well that he can rob us of the enjoyment of the salvation that is ours as justified believers and as possessors of eternal life. But we are not "to give place to the devil," nor to any of his agents, who are ever striving by force or subtlety to hinder our spiritual advancement. Let us prepare ourselves for incessant warfare.

When we all pass into the Father's house there will be no foes and no conflict. There our new desires, our spiritual appetite for divine truth, will be abundantly satisfied. We shall drink to the full of the rivers of the Father's good pleasure in that place of divine intimacy which the Lord Himself has gone to prepare for us. But here and now we are on the battlefield, and must gird on "the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God."

GILGAL'S PERPETUAL MEMORIAL

The first prominent feature at Gilgal in future was to be its stone memorial. Joshua, on behalf of the children of Israel, was commanded to take twelve stones out of the bed of Jordan.

They were to erect them in Gilgal as a lasting memorial of the fact that Jehovah had brought the hosts of Israel across the river Jordan on dry ground. Moreover, all the surrounding peoples of the earth, the foes of Israel, would have in this singular monument a continual reminder of the way in which Jehovah by His own mighty hand had brought the children of Israel into the land to possess it.

The outstanding typical feature of this memorial is the believer's association with Christ in His death and His resurrection. The twelve stones came out of the bed of the river the place of death, and from the place where the ark of the covenant held back the gushing waters of the Jordan. They were erected in the promised land at Gilgal, a stone for every tribe. The whole nation was represented by this monument. In figure, all the people had been dead, but they were now alive again, and Jehovah's power had wrought this marvellous passage. Outside Canaan they were dead stones, but they had been made living stones over Jordan and inside the land. They were brought there to show forth the praises of Him who had brought them out of death into life. The Gilgal memorial is therefore a foreshadowing of the New Testament truth found especially in the Epistles of Paul.

We might, if time permitted, refer to several relevant scriptures, but let us take Ephesians ii. This chapter brings before believers in Christ that formerly they were "dead in trespasses and sins." When God began to deal with them in sovereign grace they were absolutely bereft of life towards Him, dead things to be cast out of sight and forgotten, worthless before God and helpless in themselves. It was then that God Who is rich in mercy for His great love wherewith He loved them quickened them together with Christ. The power of God raised the Lord Jesus from the grave to God's right hand in the heavenly places and that same mighty power, says the apostle, wrought in you, when you were dead in trespasses and sins. As it gave Christ life so it has given you life, both Jew and Gentile being quickened together and made one in Christ Jesus.

Now here in the chapter comes what answers to the memorial in Gilgal. The apostle says, "Wherefore remember"

(verse 11). Christian believers must have their monumental stone. What were they to remember? They were to remember what they were naturally, and what God had done for them spiritually. They had been dead stones beneath the waters of Jordan until the ark of the covenant stood where they were, holding back the rushing river until they were extricated from the place of death and brought into resurrection-life by a power not their own—a power infinite in its magnitude. We are in continual danger of forgetting what God has done for us in Christ to the serious detriment of our spiritual well-being.

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Because of the Lord Jesus and our association with Him, the place of death has become the way of life for us. Hence death in Jordan must never leave our memories. The Lord Himself established His supper as a continual memorial of His death, which was to be shown forth until He should come again. "This do in remembrance of Me," the Lord said. His supper commemorates His death. The loaf and the cup are appointed memorials of His body given and His blood shed. In eating the bread and drinking the cup believers signify that they, together and individually, share in the body and blood of Christ.

You may say that the Lord's Supper does not set forth the resurrection of believers with Christ, as we are taught in Ephesians, Colossians and elsewhere. And it is true that the Lord's death is the central feature of the institution. Nevertheless, resurrection is implied in the observance of the Supper. It was the living Lord Who said, "This do in remembrance of Me." It is the One who became dead and is alive for evermore from Whom Paul received the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Furthermore, it is those who have been "quickened together with Christ" who eat the Lord's Supper. It is the living members of the one body of the living Christ who show forth His death. Through the death of Him Whom they remember in His death, they have all "passed from death unto life." And this fact is illustrated, if not typified, by the Gilgal memorial stones.

(To be continued, D.V.) W. J. Hocking.

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