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"To the Elect of God (in a Time of Trouble)"

THE elect of God exist, although no man can individually identify them. They are after a common family likeness, although differently situated in the present evil world. They have one faith, and one aim, and one mind, though following different occupations, and living in different parts of the earth. We greet them in the name of the Lord, wishing them and praying for them grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Beloved, ye are known of God, though you may not be discerned by men. You are scattered up and down the world, in a cloudy and dark day, undistinguishable to human eyes, from the common mass of mankind. Your Divine mark or seal, wherever you are to be found, consists of belief, obedience and love of the truth which God has caused to be set forth in the writings of Moses, and the Prophets, and the Apostles. Having this mark, you are precious in His eyes. Your faith is well-pleasing to Him; your obedience, your free-will offerings, your sacrifices in His service at a time when all the world ignores Him ascend before Him. as the odor of a sweet smell, and are acceptable to Him through the High Priest of our profession. And they will be spoken of again, to your great joy, in a day when they will seem to have been all forgotten, and when they will seem too small to be mentioned in the presence of the world-stirring events that will belong to the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ. I write to you concerning our common affliction—common in a large sense. I do not write to you because I know you. Some of you I doubtless know; but no man knows you as "the Lord knows them that are His." A man cannot even know himself in this sense. As our beloved Brother Paul has said, "I judge not mine own self; He that judgeth me is the Lord." We know the principles upon which men will be saved, because they have been revealed; but we are not capable of discerning infallibly where these principles have had their effectual work, though we may discern where they are set aside and violated. I write to you as those whom the Lord loves, and who will be banded together in a joyous company when

the Lord comes. I write to you as one of you, having the same experience and the same need. - The scorner may mockingly inquire what right I have to write to such. I answer, The right of brotherly love, which belongs to every man who can rise to his privileges in Christ. Brotherly love leads to brotherly concern in all things, but particularly in those that relate to our standing in God, our position in the present probation and our hope concerning the purpose of God which will surely be accomplished. Your present lot is grievous in many respects; and at times you are greatly cast down, and nigh despairing altogether of the Lord's promised kindness in Christ. I write to remind you of the cause you also have for encouragement and joy.

Cast Down but not Destroyed

You feel unworthy of the great salvation to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; remember that, though, only those whom the Lord esteems worthy will enter the Kingdom, yet part of that worthiness consists in the very sense of unworthiness which oppresses you. God's favor is for those only who rate themselves at God's standard; and by this standard we are, as Jacob confessed himself to be, "unworthy of the least of all the mercy and the truth" that the Lord shows to His people. For what are we at best but 'worms of the earth, fashioned in God's image, made of His clay, and permitted to live for a few years on the face of His glorious earth. The most righteous man can say with Job, whom the Lord approved, "Behold, I am vile. . wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." If a righteous man could feel this abasement - (most reasonable abasement in mortal flesh in the presence of Divine glory) is it a marvel that we who add error to weakness and sin to corruptibility should sometimes feel "broken in heart and contrite in spirit"? It is right; but be not destroyed by this abasement. It is pleasing to God. To such He more than once plainly declared He looks with approval.

But your sins, they distress you: it is right they should; but look again and be comforted. There is a sin not unto death. You are not callous toward the Lord. You do not run in the way He has forbidden. You do not love the present world, and run with it in all its "ungodliness and worldly lusts -- the lusts of the eye and the pride of life." You do not deny God and live in deliberate disobedience of His commandments. On the contrary, you love His name and Word; you believe His testimonies and rejoice in His institutions; you love, and look, and long for the appearing of His Son whom He has promised to send; and you are striving in all the ways of life, so far as in you lies, to do His will as expressed in His commandments. But you fail often. You come short of what you would do. You frequently do things you would not do; and you are distressed on this account. It is right to be so; but do not forget the provision that has been made: Christ has taken away our sins. We are washed in His blood. He stands in the Father's presence, not only as the accepted sacrifice, but as the appointed High Priest for His house. He ever liveth to make intercession for us according to the will of God. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to forgive us all our iniquity. If we walk in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sins. God forgives us for Christ's sake.

Chooses Men Empty of Themselves

Perhaps you are oppressed with a sense of the unsuitability of such persons as you, being promoted to honor and power in the Kingdom of God. Remember it is God's deliberate plan to make choice of such. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called, . . . but God hath chosen the weak things of this world." Jesus spoke of this, and said: "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight. He even gave thanks to the Father for proceeding on this plan. There is a reason in it all. - The Kingdom is to be established for God's honor, not man's; for the Spirit objects and not those of flesh. Hence, it is a necessity that men be provided for its administration who are not proud and lifted up in their eyes, but who are lowly and who know and reverence God so deeply as to find pleasure in His exaltation. The blessing of man will come out of it all, but glory to God first. If God made choice of the aristocracy, His purpose ("I will be exalted among the heathen") would not be accomplished. They are full of themselves. He chooses men who are empty of themselves that they may be full of God. Poor men, in the day of

evil, are the kind of material out of which He can provide the earthen vessels in which His eternal treasure can be deposited, "that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of man."

But you say: "Such poor weak people as we, are not fit to be kings and priests." True, not as you are now. It is not as you are now that you will be elevated to that position. You will be changed from the mortal to the immortal, and this change will fit you in every way for what you will have to do. It will give you strength and grace and capacity' and gladness of heart. You will be able to carry yourselves as kings, and to sustain yourselves without fatigue, and to bring the wisdom of Solomon to bear in the judgment of all matters you may have in charge. Qualification of this sort is all in God, who will liberally crown His children with the highest gifts in the day of their exaltation. The one thing needful is a humble, loving, obedient heart and pliant will, which can only be developed and put to the proof by the exercise of faith in a day like this; and the operation can only be successfully performed, in most cases, in circumstances of poverty and self-denial. Consequently your lowly position and inefficient state, instead of being a cause of dubitation, should help your confidence, as furnishing in your case, the likely elements of suitability for the glory to be revealed.

Love can See by Starlight

But in another way, you may feel the cloud return. The time is long, and human nature is weak, and power fails, and you feel yourselves- walking towards the darkness which bounds the horizon of all natural life; yea, the darkness will oftentimes steal into your inmost soul, and fill you with an indescribable horror, as you survey the vastness of the universe, in which God is apparently silent, and the almost infinite mass of abortive life that appears upon the earth from generation to generation. Be comforted concerning this also: this darkness is inseparable from God's plan. Nay more: it is essential to it. Human life on the earth can no more reach the glory to be revealed without this experience, than the fruits of the field can appear without ploughing and harrowing. It is part of the plan. God's wisdom is in it, and His love, for God is love. We shall see it. Meanwhile we must exercise faith, without which He cannot be pleased. Faith working by love can see a little even now-by starlight, as it were. The darkness is prolonged for the world as a whole; but it is short for any generation. It has been on the earth for ages, but no generation' lasts for ages. We knew nothing of it last century; our turn had not come. Our turn has now come: it depresses, but it will soon be over, and when over, the next thing in our experience (apparently the immediate next) if actually delayed however long, is the eternal sunshine of the Father's manifested presence, power and glory. We shall find then what has been done for us by present exposure in the darkness and coldness of earth's winter. It is the Father's appointment for us meanwhile. What can we say but "Thy will be done"? He doth not willingly afflict. Not only so, but He ministers to our need while we pass through the darkness. None of the elect of God is left alone. God is with him to guide and strengthen in many invisible ways. God cares for him: pities him; chastens him; upholds and prepares him for the inheritance that is in store for all the sons of Tigh; an inheritance in which they will commune with unspeakable joy after the prolonged and bitter fight of faith victoriously waged in their several evil days. But remember the end. Remember the joyful muster of the Lord's elect.

All Our Desires Realized in the Kingdom of God

This touches another sorrow you have. In your several spheres of probation, you are yearning for what you never realize. You hunger and thirst for the prevalence of a noble enlightenment among

men. You love God yourselves with all your hearts and souls. You long to see others rejoice in Him and exalt Him in a sincere and intelligent way. You have a compassionate regard for the condition of mankind, and desire, with even a tearful earnestness, to see them in a blessed condition. You sigh and faint for the delights of sanctified and intellectual fellowship in which the hearts of companions should open with a noble warmth to the great and noble topics that the universe presents to the mind, instead of gravitating heavily to the petty accidents of animal life. Ah, and you are afflicted with your own incapacities that blur the sight and enfeeble the hands, and drag you into abysses of gloom as dark and dreadful as Jonah's habitation in the storm-tost sea; Now, there is comfort concerning all this. It is somewhat negative in its form; but, then, it is true, and true comfort wears well, whereas false comfort fails you in the long run. The comfort is that these things are unattainable in the present condition of human life upon earth, but they are attainable and will be realized in their very perfection in the Kingdom of God. The recognition of this is a help. We reconcile ourselves hopefully to our lot, enduring the hardness of the desert by knowing that it is a desert, and in the confident anticipation of the land of promise at the end of the journey. One comfort more. It is not displeasing to the Father that we thus hunger and thirst to the point even of misery, after righteousness. On the contrary, Jesus said, "Blessed are ye that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for ye shall be filled."

Finally, you are troubled and distressed by dissensions in the household of faith. Many of you have been plunged into deep grief, even unto many tears. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial." It is nothing new. It is the modern form of a very ancient and frequent experience, resulting from the fomentation of diverse elements brought together by the knowledge of the truth. We must trust to God's wisdom in permitting of the admixture of these elements. He has done so from the beginning. Do not be too much distressed by it. The results that come of it do not alter things; they only prove and try, and manifest things. The word of the Lord standeth sure amid all the chafes, and changes, and corruptions of men. The Lord Jesus, from the serene exaltation of the heavens, has for centuries beheld the confusions, and commotions, and wars that have wrought havoc among men in His absence. He has beheld them without surprise. He foresaw them and foretold them. He said there would be strife and division; that iniquity would abound; that the love of many would wax cold; that the trial would be too severe for some, but he that should endure to the end would be saved. Can we imagine that such things are permitted without a purpose? The Apostolic age was rife with them; is it a marvel if we have our share? There is but one answer on the part of enlightened reason, and that answer will help us to stand in the midst of the evil and to hold fast unmoved the hope of the Gospel, looking to Christ, who lives, distrusting ourselves, who die. Our life is fleeting away; the battle will soon be over. Be strong and of good comfort. Stand fast; quit you like men. Keep close to the Word in daily reading, and the peace of God will rule your hearts and minds and preserve you amid all chafes and tumults, unto His glorious Kingdom, which will heal all sores, and chase all darkness for ever away.

Your fellow-suffer, fellow-soldier, fellow-pilgrim and fellow-suppliant of the mercy of God unto eternal life. - *Robert Roberts, from Z. W. T., June, 1885.*

The Pursuit of True Piety and the Real Separation

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." -- 1 Thess. 4:3.

WHEN in the ancient time God called out a special people from all other nations to use them in the accomplishment of certain special designs, He gave them explicit instruction that they should "separate themselves from the people of the land." (Ezra 10:11.) The people of the land at that time were of course the uncircumcised nations and Gentiles, foreigners and strangers to God's promises and covenants. The special purpose of that people called out in those days, we now learn, was to make of them a picture or a prefiguration of another people, a holy nation of a later time, namely of the called out Church of this Gospel dispensation, who together with Jesus are to form the Kingdom that is to restore all things to the state of Edenic Paradise, and to establish God's will on earth as it is in heaven.

Accordingly, as Israel of old was counseled to literally separate themselves from all other people not in covenant relationship with God and to renounce everything out of harmony with that holy relationship, so the real called out people of this Age are instructed to separate themselves in spirit and sympathetic fellowship from the world—its plans, schemes, ambitions, and from all that is not in accord with their holy relationship to God. Thus the great Founder of our holy faith said to His immediate followers, "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Again, one of His loved disciples enjoins, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world." - 1 John 2:15, 16.

Dwelling in a Spiritual Atmosphere

The statement of the Apostle Paul, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification," is expressive of the spiritual relationship that is to be sustained by every disciple of Christ, and signifies that separation and drawing apart from all that could contaminate and that is out of accord with the holy relationship which a consecrated believer sustains toward his Master. This life of separation, therefore, and this solemn responsibility of walking with God and apart from the spirit, influence, and aims of this world, evidently becomes the matter of primary importance and consideration for all who would secure the Divine approval and at last enter into that rest that remaineth for the people of God. In this connection it has been well observed by another that, "to be alone with God, which implies being in solitude from the world, is indescribably pleasing to the devout mind. And in order to realize an idea which carries with it so much attraction, it is not surprising that many pious persons have, in all ages of the world, secluded themselves from society. In plucking the roses of the world, they have been pierced with the thorn; and in the depth of their sorrow they have sought to avoid that, which under the appearance of good, conceals so much evil. Their designs have been right, but their methods have not always been successful."

Thus the writer above calls attention to what has been a common error through the centuries of this Age on the subject of solitude and separation unto God. A more careful and devout adherence to the holy Word can lead to only one conclusion, that is; that the child of God is called upon to dwell and walk apart from the world, apart from sin and self, in the sense that in his spirit and

contemplations he is dwelling in a spiritual atmosphere, as the Apostle implies, "seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." He dwells in spiritual solitude in the sense that his real heart affections-his hopes and desires are heavenward; all the while, however, he is conscious of his responsibility to walk amongst men, and in his conduct and speech to let shine the light of truth and its spirit for the blessing of others and for the glory of God.

Erroneous Conceptions of Dwelling with God

The writer quoted above observes further: "In order to have correct ideas on the subject before us, we may properly remark, in the first place, that interior or spiritual solitude is not to be confounded with physical or *personal* solitude. It is something more, and something higher, than mere seclusion of the body in some hidden or remote place.

"In the accounts of those who, in the early periods of Christianity, retired into solitary places, with the object of perfecting their inward state in desolate caverns, in forests, and in the seclusion of monasteries, we find frequent mention of unexpected and heavy temptations. Often did the world, in the shape of evil desires and vain imaginations, follow them to their lonely retreats. It is related of St. Jerome, whose devout writings still edify the Church, that, in the ardor of his young piety, he thought he could successfully escape the temptations of luxurious cities, and perfect his inward experience, by dwelling alone in the solitary deserts of Syria. In the midst of those vast plains, scorched by the burning sun, he sat down alone, emaciated, disfigured, with no companion but wild beasts. Strong were his resolutions; great were his sufferings; many were the penitential tears which he shed; but in the midst of this desolation and of these flowing of tears, he informs us that his busy imagination placed before him the luxuries of Rome and the attractions of her thoughtless voluptuaries, and renewed the mental tortures which he hoped he had escaped.

"To be secluded, therefore, in body is not enough. To be alone in caves and in forests is not necessarily to be alone with God.

"Nor is this all. We may properly remark, further, that true spiritual solitude, which always implies the special operations of Divine grace, is not merely *mental* solitude. It is not the solitude, even when added to that of the body, of a merely disappointed and impenitent mind; of the mind *as it now is*.

"The mind may become so intensely selfish that even the world cannot supply its wants. How many persons, the victims of intense avarice, of burning sensuality, of overleaping ambition, have renounced and cursed the world, because even the world, with all its adaptedness to their desires, could not give all that they asked! Men of wealth, voluptuaries, statesmen, warriors, kings, worn out with indulgence, or disappointed in their boundless aspirations, have separated themselves from society, when probably it did not occur to them *to separate from themselves*. In forests and in dens of the earth, and wherever they could flee away, and shut themselves up alone, they have poured forth, not their prayers to God, but their misanthropy and hate against man. In leaving the world behind them, they have carried in their hearts that which gave the world its evil and its sin.

Separate from All Except What God Allows

"True spiritual solitude, in being something more than solitude of the body, and something more than solitude of the unholy mind, is solitude *from that in the mind*, whatever it may be, which tends to disunite and dissociate it from God.

"The soul, in the state of interior solitude, is in a state of solitude or separation from two things, in particular, namely from its own desires and its own thoughts. *It is separate from its own desires.* Sick of the world, if thou wouldst erect an inward oratory, and enter into the secret place of the heart, then let it be thy first purpose, as it certainly is an indispensable one, to cease from all desire, except such as God Himself animates. In order to control the desires, and bring them into subjection to God, it is necessary to control the senses. The desires must have their appropriate objects, and in a multitude of cases the objects are made known by the senses. Keep a close watch, therefore, upon the senses. Let not your eye rest upon anything which is forbidden. Let not your ear listen to any corrupting or unprofitable conversation; but be as one who has no sight and no hearing, and no touch, and no taste for anything except what God *allows* and is pleased with. Contend with all, because all have gone astray. Crucify all, because all have crucified Him, who is the Eternal Life. Separate from all, so far as they have separated from God; in order that being united with them in their truth, you may be united with the God of truth.

Fully Established in the Way of Holiness

"The soul, in a state of spiritual solitude, is in a state of solitude or separation, also, from its *own thoughts*. *By* its own thoughts are meant thoughts which are *self-originated*, and have selfish ends. When all such thoughts, as well as all desires which are not from God, are extinct, the inward solitude is greatly increased.

"Let it be remembered that the state of spiritual solitude does not exclude *all* thoughts from the mind; but only those which are *its own*, which are *self-originated*, and which tend, therefore, to dissociate it from God. Accordingly, it does not exclude those thoughts, to whatever subjects they may relate, of which God may properly be regarded as the Author. And it is proper to say here, in order to determine what thoughts are from God and what are not, that thoughts which are from God are characterized by this mark, in particular, that they always harmonize with the arrangements of His Providence. Thoughts which arise from the instigations of self, and not from a Divine movement, are not in harmony with what God in His providential arrangements would desire and choose to suggest; but, on the contrary, they busy themselves with recollections and images of persons, things, and plans, which are wholly inconsistent with such arrangements. All conceptions of persons, things, and situations, all imaginations, all thoughts, and all reasonings, which, in coming in our own *will*, are out of harmony with the existing providential arrangements, are not only not from God, but they constitute so many disturbing influences, which separate God from the soul. The evil is inexpressibly great. In the truly holy soul, which, after many temptations and hesitations, is fully established in the way of holiness, thoughts so discordant and out of place are not permitted to enter. It stands apart, if one may so express it, constituting an unoccupied space, a closet shut up, a still and sacred seclusion, unapproachable to everything which comes unbidden by its great Master.

Speaks Inward to Things That are Eternal

"Again, the true solitude of spirit, in the full import of the terms, may be regarded as including, to some extent at least, a cessation or solitude from words. If speech is a blessing when it *is* under the regulation of holy principles, it is a source of great and almost unmitigated evil when it proceeds from unsanctified passions. And when we consider how closely and extensively it is connected with such passions, we have good reason, at least in a multitude of cases, for regarding silence as a sign of moderation, truth, and peace. To say nothing but what is appropriate, to say nothing but what Christ would say, bearing reproaches without reply, and uttering the truth in love, is a virtue, which is a product of the Holy Spirit, and which belongs to him only who has been taught of God. The speech of him who is the subject of spiritual solitude, like everything else- that comes within the reach of moral obligation, is under the restrictions of a Divine *law*; and he can no more speak without God to guide him *in* his utterance, than he can do anything else without God. In being silent, with the exception of those occasions in which the Providence of God calls him to speak, he has sundered one of the strong links, which would otherwise have bound him to what is vain, frivolous, *and* wicked in the world.

"It may be added here, that solitude from words is not solitude from communication. The soul that, in consequence of its sanctification, does not speak outward to things that are temporal, speaks inward to things that are eternal. And in proportion as it ceases from those communications with men which God does not call for and does not authorize, it increases its communications with God Himself.

In the Strong Fortress of the Infinite

"And these last remarks indicate the true result of spiritual solitude, when it is rightly understood and experienced. The soul is not left alone with *itself* which would be much the same as to say that it is left alone with Satan-but is left alone with God, who is Eternal Life. Separation, in its spiritual application; is not only seclusion, but *transition*. Separation from the world, when predicated of a being to whom absolute separation is an impossibility, is transition to God; and he who is not of the world is of God; alone and in unison at the same time; in solitude from that which is evil, but *in* union with that which is good. He has hidden himself, not in the dark and weak enclosure which selfishness furnishes to those who do not believe, but in the strong fortress of the Infinite. He is not only *with* God, but *in* Him; not only in harmony of action, but in the sacred enclosure of his being; so that God may be said, in the language of Scripture, to '*compass him round about*.' No noise of unholy thoughts, no suggestions of unhallowed reason, no clamors of unsatisfied desire, no confusion of the tongues of men, nothing that is hurtful, nothing that is unprofitable, reaches him. 'As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people.'-Psa. 125:2."

Character Reflecting a Knowledge of God

"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 inquire in His temple."-Psa. 27:4.

THERE is a pathetic note manifest in the words of Jesus as in His prayer He makes mention of the absence of a knowledge of God on the part of some whom He designates as the world. "O righteous Father; the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee." (John 17:25.) It seems evident that the world to which He more particularly refers is not the Gentile world then outside Divine favor, but rather that portion of humanity among whom ' He had gone in and out bearing testimony to His Messiahship and mission in the earth. He had been sent to a nation which had enjoyed extraordinary advantages over all other peoples, a nation "to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the services of God, and the promises," and yet He is obliged to say to them, "Ye neither know Me, nor My Father: if ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also." "Ye are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." John 8:19, 44.

The Depths of Christ

Is it to be wondered at that Jesus' heart was saddened by facts so manifest to Himself, though because of their blindness, so unperceived by the Jews themselves. To find the Gentile world in gross darkness and ignorant of God, was no surprise to our Lord, but to find so little of the knowledge of God among a people so highly privileged was surely cause for His frequent expressions of lament and disappointment. To a sensitive nature, perfectly informed as Jesus was in the blessedness of what a knowledge of God really meant, the deplorable absence of that knowledge must have been a very painful experience indeed. The real depth of His lament could not possibly be understood by the "world" that Jesus found so lacking in acquaintanceship with God; only those who know God could ever experience and share this, the Savior's sorrow with Him. In His own unbroken, intimate fellowship with God, living as He did in the undimmed light and joy of the Father's presence and approval, who can describe scribe the great empty chasm He saw spread out before those professedly seeing, yet blind leaders and people of Israel. Oh what a world of difference in the viewpoint of those whose meager knowledge of God shrouded Him in the garments of "vain imaginations," "vain traditions" and "commandments of men," and the vision of Jesus, before whom the knowledge of God was spread out over all the principles, mysteries, and powers of eternal life! How vast the scope of His definition of eternal life, when He declares, "This is life eternal, that they might *know Thee* the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." (John 17:3.) In the light of such a statement of what eternal life consists, how few at any time have known its underlying verities.

Surely then the words of David in our text are such as should be constantly upon our own lips. The delight he experienced in being permitted to abide in the house of God, and the exalted purposes constraining him to take full advantage of his opportunity to seek a greater knowledge of the Lord, should never be absent in our lives today. This fact seems wonderfully emphasized also in the statement of the Apostle. Perhaps it was as the typical representative of such as Paul that David was caused to give us our text. Harken then to the Apostle as he too determines to dwell continually within the circle of these great eternal-life influences-knowing God "and Jesus Christ whom He bath sent." "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of

the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. . . . That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection."-Phil. 3:8, 10.

For David, dwelling in the house of the Lord, and spending all the days of life within its holy environments, there was the one great objective, namely "to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple." His heart was particularly sensitive to the known delight that the Lord experiences when receptive minds truly seek His face. We therefore experience no surprise when we find the Psalmist saying, "When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face, my *heart* said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." (Psa. 27:8.) His was that longing after God best described and being as real and present as the thirst of the hart for the water brooks. No wonder his night watches were so frequently filled with sweet communion with God, and his days occupied with meditations on the law of God, in which he delighted. To him the Lord's Word was surely fulfilled: "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to- you." Similar was the experience of Paul, whose great purpose was "that I might know Him, and the power of His resurrection." Worthy examples they are for us to follow, and to us of the house of sons, their singleness of purpose becomes an outstanding incentive to reach the plane where Jesus stands, and to testify with Him, "O righteous Father, I have known Thee."

God is Love

Well has the poet written into song the happy discovery of those who follow on to know the Lord:

"But what to those who find? Ah! this,
Nor tongue nor pen can show!
The love of Jesus, what it is,
None but His loved ones know."

These words seem to breathe the same deep knowledge that is contained in the expression of Jesus "The world bath not known, . . . but I know." Some heart emotions can be clothed in language and in considerable measure transmitted to others. Some reactions of joy may find suitable and adequate expression in "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," or in some other form of testimony, but to *know Him*, and have the mysteries of eternal life flowing through our souls from Him, requires more than we now possess of language properly to express. How vain the boast of a knowledge of God unless the heart is wholly devoted to Him. Some may know enough *about God* to preach the Gospel in contention, but never *know Him*. Knowledge of His purposes for Church and world there can be, "the devils believe and tremble," but to only one class can come the fulfillment of His promise: "I will manifest Myself to him." It is not, therefore, our knowledge about God on which we rest, but knowing Him in the deep responsive understanding of the heart affections.

This is the knowledge which is full of energy, full of power to work out all the needed transformation we must experience. This is the knowledge of God that Jesus rejoiced to fully possess in His perfect accord with the Father, and into which He longs to lead us through all the progressive stages of sanctification. Then it is that the great mystery of spiritual growth is made clear to us, of how we are "*created in Christ Jesus*, unto good works." Then the life of God flows in, and in "actions speaking louder than words," "the life also of Jesus is "made manifest in our mortal flesh." - 2 Cor. 4:11.

"God is love," therefore to know Him and His beloved Son, is to find oneself truly "lost in wonder, love, and praise," in the realization of what it means to have been made the object of His condescending love-His blessed personal love. Is it a wonderful love concerned with a world of sinners lost? Indeed it is! Is it a wonderful story of salvation for the Church of this "accepted time" and of a "paradise restored" to the children of men? Yes indeed! But oh how sweet and precious and personal to every one of us is the love of God, and of Jesus. "He loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*. "He gave Himself a ransom for all," but He also "died and paid it all, yes all. the debt I owed." And how blessed it is to feel the power of this love of God shed abroad in our hearts and impregnated with a sense of overpowering gratitude. We do thank God for the tongues and pens of a multitude of such thankful souls, who have sought to express their reactions and ours to the Apostle's three Spirit-inspired words, "God is love." We share with them their sense of limitation as they survey the boundless wideness of His grace, and cry, "O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise. "Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were an offering far too small." "Love amazing, so Divine, Demands my life, my soul, my all." "Here, Lord, I give myself away, 'Tis all that I can do." These are but a few of the confessions of the hopeless inability experienced by devoted hearts, who "for such love would make some return." Blessed sense this of the greatness of His unspeakable Gift, and blessed assurance and promise it is of our some day possessing the powers to praise Him with perfect adoration. To live in the enjoyment of this heart knowledge of the love of God is, then, to live a life of grateful praise, reflecting our knowledge of Him in the melodies of joy and thanksgiving, by which we may fill His courts with praise.

God is love. To know Him is to find oneself influenced by that "Love Divine all love excelling, to scatter love wherever the daily path may lead. With that love abounding in the heart, its reflection will not be absent. The ever ready word in season, like apples of gold in pictures of silver, will surely reveal it. Leaving beauty where ashes have been found, and replacing the cup of sorrow with one of joy, will testify to , its presence in the character. Lifting up the heeds which hang down, giving renewed strength to the feeble knees, fulfilling the law of Christ by bearing another's burden, will all bear witness to an intimate knowledge of God, for "he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God." (1 John 4:16.) "Be imitators of God as dear children," says the Apostle, but such we can never be unless we *know Him*. Knowing Him as Jesus intended His words to mean, will insure our being "rooted and grounded" in the love of Christ. Then we will realize the fulfillment of the law which says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. . Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Mark 12:30, 31.) There is therefore no greater reflection of our knowledge of God's love, than this-our whole-hearted recognition of our indebtedness to His grace, and the spontaneous outpourings of our love toward Him in devotion and toward our neighbor in helpfulness. And our nearest neighbor, according to Jesus, is whoever needs our active love most.

God is Light

God is light, therefore to *know Him* is to "walk in the light as He is in the light." It will mean walking in a pathway. that shines with increasing brilliancy as growth in the knowledge of God progresses. It is not promised that the path of all will shine more and more unto the perfect day. The Scriptures' are here, as everywhere, careful to limit such experiences to the few whom God has determined beforehand shall have them. It is the path of the *just ones* alone that can thus shine. "The secret of the Lord is [only] with them that fear Him." "The *meek will* He guide in judgment: and the *meek will* He teach His way." (Psa. 25:9.) This is a pathway wherein the light of Divine revelation will increase as the righteous individual moves onward in his

acquaintanceship with God. It will mean clearer visions of God's truth as it progressively unfolds, up to the full dawn of the new Day. But in so real a sense it will represent a path of light leading onward to an increasing nearness to God, and an increasing reflection of His character likeness in the one thus walking in the light. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, *to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*" (2 Cor. 4:6.) Only when that light is permitted to shine "in our hearts," our innermost being, our deepest affections, our enraptured minds, can we experience the real joy of walking in the light of His face, and know the power of that undimmed countenance to make one holy.

"If we walk in the light as He is in the light."-What a demand! Are we not taught to think of God as "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see"? (1 Tim. 6:16.) How then can we now walk in such unapproachable light, and live in the environment of such glory? Surely it can be only by being "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God. (Rom. 6:11.) The old man has been crucified with Christ, and the new creature can dwell with Christ in God. "Ye are not in the flesh, saith the Scriptures, "but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in, you." (Rom. 8:9.) The pure in heart *see* God, and earth-born clouds are not permitted to hide Him from their eyes. To have this access into the holy of holies where saints may enter with "boldness," and to know God as "light" in this way, will therefore result in a character reflecting His holiness. Professions of knowing Him, and the daily walk will agree. Confessing this knowledge will not be vitiated by works which deny Him. The cross of Christ bearing its victim, who was made sin for us, receiving in His own body the punishment we deserved, will be visualized with deeper realization of how God hates sin. It will make real to us the need of an increasing hatred of the unrighteousness so inherent in ourselves, and it will result in giving us a clearer understanding of our holiness in Christ, and increase our gratitude accordingly. Only those who fully comprehend their utter unprofitableness, and the sinfulness inherent in themselves, can really appreciate their provision for holiness through grace. Oh how effectual the light from that blessed cross which reveals that He who was "made sin, for us" has now, in God's love, made it possible "that we might be made the, *righteousness of God* in Him. (2 Cor. 5:21.) Surely "the love of Christ constraineth us" to accept by faith these blessed facts of justification, and to diligently put off the old man, who because of his deeds is shut out from the light of the Spirit, and to put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created him." (Col. 3:10.) Such knowledge of God as "light," *does* give an impetus and zest to the desire to be cleansed from "*all filthiness of the flesh and spirit*" until the holiness, without which none shall see Him, has been fully realized.

God is Life

God is the supreme Fountain of life. To *know Him* therefore will mean a present experience of the life which is life indeed. Living in vital union with Him cannot fail to produce evidences that we have indeed "passed from death unto life." There will not be just "*a name* to live," but the reflection of the knowledge of Him will be seen in fruits and graces utterly impossible unless we are "alive unto God." To know the great Fountain of life in the sense Jesus rejoiced to know Him, will therefore mean the possession of energizing, spiritual forces definitely at work in the heart. This is the clear, unmistakable teaching -of the following Scriptures, and others: "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know' what is the hope of His calling, . . . and what is the *exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe*, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead." "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

"Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."-Eph. 1:19, 20; Rom. 8:11; John 10:10; 4:14.

These are thrilling statements indeed. They by no means teach that such results must await our glorification beyond the veil. Here and now we may enter into larger and larger fulfillments of them. "He that hath the Son hath life" as a present possession. "The life I now live I [now] live by the faith of the Son of God." He who enjoys the verification of these assurances in his life, *knows God*. He has passed from ineffectual efforts and questionable hopes into an experience that maketh not ashamed. God is working in him to will and to do His good pleasure. May He who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think, continue to impart His life to us, and make us living witnesses of the "life more abundant." Thus we shall be characters reflecting a vital contact with God, whom to know is life eternal. Then there will be the fruitage of love, joy, and peace, so definitely promised to all who live in Christ the Vine; not the artificial, the imitation of these graces which so often deceive us, and leave us humiliated in the hour of trial by the discovery that they were not real, but the genuine fruitage that will abide, come what may.

The Peace of God

"The very God of peace sanctify you wholly," prays the Apostle. The God of peace -- the great Reservoir of the peace "which passeth understanding." Surely if we *know Him* such a prayer shall not have been in vain, and such a peace as this will always pervade our lives. But alas, how many of us have sung all too truthfully, "Of peace I only knew the name, nor found my soul its rest." The sin of worry, of fretting over the reverses that so frequently overtake us, and our growing restless under the things that disturb the even tenor of our own preferred plans and preferences is so present with us, that peace, real peace, permanent peace is not known.

This "peace of God" is not only a blessed boon that He so willingly waits to impart to us when faith is, prepared to claim it, but as He would have us realize, His peace is so essential to our full fellowship with Him, and to our attainment of His will concerning us. "They that believe do enter into rest"-the rest reserved for the people of God. Blessed rest from our own works, which can never justify us, nor give peace to our awakened spirits, rest from foreboding fears lest our temporal needs are forgotten and we suffer want; rest from fretting lest evil-doers prospering in their way, defeat the plans we cherish; rest, sweet trusting assurance that God is in His heaven and all is well. As a dear saint of not so long ago expressed it: "If you trust you do not worry, if you worry you do not trust." Only let our faith be true and simple, ready to take Him at His word, and our lives will surely be full of the sunshine of His peace, however overcast our skies may be. Surely we too can say,

"Faith came singing into my room,
And other guests took flight;
Fear and anxiety, grief and gloom
Sped out into the night.
I wondered that such peace could be:
But faith said gently, 'Don't you see
They really cannot live with me.'

Casting all Your Care upon Him

"O righteous Father, I have known Thee, we can surely say today, after our years of fellowship with Jesus. In what a multitude of ways He has demonstrated His love and power active on our behalf. Never one trial too much, never a temptation without its way of escape, never a burden laid upon us to test our happy accord with His will, without the sweet assurance whispered into our hearts, "My grace is sufficient for Thee." In days of a less perfect knowledge of His full provision for us in Christ, a day we trust now gone, never to return, we were deprived of much of His peace because we failed to recognize that it was solely a gift, and believing it could come only by our efforts, we needed to learn the futility of our struggle:

"I struggled and wrestled to *win* it,
The blessing that setteth me free;
But when I had ceased from my struggles,
His peace Jesus *gave* unto me."

And oh! what peace the Savior can *give!* Peace from the things mentioned foregoing, and a peace that passeth understanding when we have really learned to put the emphasis not on our *Do*, but on His *Done*. Ah, then, in so many ways He truly becomes our peace. And is it not God's will for us that our experiences even now shall be like the fulfillment of a prophecy, which in its real setting is still future for the world: "Of the increase of His government and *peace*, there shall be no end." Only let *His government*, His entire will, be fully recognized in our life, and His peace will surely follow. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in Me ye shall have peace." And in what an unlimited measure that peace will come, if we really *know God* "or rather," as Paul (so) beautifully expresses it, know, that we "are known of Him." - Gal. 4:9.

The Joy of the Lord

There is a beautiful rendering of Psa. 119:32 (Douay Bible) that is so true in the lives of resting, trusting saints: "I will *run* the way of Thy commandments, when Thou hast set my heart at liberty." They cannot run with joyous heart and fleet feet who are not made "free indeed." Let there be bondage to the fear of man, or bondage to unconquered sin, and our feet are heavy. If there be some weight permitted to slacken our steps, some command of God "grievous," or hard to obey, it will mean a heart far from joyful liberty, for "if our hearts condemn us God is greater than our hearts, and His judgment we know. We know full well then why we are weak -- delight in His will is absent.

Would we be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might? Would we gladly lay hold of every source of strength calculated to turn our defeats into triumphs and our "groaning within ourselves" into "always rejoicing"? Would we give much to be able to testify in truth,

"Of victory *now* o'er Satan's power,
Let all the ransomed sing,
And triumph *now* in every hour,
Through Christ, the Lord, our King."

If we would be thus enriched, let us remember the words so blessedly true, "*The joy of the Lord shall be your strength,*" for a heart joyful in the Lord, is a strong conquering heart.

The Scriptures abound with references to the joy of the Lord, and they so frequently stress the fact that He wants us to now enter into His joy. And what is the joy of God? Is it not a joy in His beloved Son, and in all the plan of redemption centered and completed in Him? Is it not a joy in those things "which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived," those things amidst which He dwells and has now revealed unto us by His Spirit, and which, when we are made meet for His holy presence, He will fully unfold and give to us? Is not His joy wholly occupied with the things that are "pure, and just, and good," and in the knowledge that ere long all impurity, injustice, and evil will pass away, never to rise a second time? And is not His joy unspeakably great in seeing us, His children, become more and more like Him in these things? Who can fathom the joy of the Father as He beholds our acceptance of His grace, and as we throw off the shackles that bind us to a world like this, and lay hold of all the privileges of sonship He has made possible to us, among which is "fulness of joy at His right hand." Truly, "we cannot have too many rejoicing Christians, if they rejoice in the Lord." We must agree that this is so. If *we know Him so* intimately, as so much closer than any earthly tie, our lives will radiate His joy. We will then *run* in the way of His commandments, with a heart at liberty, treading on resurrection ground, unfettered by the opinions and doings of others, living above the blighting, constraining, and joy-destroying, fault-finding tendencies of the fallen nature. Have we not been made strong in loving sympathy for all who love our Lord, just through the joy and gladness with which He fills our own hearts, as we meditate on His loving kindness to us? Are we not today becoming more and more blessedly conscious of the fact that we seem drawing (so) near the veil that even now we are tasting of the joys of the Lord into which ere long we shall be fully ushered? If we are, we know how strong love makes us to believe and claim all that He can be made to us, and we know how empowered such love can make us to fulfil His every command. Of all the evidences that we have walked with God and have learned to know Him, none so beautifully manifests this as a character reflecting so' much of the love of God, that unloveliness, bitterness, and discord, are rebuked and silenced. Shall we not then henceforth demonstrate that we really know Him.

"So let our daily lives express
The beauties of true holiness;
So let the Christian graces shine,
That all may know the power Divine."

Half Hour Meditations on Romans

No. 38

"And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise." - Gal. 3:17, 18.

ONCE again our attention is directed to Abraham, the Friend of God, "Father," Exemplar or Pattern of all believers, whether Gentiles or Jews. In our last two Half Hours we have seen the Apostle conclusively demonstrating the fact that Abraham was reckoned righteous by God, not because he was in fact righteous, having kept law's every requirement, but because it pleased God to regard Abraham's faith. Moreover the Apostle was at pains to show that this standing in God's sight was enjoyed by Abraham several years before circumcision was instituted, thus making it apparent that Abraham was justified (declared righteous) not only by faith, but by faith alone.

But a further question would be advanced by the Jewish disputant.. After being thus blessed with this standing before God, Abraham had received a magnificent promise. He and his seed were to receive a rich inheritance; they were to be heirs of nothing less - than the "world"! Now surely, so the opponent would argue, the seed to which this inheritance related could be none other than the nation of Israel-Abraham's issue through Isaac. And if this be granted, the Apostle must then concede that, after all, even though justification was by faith and by faith alone, inheritance was not-inheritance, the Apostle must admit, was by another means, even on account of that relationship to Abraham which was possessed by those who were his physical descendants, and who were under the Law Covenant mediated by Moses. St. Paul knew that this thought lay deep in the heart of every Jewish opponent, and therefore in the four verses we now consider (4:13-16), "he attacks it unsparingly, demonstrating the very opposite is the truth; for the Law, far from procuring the promised inheritance for the Jews, would infallibly deprive them of it."

"For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith." -Ver. 13.

Three things claim our attention here: (1) the promise; (2) the seed to whom the promise was made; and (3) the grounds or means whereby the fulfilment of the promise is made certain.

The Promise

When we turn to the Genesis account, we do not find any of God's promises to Abraham containing the precise words "heir of the world," but it is easy to see that this must be their outcome, and the Apostle, in this comprehensive expression, gives us the substance of them all. Thus in Gen. 12:2, 3, we read: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed"; and again, in chapter 22, verses 17, 18: "In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

Inheritance of the world would, of course, necessarily include the inheritance of the land of Canaan, and indeed this feature is specifically mentioned. "I will give unto thee, and to thy seed

after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession." (Gen. 17:8; see also Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:18.) Reference to this portion of the promise is also made in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where we read: "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles [tents] with, Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." - Heb. 11:8, 9.

The Seed

But the promise was not limited to Canaan, and the fact that the substance of these glorious promises to Abraham meant nothing less than the inheritance of the "world" would not be disputed by the Jewish opponent. Indeed he himself would have been only too ready to have multiplied Scripture quotations in support of this teaching, perhaps recalling the promise through David to the Messianic Seed of Abraham: "I have given Thee *the uttermost parts of the earth* for an inheritance." (Psa. 2:8.) But the Apostle is about to show, to the great discomfiture of those who "rested in the law," and to the great encouragement of those whose rest is in God, that the seed which is to inherit the promise is not Israel after the flesh, but Israel after the spirit; not that nation which can claim *physical descent* from Abraham, but that nation, composed of both Gentiles and Jews, who can claim Abraham as their "father" on higher grounds, because of a *kinship* of faith, because of the possession of a like confidence in God to that which Abraham manifested in such high degree. Some years before this the Baptist had uttered the warning: "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Matt. 3:9), and in harmony with these words of our Lord's Forerunner, the Apostle is now to point out, what he will later, in chapter 9, more fully elaborate, that the physical descendants of Abraham are not the "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16); that from God's standpoint "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel; neither, because they are the [natural] seed of Abraham, are they all children" in God's sight. On the contrary, in God's estimation, the "children of the promise," ("they which are of faith"-Gal. 3:7), "*are counted for the seed.*" - Rom. 9:6-8.

A Heavenly and an Earthly Seed

For the purpose of his present discussion the Apostle does not enter on the question as to *how* the promise is to be fulfilled. He is concerned here only with the condition, the grounds, the means, whereby it is- to be fulfilled. Elsewhere the Scriptures distinguish between a heavenly and an earthly seed, and show how the blessing will proceed from one to another of various groups within those two main divisions. First our attention is drawn to the fact that *all* the promises of God, and therefore this Abrahamic promise, are yea and amen in one particular Seed, the Anointed Jesus, whom God hath appointed heir, not of the world only, but of "all things", Thus indicating that the promised blessing of all the families of the earth must come to them through Him. (Matt. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:20; Heb. 1:2.) In another illuminating passage the Apostle shows that in the Father's Plan Jesus is not to be alone in this glorious work, but is to have a company of anointed ones closely associated with Him; as closely associated and united as the members of a body are to each other and to their head. His words are: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ." (1 Cor. 12:12.) Comparing Scripture still further with Scripture we are confirmed in the above understanding, for in a powerful passage we are expressly informed that the Seed to whom the

promise was made is Christ, and that if we be Christ's then are we Abraham's seed and heirs according to that promise;-joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him: Gal. 3:16, 29; Rom. 8:17.

But while this "choice" seed (1 Pet. 2:4; Eph. 1:4), the Anointed Jesus and His Anointed Church, with whose calling, character qualifications and development the New Testament is chiefly concerned, is to be highly exalted-from human to spirit conditions, even to the Divine nature itself, yet this class will not constitute the whole of Abraham's seed. There are others who will be raised to spirit conditions, though not to the Divine nature, and the willing cooperation of these will also be enlisted. According to our understanding of the -Scriptures the Church which is His Body (Eph. 1:23), will be assisted in the work of blessing and restoring all nations, by the rest of the Church of the Firstborns (Heb. 12:23); - the virgins her companions that follow her.-Psa. 45:14.

Others again, indeed the greater number of Abraham's seed, will be raised to human conditions, and enjoy an earthly paradise. Of these, Abraham and others of the faithful ones of a prior Age will have exalted stations they will be Princes in all the earth. (Psa. 45:16.) These one-time "fathers" will have become the "children" of Christ Jesus, their "everlasting Father" by His Bride, the Lamb's wife. (Isa. 9:6; Rev. 21:9.) In full harmony with those on the spirit plane and in cooperation with them, these perfected men' will throughout the Millennial Age be occupied in turning many to righteousness, and as a result they will shine amongst their fellowmen as, the stars for ever and ever. - Dan. 12:3.

Does Israel after the Flesh Constitute the Earthly Seed of Abraham?

We thus see that five groups or divisions may be distinguished amongst the posterity, of Abraham amongst the true, God -- recognized, faith-seed of Abraham. First, our Lord Jesus Himself, the Seed most excellent, the Messianic Seed; second, the Church which is His Body; third, the rest of the Church of the Firstborns, sometimes referred to as the Great Multitude or Great Company, Rev. 7:9; fourth, the Ancient Worthies; and fifth, the Restitution Class, composed of the remainder of the world of mankind *who embrace the faith of Abraham -- who walk* in the steps of his faith.

The Apostle, however, in the passage in Romans we are considering, does not distinguish these groups or divisions. He does not even distinguish between the Gospel Age Church and the Restitution Class of the Millennial Age. For the purpose of his present discussion he is content to regard them as together forming one large group-the seed of Abraham. He is concerned with emphasizing the one distinguishing characteristic common to them all. Together they constitute the household of *faith*, and that is the point of emphasis.

But some one may be inclined to ask: Are not Israel after the flesh part of the seed of Abraham? To this we would make answer: Not according to our understanding of the Scriptures. But, it may be insisted: Do they not constitute his *earthly* seed? We answer: No. Many Gentiles will be found amongst his earthly seed. If Israel after the flesh share the faith of Abraham, they may, together with Gentile believers, constitute his earthly seed; if they share his faith, they may be found even amongst his heavenly seed. Indeed, we know as a matter of fact that some, for example, the Apostles, will be found amongst Abraham's spiritual, heavenly, seed. But in whatever group individual members of Israel after the flesh may be found, it will not be because of their flesh

relationship, but because of their faith relationship to Abraham. And they will not be counted for - the seed in any sense of the word if they are found destitute of the faith which characterized him.

Believing Israelites to form Nucleus of Abraham's Earthly Seed

In a later chapter in this Epistle, namely chapter 11, the Apostle will tell us of his hopes-nay, of his firm convictions, that the great majority of Israel after the flesh will come to embrace Abraham's faith, and share his inheritance. When the Gospel Age has ended, "after those [Gospel Age] days" (Jer. 31:33), God will make a New Law Covenant with Israel, like, yet oh! so different from, their Old Law Covenant. It is the Apostle's confident expectation that *then*, they will be found with God's law written on their hearts, instead of on tables of stone, and that instead of the great mass of his countrymen being blinded as at present, and only the few showing faith, conditions will be so changed that the great majority will believe and turn to the Lord and only the few will reject Him. Indeed it is his happy belief, inspired by Scriptures we cannot now take time or space to discuss, that his brethren according to the flesh will form the nucleus of the Restitution Class, the Earthly Seed of Abraham that to this nucleus, and largely as a result of their missionary efforts, all nations shall be drawn, to them all nations shall be joined, in them all nations shall merge.

Faith not Law the Ground of the Promise

But these thoughts are not uppermost in the Apostle's mind now. Here in verses 13-16 of chapter 4 he is occupied-intensely occupied with the fact that the present condition of his countrymen is that of blindness. That, ignoring the faith which was the sole instrument in Abraham's case, both for justification and inheritance, they "rest in the law" and think the promise will be secured to them on that account. This cannot be, he insists, "for, if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect."-Ver. 14.

In the Galatian letter St. Paul presents the *historical* proof that the keeping of the Law could- not secure the fulfillment of the promise. He there shows (see the passage quoted at the head of this "Meditation"), that the Law Covenant was not given until four hundred and thirty years after the Abrahamic Covenant, and that therefore it could make no difference to, could make no change in, so as to annul or abrogate, that older covenant which rested on God's promise and man's reliance on God's faithful performance of that promise. Here, in the passage before us, he reaches the same result from another standpoint. His reasoning here is: If an inheritance is promised on the one condition of faith, and then it develops that in order to come into possession of the promised inheritance it is necessary to first render obedience to certain other conditions not previously stipulated, it becomes at once apparent that the promise was not serious, could not have been made in good faith, and any reliance thereon would be misplaced. This would be still more apparent if the conditions imposed were impossible of execution. In that case the one exercising faith in the promise would find his faith made *void, emptied* (the word is the same as that in Phil. 2:7 where the Apostle speaks of our Lord as *emptying* Himself). His faith would be deprived of its object, drained of its contents, and thus made useless. Not only so, but the promise itself, having an impossible condition attached to it, would be paralyzed in its effects.

But the promise, as a matter of fact, was made by Almighty God Himself. It must therefore have been made in good faith. To suppose otherwise would be to doubt the veracity of God. Such a conclusion cannot for a moment be entertained. (Romans 3:3, 4.) Therefore no such impossible

condition as obedience to the requirements of the Law Covenant could have been attached so' as to interfere with the fulfillment of the promise. Or to use the words of the Apostle in verse 16: "Therefore it (the promise and its fulfillment) is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed."

Where Law is not There is no Transgression

Moreover the opposition of the Law and the Promise both in their operation and in their effects is still further manifest in verse 15: "Besides, the Law works out wrath; but where law is not, there is no transgression."-Diaglott.

The Apostle must not be understood here as affirming that prior to the giving of the Law there was no sin, for as a matter of fact we know to the contrary. He himself informs us in the next chapter, verse 13, that "until the law," that is to, say, from Adam "until the law sin *was* in the world." What we understand him to be teaching us here is (1) that where there is no law, sin, in the form of transgression of law, cannot exist; (2). that no sooner is a law given to fallen man than he is bound to transgress it because his imperfect state is such as to render him powerless to do otherwise, and (3) the transgression of law brings in its wake, the condemnation and punishment of God. This idea of Law's operation and effects is worked out in remarkable detail and to our great edification in chapter 7 as we shall see. At present it must suffice us to note Law's incompatibility with Promise and to rejoice in the knowledge that "*therefore* it is of faith that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is father of us all."

The Seed is Composed of Jewish and Gentile Believers

Some have supposed that the Apostle does in these words distinguish between the heavenly and the earthly seed. Those who adopt this view understand the seed "which is of the law" to refer to the earthly seed, and the seed "which is of the faith of Abraham" to have reference to the heavenly. We have already indicated our belief that the Scriptures elsewhere do indeed make this distinction, but we are unable to see that this distinction is made here. To our understanding the Apostle does but differentiate here between believers of Jewish and Gentile origin, without indicating in any manner whether they will be found amongst the heavenly or the earthly seed.

Instead of the promise being made of none effect as it would have been had it depended for its fulfillment on obedience to the requirements of the law covenant, it was made sure by depending on faith only. And to whom was it made sure? We answer: To all the seed in the true and full sense of that word as we have endeavored to point out that sense in the preceding paragraphs. After what has gone before we cannot doubt but that the expression, "all the seed" refers to all believers, both Jews and Gentiles. The seed "which is of 'the law would thus refer (not to fleshly Israelites without faith, nor yet to those Jewish believers only who were destined to become a part of Abraham's earthly seed, but) to all Jewish believers, without regard to whether they would be ' found amongst the heavenly or the earthly seed. If this thought be the correct one, then the corresponding phrase, namely the seed "which is of the faith of Abraham" would refer to Gentile believers, some of whom might be of the earthly and some of heavenly seed of Abraham.

It may be objected, indeed, that in referring to the seed "which is of the law" St. Paul does not mention the qualification of faith, and that therefore he is speaking of Israel after the flesh,

without regard to whether they are believers or not. But neither the immediate context nor the general tenor of Scripture will support this objection. In the light, of the context we have considered foregoing, we cannot but understand that the presence of *faith is* implied in "all the seed" to whom the promise is made sure, and that therefore the expression "which is of the law" refers not to Jews as such, but to Jewish believers only. In the case of the Gentiles, that seed "which is of the faith of Abraham," the attribute of faith is expressly mentioned, because it appears in them without any question of it being supplemented by abortive attempts at obedience to the requirements of Law.

Father of Us All

The last words of verse 16 "sum up all that has been developed in the previous context. Believing Jews and Gentiles, we all participate by faith not only in justification," but also in the inheritance; for the true seed to whom this promise was made was that of faith, not that according to law. Abraham is therefore the sole stem from which proceed those two branches which form in him one and the same household of faith.

ENCOURAGING MESSAGES

My dear beloved Brethren:

Loving greetings in the name of Jesus. Ah, yes, and what a name! Savior, King-yea, King of our hearts. The hymn says, "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds, in a *believer's* ear. But to the Lord's consecrated saints, to those who are more than mere believers it means their "All in All." It means Friend amidst enemies, strength amidst a realization of *our* weakness. It means sweetness amidst the sourness of this decaying, world, loveliness amidst ugliness, truth amidst error, Savior when despair is nigh overwhelming us, courage when afraid, hope for the future when present circumstances- are black. It means too that there are *others* who are also of those who "look unto Jesus," hence bringing the sweet and encouraging thought that I am not alone in this sin and death and misery-stricken world. No there are others of "like precious faith." No wonder Brother Paul calls it the gift of God, the "unspeakable Gift."- It is beyond human comprehension, and our gratitude to God for this. gift is beyond adequate expression. Yet our loving Father knows our hearts and He gives us the Holy Spirit which in turn says and expresses the thought of our imperfect minds, "with groanings that cannot be uttered."

So then, dear ones, in the name of the all-sufficient Jesus I tender greetings, my thanks to you for your ministry and also my appreciation of the same. The cause of this letter is the arrival of the "HERALD" for July. I do wish to emphasize the great good *to me* the "love letter from over the sea" does. It generally comes just when I need encouragement. The Annual Report was a strengthening joy to me, to notice God is not unmindful of your labors of love and also not unmindful that we need the ministry; so He blesses it.

We have had our Annual Convention here in Nottingham and great was the joy and blessedness. The ministry of two beloved brothers from abroad was a special feature-Brother Luttichau from Copenhagen, and Brother Van Halewyn from Rotterdam.

I spoke to several brethren upon the loving spirit and *sound* doctrinal features of the "HERALD" and all agree it was indeed being blessed to us by God. I was also privileged to render a testimony bethought from the thoughts engendered in the last "HERALD," "O that I had the wings of a dove." Yes, brethren, we need all the services that- zealous brethren can render in this the evil day. "The hour of temptation" so forcefully described by our loving brother and servant, the Pastor, is indeed now upon the Church and so the loyal, loving, godly and unselfish ministry of brethren is indeed a boon and a veritable Godsend, literally, as I can testify myself.

Now when this "epistle of love" came today from you, I was very low spirited, not that I hadn't tried to shake the black' shadow off, because I had; for indeed with much prayer and supplication I had petitioned the loving Father to increase my faith, my love and my zeal. These petitions I have much repeated of late, feeling within my own heart that my Christianity was becoming too heady and waning in heart motives. Ah, true is the exhortation to keep thy *heart* with all diligence, and thank God it's not a case of our head, for of truth some of us are lacking in keeping our heads. We do so run wild.

Very often I've been in a maze of thoughts, and along comes the "HERALD and gives one a helpful suggestion, kindly advice, an encouraging exhortation: It suits all conditions and kinds of troubles, seeming to locate the aching sore, and applying the correct ointment.

Such is true in *my present* case. . . The Lord knew my need, ah and *how to supply it*. Now brethren, I pray God's blessing on your continued ministry, and I pray Thy Kingdom come, O Lord. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. . . . Amen.

Your loving- brother, A. T. G. E.-ENG.

Dear Brethren
Christian greetings in His name to all.

I wish to send my grateful appreciation to you for continuing to send the "HERALD," without receiving any acknowledgment of the favor I have already received. But I have been seriously ill since the new year and not able to write.

The "HERALD" has indeed been a source of encouragement and strength to me in the dark days of suffering, and trial since I wrote to you last, but they have been blessed, blessed days of rest and peace in Him-just to be content in the will of God.

It is indeed a blessed thing when the fret and strain is all gone. How lovely it is to come into the clear consciousness of the indwelling Christ, and to know that the life which 'Christ possesses and directs can not miss the mark. This is the blessed position He has brought me into by His grace. .

May the Lord continue to bless you in your labor of love.
Your sister in the blessed hope,
J. T.-SCOT.

Dear Brethren in Christ

I was just reading the article in the last "HERALD"- "The Lord will --give Strength to His People." It is a lovely article, and in it you point to the wonderful promise, "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.", It brings to mind how in past time when sorrow came, there also came. a calm, a peace, and a deep laid joy, which sometimes could not be understood, until meditating on the words of our Lord Jesus, "My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful." We have indeed a wonderful heritage, which is only for those who fully resign in obedience to God's holy will. They all have the assurance that all things work together for good to them that love God, to the called "according to His purpose.

But it is also wonderful that the Lord God' has given to us a picture in Job 41 :22, that also applies to the world of mankind. Their sorrow will have the same effect. In Isa. 35:10: "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." What a Hallelujah chorus will ascend to God!

Dear brethren, I am really writing to let you know I received with thanks the ten books of the "DIVINE PLAN OF THE AGES," and also tracts you, sent. Thank you very- much.

I feel very, very grateful to our Heavenly Father for leading me to read these books, and to learn something 'of His Plan and purposes concerning the race of mankind, through His servant, Brother Russell. Sure and wonderful are His leadings! The first book I was reading, was called the "MILLENNIAL DAWN." Some one gave me a wrong impression and the result was I burned the book. However, the Lord knew it, was in ignorance and therefore He led me step by step to appreciate reading the Six Volumes. - What a change it made to understand God's Holy Word. It became a new Book to me. I know I am unworthy to have this privilege of running in the race, but it shall indeed be now and hereafter far God's honor and glory.

I want to say the dear Lord is giving me an incentive to engage in humble prayer for all saints, especially for those who dispense the Truth, which includes you dear brethren. I believe God is true to His Word, that they that water shall also be watered. It seems we are living very close to the time when the last members will be changed, and it is very important for every one to be ready-"to watch and pray." Once again I thank you for the help I receive from you all.

With Christian love,
Your sister in the Anointed,
B. K.-W. Aus.