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## Purified Through Waters of Affliction

*"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." - Isaiah 43:2.*

THE WORD "character" in its origin is suggestive. It is from a root which signifies to scratch, to engrave, to cut into furrows. Then it comes to mean that which is engraved or cut on anything. In life, therefore, it is that which experiences cut or furrow in the soul; Character is formed as the years go by. It is the writing-the song, the story, put upon paper. It is the engraving, the sculpturing, which the marble receives under the chisel. It is the picture which the artist paints on the canvas. Final character is what a man is when he **has** lived through all his earthly years. In the Christian it is the lines of the likeness of Christ limned, sometimes furrowed and scarred, upon his soul by the Divine Spirit through the means *of* grace and the experiences of his own life. Spiritual beauty never can be reached without cost. The blessing is hidden away in the burden, and can be gotten only by lifting the burden. Self must die if the good in us is to live and shine out in radiance. Michael Angelo used to say, as the clippings flew thick from the marble on the floor of his studio, "While the marble wastes, the image grows." There must be a wasting of self, a chipping away continually of things that are dear to nature, if the things that are true, and just, and honorable, and pure, and lovely, are to come out in the life. The marble must waste while the image grows.

**God's Winter Plants**

The papers tell of a newly discovered flower. It is called the snow-flower. It has been found- in the northern part of Siberia. The plant shoots up out of the ice and frozen soil. It has three leaves, each about three inches in diameter. They grow on the side of the stem toward the north. Each of the leaves appears to be covered with little crystals of snow. The flower, when it opens, is star shaped, its petals being of the same length as the leaves, and about half an inch in width. On the third day the extremities of the anthers show minute glistening specks, like diamonds, which are the seeds of the wonderful flower.

Is not this strange snow-flower an illustration of many Christian lives? God seems to plant them in the ice and snow; yet they live and grow out of the wintry cold into fair and wondrous beauty. We should say that the loveliest lives of earth would be those that are reared and the gentlest, kindest influences, under summer skies, in the warm atmosphere of ease and comfort. But the truth is that the noblest developments of Christian character are grown in the wintry garden of hardship, struggle, and sorrow.

Trial should not, therefore, be regarded with discouragement, as something which will stunt and dwarf the life and mar its beauty. It should be accepted rather, when it comes, as part of God's discipline, through' which lie would bring out the noblest and best possibilities- of our character. Perhaps we would be happier for the time if we had easier, more congenial conditions. Children might be happier without restraint, without family government, without chastening-just left to grow up into all willfulness and waywardness. But there is something better in life than present happiness. Disciplined character in manhood, even though it has been gotten through stern and severe home-training, is better than a childhood and youth of unrestraint, with worthless manhood as the outcome. A noble life, bearing God's image, even at the price of much pain and self-denial, is better than years of freedom from care and sacrifice with a life unblessed and lost at the end. "To serve God and love Him" says one, "is higher and better than happiness, though it be with wounded feet and bleeding hands and heart loaded with sorrow."

It is well that we should understand how to receive trial so as to get from its hard experiences the good it has for us. For one thing, we should accept it always reverently. Resistance forfeits the blessing which can be yielded only to the loving submissive spirit. Teachableness is the unvarying condition of learning. To rebel against trial is to miss whatever good it may have-brought for us. There are some who resent all severity and suffering in their lot as unkindness in God. These grow no better under Divine chastening, but instead are- hurt by it. When we accept the conditions -of our life however hard, as Divinely ordained, and as the very conditions in which, for a time, we will grow the best, we are ready to get from them the blessing and good intended in them for us.

### **Accept no Defeat as Final**

Another important suggestion is that we faint not under trial. There are those who give up and lose all their courage and faith when trouble comes. They cannot endure suffering. Sorrow crushes them. They break down at once under a cross and think they never can go on again. There are many lives crushed by affliction or adversity, which have not risen again out of the dust. Nothing is sadder than such yieldings. The Divine intention in trial never is to crush us, but always to do good to us in some way, to bring out in us new energy of life. Whatever the loss, struggle, or sorrow, we should accept it in love, humility, and faith, take its lessons, and then go on into the life that is before us. We should never accept any defeat as final. Though it be in life's last hours, with only a mere fringe of margin left, still we should not despair.

"What though the radiance which was once so bright,  
Be now forever taken from my sight;  
Though nothing can bring back the hour  
Of splendor in the grass, of glory in the flower,  
We will grieve not, rather find  
Strength in what remains behind."

There is nowhere any better illustration of the way we should always rise again out of trial than we have in the life of St. Paul. From the day of his conversion till the day of his death, trouble followed him. He was misunderstood; he was cast out for Christ's sake; he met persecution in every form; he was shipwrecked; he lay in dungeons; he was deserted by his friends, but he never fainted, never grew discouraged, never spoke one word about giving up. "Cast down, but not destroyed," was the story of his life. He quickly arose out of every trial, every adversity, with a new light in his eye, a new enthusiasm in his heart. He could not be defeated, for he had Christ in him. Shall we catch St. Paul's unconquerable spirit, that we may never faint in any trial?

It requires faith to meet trouble and adversity heroically. Undoubtedly, at the time, the blessing is not apparent in the sorrow or the defeat. All seems disastrous and destructive. It is in the future, in the outworking, that the good is to come. It is a matter of faith, not of sight. "All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous, but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness." Oh, the blessing of God's "afterwards"! Jacob 'one day thought and said that all things were against him, but afterward he saw that his great afflictions and losses were wrought in as parts of a beautiful plan of love for him. The disciples thought that the cross was the destruction of all their Messianic hopes; afterward they saw that it was the very fulfillment of these hopes. The pruning, which at the time cuts so into the life of the vine, lopping off great, rich branches, afterward is seen to have been the saving and enriching of the whole vine. So we always need faith. We must believe against appearances.

Back and forth the plough was driven. The field was covered with grasses and lovely flowers, but remorselessly through them all the share tore its way, cutting furrow after furrow. It seemed that all the beauty was being hopelessly destroyed. But by and by harvest-time came, and the field waved with golden grain. That was what the ploughman's faith saw from the beginning.

Sorrow seems to destroy the life of a child of God. Its rude share ploughs again and again through it, making many a deep furrow, gashing its beauty. But afterward a harvest of blessing and good grows out of the crushed and broken life. That is what God intends always in trial and sorrow.

Let us have the ploughman's faith, and we shall not faint when the share is driven through our heart. Then by faith we shall see beyond the pain and trial the blessing of richer life, of whiter holiness, of larger fruitfulness. And to win that blessing will be worth all the pain and *trial*.

- *Selected.*

## The Marks of the Lord Jesus

*(Continued from last issue)*

*"From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." - Galatians. 6:17.*

ANOTHER "mark of the Lord Jesus," indeed one of the most striking of His characteristics, was His absorbing desire to acquire glory for the Father. The only witness He cared for was that which came from God. "To honor Him, to work His works, to live in His love, to perform His commandments, to show good works from Him, to glorify His name, to divert the attention of men to Him-such was the passion of His life. He ascribed both words and works to the indwelling of the Father. He avowed His intention to answer prayer that the Father might be glorified. And, when His hour approached when He must pass through death to glory, from the lowest of the one to the highest of the other, He only wished for glory that He might shed it back again on the Father. And in the ages yet to be we are told that He will deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all."

In the matchless life of Jesus this strain is never lost in countless ways He seems to say, "Oh, if you only knew My Father as I know Him, and were experiencing through Him the powers of eternal life as I know them! If you could only visualize His boundless love, and comprehend the perfection of all His glorious attributes as I am able to comprehend them, My highest desire would then be realized for you." Yes, how well He knew that such knowledge of God would accomplish mighty transformation in the lives of men and women. Before such knowledge, traditions of men, dependence on outward conformity to creeds and rites must be swept away, and every blighting prejudice destroyed. Jesus never made subsidiary those things which in the Father's order are always antecedent.

Much of the seeming revolutionary teaching of Jesus, as viewed by the religious leaders of His day, was simply the reversal of man's distortion of God's order. While they charged Him with a criminal disregard for the law of Moses, He Himself emphatically declared that He came not to destroy that law but to fulfill it. They had placed such extreme emphasis on the letter and on the inevitable innovations of men, sure to follow when the letter is divorced from the spirit, while Jesus in a perfect regard for the importance of the letter of the law, emphasized the fact that the law was fulfilled only by those who put the spirit of love before the coldness of the letter. In other words, our Lord clearly taught that the keeping of every jot and tittle of the law in the cold sternness of the letter, could leave one like the elder son in the parable-utterly deficient in the greatest and most essential quality of true character; love. Thus Jesus was not minimizing the very real importance of such doctrines as the law represented, but rather His purpose was to show the true relationship between the letter and the spirit.

### Attaining a Properly Balanced Viewpoint

Human nature changes little with the passing of time. God's people of all ages seem to have been susceptible to the disposition to put the emphasis on the lesser rather than the greater things. A swing to one extreme or the other seems so much easier for most of us than attaining a properly balanced viewpoint. And in this very fact, there lies a danger not generally recognized. In defending one or the other of two different viewpoints, there is always present the danger of our

unintentionally becoming biased and prejudiced, and prone to misinterpretations of our opponent's real convictions. Perhaps on the relative importance of doctrines and the vital facts of true Christian experience, this danger needs special attention at the present time. The building up of the Church in the most holy faith, and her preparation to meet the Lord, the telling out of the Glad Tidings to others as the Lord's providences open doors, are all important matters. The same Bible which urges upon us the fact that attention should be given to doctrine, also urges upon us the fact that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." What we all need more and more to covet is that spirit of a sound mind which will enable us to find a place for "all truth in our study and ministry; and the best way to reach this happy medium ground is suggested to us by the Master Himself. To know God is eternal life. It follows therefore that the one who attains that knowledge will have that which will adjust all these features of Christian life, and he will be "living by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." When the knowledge of God becomes the chief objective in one's life, then the human tendency to make the letter rather than the spirit the test, will be avoided.

Another has very beautifully condensed the whole matter in the following concise statement "Our faith must come to us through the brain, indeed. But it cannot stop there. 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.' The mind takes the truth from the Scriptures, weighs it, perchance, in the scales of some tried and standard confession, and then distils it into the heart, its richest **essence**, its finest life, condensed **and deposited** there." When this is wrought out in the life, then others may cast out devils, and we shall be glad, even though they follow not with us. Then Martha's activity will be properly apprized, and Mary's disposition to sit much in meditation will be rightly judged. The unchanging doctrines of the Word will be devoutly loved and cherished, and the superstructure of Christian character will be free from "wood, hay and stubble."

Did Paul have these marks? Yes, if ever a follower of Jesus bore them he did. None more than he insisted upon clearly defined doctrines as a basis for fellowship with God and His people. He did not, however, multiply doctrines to confuse the Church, but adhered strictly to "the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus." The real essential doctrines, outside which there could be neither fellowship nor Godspeed, were remarkably few and simple, but these were fearlessly and constantly affirmed. The purpose of all doctrine, with Paul, was to lead men out of bondage into the liberty that is in Christ Jesus, that men "might know Him and the power of His resurrection."

No one can study Paul's various Epistles carefully without being struck 'with the intensity of his desire to bring his brethren to the feet of Jesus and to leave them, there. How positively he spurns any attempt to have himself set before their minds as an abject of worship, and declares that any so doing are steeped in carnality. How clearly he teaches that ordinances are never to be the criterion of relationship to the Lord, for carnal men can be inseparably wedded to ceremonies and rites, and of such were his most active enemies. Just as Jesus revealed that true character and loyalty to doctrine grew out of a heart knowledge of God, so Paul recognized that this perfect order must be held unchangeable in the life of saints. The Apostle had no fear for the doctrinal standing and the Lord's approval of those of his brethren who really knew his Savior and Lord, but he did have a deep anxiety and burden of soul for those who never seemed capable of rising above "first principles" into the realms of the deeper knowledge of God. Have we, then, this "mark" borne by Paul? Is the great longing of our heart that of wanting others to know our Jesus in all His altogether loveliness, as He Himself was consumed with a longing that others *should* know His Father? Is this our understanding of what really matters most?

## **On this Rock I will Build**

And yet another "mark" may be found both in Jesus and Paul. In perfect accord with the line of thought presented foregoing, we find our Lord laying down the foundation for the superstructure of God's building, the Church. When on that memorable occasion He asked His disciples what men were saying about Him, and then so highly commended Peter for his declaration, He was there giving utterance to a fact never to be forgotten by His followers. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," was the reply of Peter, and to this Jesus answered, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is heaven. And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." - Matt. 16:16-18.

## **Life of Jesus Manifest in Our Body**

Endless arguments have gathered around this magnificent statement of Jesus. There have not been wanting those who have used it to foster intolerance and superstition, and to make manmade laws binding on believers. Neither have there been wanting many who, though having a correct enough understanding of our Lord's words, nevertheless have most regrettably failed to conform their teachings and practices to the simple meaning of this sublime statement. Flesh and blood **can repeat** many such statements as this, but it requires an operation of God's revealing Spirit before such words take on their intended meaning. And there is so little excuse, for misunderstanding what Jesus meant on this occasion. He was so constantly drawing attention to the fact that "in Him was the life and light of men," and that those who would drink of the water that He gave to thirsty souls, should have life, yea, and have it "more abundantly." He taught so clearly that to receive Him into the heart by the incoming' of the Holy Spirit, was to have the power of eternal life surging through the soul until the character is made meet to be with Him in all His glory. Throughout the Gospels, therefore, we find this predominating thought. If we are in Him as He is in the Father, and we live by Him as He lived by the Father, then, and only then, are we really building on the foundation He has laid down.

And here again we find the Apostle's brand unmistakably manifest, as another "mark of the Lord Jesus." How close the similarity of his great statement to that of Jesus: "Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 3:11.) Careful attention given to the context will impress the mind with its force. The Apostle had plenty of reason to know the activity of the human mind in its inveterate habit of substituting the shadow for the substance. And even among the brethren to whom he was writing, the fruitage sure to spring from any disregard of this foundation fact, is very painfully manifest. Carnality, inability to assimilate strong meat, envying, strife and divisions, were there. Some were looking to Paul, some to Apollos attracted to the watering vessel rather than to the Lord of glory who alone can give the word of truth its growth and increase. It is not difficult to see how such conditions develop among believers, for it is always easier to champion a favorite leader, or defend a dogma, than to live a life. If devotion to a leader is ever substituted for a personal study of the Word, and if increased zeal for the letter is permitted to have precedence over the spirit of the truth, it is inevitable that the real foundation will be lost sight of, and a building erected on any other foundation than the spirit of the truth as it is revealed in the life of Jesus the Son of God, must totter and fall. In this we are by no means depreciating the importance of doctrine, but simply calling attention to the danger of being encouraged by what are really symptoms of spiritual leanness which may be present when and where least expected.

"Theological soundness ought to be the glory of the Church, and it is only when made a buttress to spiritual decay and corruption that it becomes a reproach. Doctrine is the framework of life. It is the skeleton of the truth, to be clothed and rounded out by the living graces of a holy life. It is only the lean creature whose bones become offensive. And it is only -a lean Christian and a lean Church whose theological rigidness repels us. It is when the outward life has shrunk away from the doctrine, leaving it bare and angular and protruding that we are offended. There is none too much of doctrine,, perhaps; but it has been left exposed by the falling away in the spirituality of the body, and so has suffered an unseemly exposure. Woe to us if by our indifferent or worldly lives we turn into a dishonor that which should be the strength and security of the Christian life! We remember that it is written: 'The letter killeth; the spirit giveth life.' And if we have not the spirit, no matter how sound the letter, we are hastening to decay, and nothing can arrest, us." True indeed! "He that hath the Son bath life, and he that bath not the Son hath not life" whatever else he may have. May it be so by God's abounding grace, that our building has been on this foundation alone, and that the "mark" most clearly seen today is "the life also of Jesus made manifest in our body."

### **The Stigmata of Fidelity to Christ**

As a final feature of the similarity to be found in Paul's "marks" with those of Jesus, we conclude with a brief reference to a phase of experience they both endured. Long before Jesus appeared on earth it had been -prophetically written of Him, "I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me." (Isa. 63:3.) That this very experience befell Him we know. Yes, not only was He left alone by the masses of His own nation, but of all His own immediate friends it is also written, "Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled." (Matt. 26:56.) "Alone, yet not alone, for the Father is with Me." These words of His reveal a pathos which only loving, kindred spirits can know. It was no mere passing sense of being deserted that struck so deeply into the heart of Jesus. His life ran too deeply for that. Back of this forsaking on the part of His brethren there was something that grieved His heart most. It was their failure to comprehend His devotion to God, and what the demonstration of that supreme love of the Father meant to Him.

So He was left alone in so far as understanding hearts might have helped Him to bear the agonies of His last hours. His revolutionary teachings, setting at naught the traditions of men, His standards of discipleship, His claims of relationship to God, and that only through the appropriation of Himself as the Bread from heaven could any have life, brought upon Him the disapproval of His nation. It was when He was meeting the inevitable result of this allegiance to God that even His disciples forsook Him.

### **Tracing the Master's Footprints**

These "marks" were later to be borne by Paul. No one can believe that his lament over those who had forsaken him at different times, or his remark that "all they that, be in Asia" had forsaken his teachings, implied that his thoughts were centered in what this meant to himself. Rather, it was the vision of spiritual riches cast aside by those for whom he was so willing to pour out his, very life blood that grieved him. And why had he been thus forsaken? Search his Epistles and see! It was once again supposed revolutionary teachings, setting aside the law of works for the operation of sovereign grace, and thereby overthrowing established traditions that constituted the "hard saying," for which they "walked no more with him." It was the high standards of saintship that he

taught and exemplified in his life, rebuking thereby the sins so easily excused by others. And his teachings of the believer's present relationship to God, with his hidden life in Christ, and of how fully Christ can be appropriated, as he himself had entered into that great mystery of godliness, could not fail to leave him, sooner or later, passing over a pathway where he would have no difficulty in tracing the Master's footprints-the place where Jesus realized the withdrawal of every human support. We will not lengthen this study further by bringing together the incidents in Paul's life where this sense of loneliness was experienced, or by enlarging on his deep attachment to those few faithful understanding hearts who were one with him in spirit, and who stood by him to the end.

But for ourselves we do well to consider why Jesus and Paul both experienced this losing of sympathetic support, and this sorrow in seeing so many walk no more with them. In the Gospel by John, chapter 6, we may read a sermon of Jesus' by which the ranks of His followers were greatly reduced. He had been setting forth the real facts of relationship with Himself, a relationship He had made imperative, and He had revealed that much more than a faith in His Messiahship, and in the Kingdom He had promised would be necessary before any one would be recognized as one with Him. The "hard saying" which depleted the ranks was the demand that they eat His flesh and drink His blood. Thus when the real fact of association with Him was clearly stated, it was inevitable that many would leave Him. A complete appropriation of Him, and a complete union with Him was all He asked, but this, the vital feature of the truth; separated them from Him.

### **The Final Impress of Discipleship**

With Paul it was much the same. His uncompromising determination to make the finished work of Christ the great theme of his ministry, must produce tribulations and rejections such as Jesus promised, when He said "The servant is not above his Master." Faith in Christ, and a full appropriation of His merit and power and growing up into Him until He had been formed in them, and they had reached the point where they too could say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," was what Paul urged. And -because all would not attain this degree of spiritual life and vision, they that were after the flesh would never cease to persecute those who were after the Spirit. Back, therefore, of all other factors in this final experience of Jesus and Paul, was that sin, as old as human history, the sin of unbelief and unwillingness to believe all that the Lord had spoken. Few have been the Caleb's and Joshuas, ready to push forward until all the inheritance has been possessed.

So let us, ere we allow ourselves to feel any over confidence regarding our own standing at this late date, ask ourselves candidly, "Has my course been such as to put me into the fellowship of Jesus and the Apostle in this matter? Have I this 'mark' also?" Certain it is, if we have the other "marks," we are bound to have this last one. We must surely bear this "stigmata," revealing the completeness of Christ's ownership of us. And strange as it may seem, it is not lovelessness that brings this "mark," for such hearts must love deeply, yea, they must be ready to lay down life itself for others. It is not spiritual pride that produces this isolation of spirit, for there comes with a closer fellowship with the Lord, a growing realization that no one has a better right to think himself "the chief of sinners," and therefore the greatest miracle of God's grace. It is not selfishness that merits this mark of Jesus and Paul, for there is manifest a longing to snare with others; and the desire to spend and be spent in such a service becomes a master passion. No, it is none of these. It is the, working out of a Divine law, the branding iron burning upon the character the final impress of discipleship, the "stigmata" of the Lord Jesus.



## Three Character Studies in the Third Epistle of John

### No. 2. Diotrephes

*"Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence." - 3 John 9.*

WE COME now to consider the character developed by Diotrephes. This brother, according to the Apostle, was one who loved to have the pre-eminence in the Church. He did not receive even St. John. Instead, he prated against him with wicked words. Not only so, but his animosity extended to those whom St. John recommended, and besides refusing to receive them himself, he forbade others to receive them, and cast out of the church those who refused to comply with his instructions.

Obviously this character study is much less welcome than that of Demetrius. Evidently Diotrephes was a man of a very different and inferior stamp—a man vain and talkative, whose religion seems to have been quite compatible with a slippery morality. But perhaps if we do not find much in him which we may emulate, he may suggest lessons equally important for us, pointing out traits of character we should seek to avoid.

### **"Gird Yourselves with Humility to serve One Another"**

"What exactly it was at which Diotrephes took offense, whether in the letter of St. John or in the conduct of Demetrius, we are not told; but it is not difficult to offend a man who has an undue sense of his own importance, and whose self-love may be set on fire by any match, however innocently it may be struck. We do not know at all precisely what was the cause or the occasion of offense, but St. John clearly implies that it was some wound to his love of pre-eminence, his determination to stand first and to exact a homage he did not deserve. Possibly the Apostle's letter, the letter in which he commended Demetrius and his fellows to the confidence and sympathy of the Church, had not been addressed **to him**, or had not been carried first to him. Possibly Gaius had 'received' Demetrius without consulting Diotrephes, or even after he had declined to receive him. He may have long cherished a grudge against Gaius as a rival too near the throne; or Demetrius may not have shown him the deference which he thought due to a person of his importance.

"But, whatever the prick which 'his vanity had received, the character of the man comes out in his wholly disproportionate and extravagant resentment of the offense. In his resentment, he sets himself against men far wiser and better than himself; he imperils the peace of the Church; he diminishes its numbers and strength. Nothing less than the excommunication of all who had dared to differ from him, all who had ventured to receive the evangelists whom he would not receive, and whom he had forbidden them to receive, would satisfy him.

Not content with 'prating' against the missionaries, and against the Apostle who had sent them, he 'cast out' of the Church those who had welcomed and aided them. Tacitly at least they had questioned his claim to personal or official authority. His pre-eminence was in danger. And, losing all sense of proportion in his fierce resentment, he treats them as though they had been guilty

of a mortal sin; his wounded vanity landing him, as it often does land men, in the most bitter animosity and intolerance.

### **The Methods of a Religious Demagogue**

'**But** the democratic constitution of the primitive Church would not permit one man, 'however eminent or pre-eminent, however high -he stood in his own conceit or in the esteem of his neighbors, to excommunicate those who 'had offended 'him, simply because they 'had offended him. Before that extreme sentence was passed upon them, he must have won over a majority of his and their fellow-members to his side. And as lie could not well plead against them a merely personal offense, as the Church did not feel the wound which inflamed his irritable self-conceit, he must have taken a bypath to his end. He may long have cherished a factious spirit in the inferior members of the Church, the less wise and less good, by opposing whatever Gaius and his friends proposed, and finding plausible reasons for opposing them. And, indeed, a man of inferior gifts and of a spirit less informed by the grace of Christ, who **will** stand first, will put himself forward and attempt to rule a free Christian congregation, **must** take this course. He must play on the ignorance, and even on the piety, of those who follow him, must affect a superior wisdom, or a superior orthodoxy, or a superior devotion to the claims of its poorer and less instructed members; must, in short, wield the common weapons of that loud-mouthed, irrepressible, and unsavory creature, the religious demagogue. He will not let facts speak for themselves, but sets himself, with his glib tongue, to lick them out of their natural shape. He cannot suffer learning, wisdom, godliness, experience, to exert their natural and beneficent influence, but must at all risks counterwork that influence, and suggest plausible reasons for not yielding to, it. How else can he win and maintain a pre-eminence lie does not deserve, which in his calmer moments he may even know that he does not deserve? Tax him, press him close, and he will sometimes admit that he is not so wise, or that he 'has not had the advantages,' that he has not done so much for the well-being of the Church, or made so many sacrifices in its service, as this man, or that; but, nevertheless, it somehow happens that he is always in the right, and they are always in the wrong!

### **Was Diotrephes Unsound in Doctrine or Flagrantly Immoral?**

"There is nothing in the Epistle to suggest that Diotrephes held unsound doctrinal views, or that he fell into what are called gross and open sins. Had he been unorthodox, indeed, or flagrantly immoral, he would never have gained that eminence in the Church which he insisted on converting into pre-eminence. All that he is blamed for is the conceit and self-assurance which rendered him impatient of rivalry or resistance, and set him on seeking power rather than usefulness. To stand first, not to do most, was his supreme aim and desire; and as that is a false aim, the pursuit of which commonly leads men into evil courses very destructive to the peace and welfare of the Church, the Apostle's censure needs no defense. For the men who **take** the uppermost seats are generally men who should sit lower, and who are sooner or later compelled to take a lower place, by the discipline of a kindly Providence. Any man who will have his own way is only too likely to come to a bad end. Any man who insists on the Church taking his way is only too certain to prove a blind guide, who will lead those who follow him into a ditch, and perhaps leave them in the ditch when lie himself scrambles out of it."

## **How came the Church to follow this Unworthy Leadership?**

But you may be asking, **How** did Diotrephes induce his fellow-members to follow his lead, since they must, most of them at least, have been good men who were not likely to excommunicate their brethren either for their warm-hearted reception of Demetrius and his companions, or for wounding the self-conceit of Diotrephes?

The answer to this question is suggested by St. John's words: "He receiveth not us," that is to say, he refused to receive even the Apostle John himself, "prating against us," that is to say, against St. John himself, with wicked (or malicious) words. In other words, Diotrephes' method of securing pre-eminence in the Church had been to poison the minds of the majority against St. John.

But was this possible? Surely Diotrephes could hardly have openly denied the authority of an Apostle, and he the revered and beloved St. John? We answer: No! but he may have questioned it indirectly. "He may have dilated on the independence of the Church, of every separate community of believers, on its competence and right to manage its own affairs, to appoint its own agents, to decide on its own course of action, and have asked whether they would suffer, whether it would be right to suffer, any outsider, however honored and beloved he might be, to govern and control them. He may have pitted the venerated founder of the Asian churches, 'that blessed martyr,' Paul, against John, who had come among them only when Paul had finished his course, and who had not sealed his testimony with his blood. He may have contrasted the teaching of St. Paul, which dwelt so habitually amid the mysteries and doctrines of the Faith, with the teaching of St. John, which dealt mainly with the sentiments it should inspire, the spirit of love and grace it should infuse. He may even have persuaded himself, as well as others, that John had taken a new departure and was giving a new tone to Christian thought and life, and that the Church was in no small danger of being led away from its old standards, and thinking too much of the mercy, and too little of the severity of God. He may have conceived, or have taught others to conceive, of the living Apostle, John, with his eternal cry, 'Little children, love one another,' as a fond foolish old man, whose best days were past, who was giving a too sentimental tone to religion, and making it milk for babes, instead of meat for strong men. If he could not say bluntly, 'I mean to stand first in this Church, let who will oppose me,' or, 'I hate Gains and his pretensions to advise and rule,' or 'I dislike Demetrius, and resent his lack of deference for me,' he could at least appeal to the memory and teaching of their venerated Founder, and avow his preference of St. Paul's Gospel over that of St. John.

## **Diotrephes Possessed a Sorry Tongue**

"And when once he had taken that line, it would be only too easy, as the letter of the Apostle and the mission of Demetrius were discussed, and there seemed some chance of his being defeated, for Diotrephes to slip into wild and angry words, to prate maliciously against Gains and his followers, against Demetrius and his companions, against the Apostle John himself, and to accuse them of faults and errors which, in his calmer moments, he would not have alleged against them.

"For we must now remember that we are told two things about Diotrephes. We are told not only that he loved to have the pre-eminence, but also that he possessed a voluble tongue, that he would 'still be speaking': for how often does a fluent tongue lead a man whither, in his reasonable moods, he would not go, and betray him into positions which he would not 'willingly have

assumed? Mr. Talkative, as Bunyan calls him, may do, and often does do, quite as much harm as Mr. Illwill. A vain voluble man too commonly forgets to ask himself whether he has anything to say worth saying, or even whether he can trust himself to say it discreetly and well. It is enough for him to speak, to show off, to force himself even on a reluctant audience, so that he may flatter his self-importance and gratify his itch for speaking. He does not consider whether he can bear to listen with patience and courtesy to the arguments 'on the other side, and allow them their due weight.. It is his own way he wants, not the best way, not the way which will be most beneficial to others; and if he cannot get it by fair means, he will often stoop to foul or dubious means, stirring' up division and discontent, prating with malicious words, against those who oppose him when fair words will no longer serve his turn."

### **What is the Lesson for Us?**

We do not think the Apostle, although, when he arrived, he intended to severely rebuke him, would have us understand that Diotrephes was wholly bad; he was a man who may have had many good qualities, and have done some service to the Church; but his good qualities "were blended with and their good effects vitiated by an exorbitant self-conceit and loquacity." He was a man "so vain, so bent on influence and supremacy, as- to be capable of- the most cruel intolerance in asserting his -supremacy; so talkative as to be capable of slipping into malicious and -wicked- words rather than hold his tongue or let the Church defer to other guidance than his own"; and thus "he offers a much needed warning to many a man of 'spotless respectability and worrying temper, of pious principles and worldly aims,' who, because he thinks more highly of himself than he ought to think, flatters himself that 'he is serving the Church when he is only pandering to his self-importance and self-conceit, and is cruelly injuring the Church he professes to love."

"Beloved," exclaims St. John, when he had completed this word-picture of Diotrephes, "imitate not that which- is evil, but that which is good. Be that doeth good is of God; -he that doeth evil hath not seen God." And by this exhortation we do not understand him to imply that Diotrephes was an utterly bad man, who- had never, with the eye of faith, beheld God, or trusted in the Savior, any more than he means that Demetrius, whom we considered in our last issue, was a man wholly good, in whom no fault could be found. But we do understand him to mean that a vain man, too fond of hearing himself -talk, too bent on taking the foremost place, -is -closing his eyes against the heavenly vision. He does mean, we think, that mere words whether the fluent professions of a Diotrephes or the earnest preaching of a Demetrius, are of comparatively little account; that it is by a man's deeds he must be judged; that if 'he **does** good, if his life tells for righteousness, charity, and peace, he is a good man; but that if a man **does** evil, if the total effect of his life and labors is against righteousness and charity and peace, he is a bad man. The Apostle may imply that as Demetrius was undoubtedly doing a good work, **he was a** good man; and that Diotrephes, in so far as he opposed and crippled that work, was doing an evil work and took' his place among evil men. But what the Apostle would have us do is not so much to censure Diotrephes, and cast him out of the Church as unworthy of a place in it -- that would only be to follow the bad example of the man himself; but to resolve that we will not follow his bad example, that we will not suffer our vanity to blind us to our own faults, our talkativeness, if we are talkative, to sink into slander and a malicious prating as injurious to ourselves as to our neighbors. If we can find any good in any Diotrephes we know, let us love it and imitate it; but let us not follow that which is evil in him, or be too ready to make excuse for it because we may happen to find some germ of that evil in our own hearts; nay, let us rather turn his very faults to use, and let our dislike of them make us less self opinionated, less wise in our conceit, less willing to let

**our** tongue become a fire. Oh! surely **this** is the lesson the beloved John' would have us learn from Diotrephes. And as we cannot look at such men as Gaius and Demetrius without seeing in them, much to admire and approve, let us imitate them; let us draw some touch of their generosity, their large charity, their disinterested devotion, their burning zeal, into **our** hearts and lives. Let our religion show itself in deeds rather than in words, in a life conformed by the grace of Christ to the will of God, not in loud professions and loquacious speeches; nor in an intolerant temper, and a readiness to sit in judgment on our brethren, and to pass sharp and pungent verdicts upon them.

"Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth. **This** wisdom is not a wisdom - that cometh down from above, but is earthly, brutish, demoniacal. For where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed. But the wisdom that cometh from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy . to be entreated, full of mercy, and good fruits, without variance; without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by them that make peace." - James 3:13-18, A. R. V. Margin.

*(To be continued)*

## **MORE OF THEE**

"Less, less of self each day,  
And more, my God, of Thee;  
Oh keep me in Thy way -  
However rough it be. -

"Less of the flesh each day,  
Less of the world and sin;  
More of Thy love, I pray,  
More of Thyself within.

"Riper and riper now,  
Each hour let me become;  
Less fond of things below,  
More fit for such a home.

"More molded to Thy will,  
Lord, let Thy servant be;  
Higher and higher still  
Nearer and nearer Thee.

## Faith in Control of the Tongue

*"He that hath knowledge spareth his words; and a man of understanding is of a cool spirit." - Proverbs 17:27, Margin.*

OF ALL the possibilities dwelling in the various members of our body, none exceed those of the tongue-possibilities for - good and possibilities for evil. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue," says the wise man. We are so prone to offend in our speech and it is so difficult to have it always regulated that the Apostle says, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." It should therefore be of deep interest to us that the Scriptures impart much instruction on this subject. Well might the words of the Savior be engraved on the hearts of all professing godliness: "I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." (Matt. 12:36, 37.) How important, therefore, that we should realize the power and influence of the tongue, that it should be under control, and that it should be used wisely by all who name the name of Christ. We do well to consider the means by which we may avoid using it for evil, as well as how it may be used for good.

Many things are valuable and good in themselves but in their excess become an evil. This we believe is especially true with respect to the tongue which errs in this direction perhaps more frequently than in any other. Silence is its least seldom fault. Even in proclaiming the precious truth which God's Word has disclosed in these last days, the mistake of saying too much is frequently made, and we find it much more difficult, to hold our silence than to bear a proper witness. Since the tongue may err when moved by such noble desires, how grievous may be its mistakes when influenced by less inspiring purposes.

### The Habit of "Conscientious Silence"

.It is most lamentable that one should ever put to ignoble use an instrument capable of more noble service than is any other over which God has given us stewardship. "Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse *we* men, which are made after the similitude of God." (James 3:9.) There is no doubt then that the Apostle is correct in *calling* the tongue an "unruly evil." It is so *busy a* member that for the Christian, life becomes in large part that of a watchman, setting ourselves to watch over the activities of our lips. There is little time when people meet together that there is not one tongue in action, but we do well to inquire as to what proportion of such activity is profitable. No doubt as a result of too great freedom in the use of the tongue, much is said that is unprofitable, involving also a loss of time. One who has resolved to "walk in holiness before the Lord" will not deliberately waste his time and will feel constrained therefore to refrain from useless conversation.

In conversing with others it seems necessary to some extent to sympathize with their line of thought and experience; we are frequently not at liberty to reject subjects of interest to them. Thus we are often involved in discussions which are not edifying or conducive to holiness. We may often be forced, to listen to conversations of the world and even of some believers, occupied with unfavorable comments on the conduct of others-much of imaginary suspicion, much of slander. If

we desire our tongues to be guiltless of sins of this kind we must know how to control them and how to cultivate the habit of "conscientious silence.

### **Injurious Effect of Multitude of Words**

Then, too, overmuch conversation 'has an injurious effect upon one's own religious attitude of mind by filling it with vain and useless thoughts. Just so far as it is so occupied, it necessarily loses the consciousness of the sweet and purifying presence of God. We cannot be living in the presence of God and enjoying His fellowship while occupied with the things of time and sense. Words are 'but outward signs of what is within, and since "expression deepens impression, idle and unkind thoughts are but invigorated by being expressed. By repression and silence it is well known that they wither and (lie. *So* by a judicious practice of silence our thoughts will be less liable to wander, and unkind or evil sentiments being deprived of the stimulation of words will be more under control.

Again, outward silence promotes inward and spiritual rest. Words too generally connect us with things outward to ourselves, while silence is conducive to meditation and communion with God. It is favorable to the indwelling and operation of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

Some perhaps would question our statement that harm *may* come from a tongue exercised in proclaiming the truth. Experience proves, however, that more than ordinary discretion is needed that we may avoid discouraging inquirers by our multitude of words or our haste to impart truths we were years in attaining. We would also say that without much study, much meditation, much prayer and communion with God, one will soon be in no condition to dispense blessing to others. Much talking and giving out without a proportionate taking in and requisite time for prayer, will quickly result in loss of spiritual life. It has been said that a man may "talk away his religion." In harmony with this, though faithful ministers of the Word of God, we may eventually have cause to regret the fact that our outward duties and calls for much speaking have left so little time for inward rest and refreshment by close contact with the great Source and Fountain that our spiritual power is gone.

### **The Truly Consecrated Characterized by Quietness of Manner**

Even the manner of speaking may have an effect on Christian development. In giving a few brief practical suggestions on the manner of Christian conversation, one devoted writer remarks that "we should make it a general rule to avoid expressing ourselves in a very emphatic and passionate manner, and with a high tone of voice. It is well understood that such a method: of outward expression reacts upon the mind, and has a tendency to produce an excited and inordinate state of the feelings within; and besides, it is generally unpleasant and unprofitable to the hearers. . . . A truly consecrated person will not only be characterized by quietness of manner, so far as words and voice are concerned, but also in other outward respects. His countenance, his action, his general movement, will be pervaded, in a great measure by the same beautiful and Christ like trait.

"Another remark is that we should be careful not to speak much of ourselves and of our own affairs. . . . Such conversations, viz., those which turn frequently and almost exclusively upon ourselves, besides not being in general edifying to others, are apt by directing our thoughts from the glory of God to the persons and the affairs of the creature, to reanimate and strengthen the

dying life of self. Again, it is not religiously profitable to make the persons and concerns of our neighbors [or our brethren]. the frequent subjects of our discourse, unless it be for the purpose of saying what we know can properly 'be said in their favor, of vindicating them against aspersions, or for some other good and charitable purpose. . . .

"The only further practical remark which we wish to make on this subject is that when we are falsely spoken against, or in some other way greatly injured, we should not, as a general rule, be hasty to reply. The life of nature would prompt us to reply quickly, to vindicate ourselves at all hazards, and sometimes perhaps with a considerable degree of sharpness and violence. But the gentle spirit of Christ in the soul, which says, 'Without My Father I can do nothing,' always leads us to look to God for aid and direction, before we look to ourselves and our own wisdom or to the 'precipitate help of earthly friends."

### **Grace of God Speaks more Eloquently than Words**

Have we not many noble examples in the Scriptures of such saintly conduct on the part of faithful ones in the past? The Prophet Daniel when persecuted and misrepresented turned at once to his God as his only source of help. Kneeling before Him in his solitary chamber, he committed all to Him who alone can succor in every time of need. The life of our Savior is particularly instructive in this connection. Although He could easily have made a defense when brought 'before Pilate, He was silent: "He answered him to never **a word**, in so much that the governor marveled greatly." "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth. The grace of God evidenced by patience and silence under such circumstances speaks far more eloquently than a multitude of words and all the activity and effort which the natural life is so ready to pour forth.

Much that is wrong in the use of our tongue, we may be inclined to attribute to thoughtlessness, but this is no valid excuse to one who has consecrated his all to the Lord. "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation" is the admonition of the Apostle, and while the word "conversation" here has the thought in the original of "conduct," and it is sometimes so translated, the use of one's tongue is certainly included in this. If we are to be holy, therefore, in our conversation, we should not use the tongue thoughtlessly, and surely not maliciously. We cannot be too sensible of the fact that each statement made starts forth with the prospect of many repetitions. If the initial statement is ever so slightly exaggerated, or even given with indefiniteness, the speaker is taking upon himself part of the responsibility for the final proportion to which that thought will attain. The first careless word becomes at the end a positive and a dangerous falsehood, perhaps blasting the reputation of one near and dear to us, and what is still more serious, very near and dear to our Heavenly Father.

### **Faith Removes the Root of Evil**

The powers for good and evil reposing in the tongue are known not only among religionists 'but in all circles. Educators and reformers have made well meaning and even fairly successful suggestions regarding the control of the tongue, but too often their attention has been devoted to the results instead of to the cause. If any evil is to be removed it must **be** by attacking the root of that evil and removing it not in part but as a whole. One who has endeavored to rid the ground of some noxious weed, has learned beyond a 'doubt that removing the main root is not all that is necessary. The leaving of but one unseen fibre may mean the starting of a new crop. This member of our body is one that inspiration tells us no man can tame, therefore the only hope of bringing it



into subjection is through the indwelling of the Spirit, with which -we must of course cooperate with all our resources. Our main part is the exercise of faith. We 'do not here refer to faith merely as a system of dogma. That is the "foundation" upon which is built that faith, that confidence, in the power and love of God which inspires us to lay our all in His hands, looking to Him to guide us in every thought, word, and deed. It is not ascribing too much to faith to suppose that it can accomplish a miracle of control in our conversation, for like the Apostle Paul we can say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Like everything else, uncontrolled speech has its cause. This cause lies too deep in our nature for human power or any humanly devised remedy to reach it, for it is really part of ourselves; or more truly, it is the real self. Faith controls this member by working upon the fundamental cause; it removes the inordinate desires that result in an inordinate use of the tongue. It is impossible that a tongue should be still as long as there is an all consuming desire to be heard; it is impossible that the tongue should be devoted to good uses while the longings of the heart are toward evil. Even though such lips should speak forth the message of the Kingdom with a sanctimonious tone, eventually the tongue will reveal the unholy motive back of the 'high sounding phrases, for, unrestrained and un sanctified self is in control. Inward repose alone can give outward 'balance, and God alone can give inward repose. Nothing other than faith can deliver us from bondage to self. The way is clear, but it is usually long.

### **"Faith that Worketh by Love"**

The first assistance that faith lends toward the control of the tongue is in making impossible the existence of jealousies and suspicions. One whose life is "hid with Christ in God" lives on too high a plane to have any time or tendency toward jealousy of others, and whatever their motives may be in their relation to him, -he wastes no time on suspicion, knowing that God is in control of all events and that he has no reason to "fear what man may do unto him." It is not even necessary to use the tongue in his own defense, for "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." (2 Cor. 10:4, 5.) Whatever the accusations may be, the tongue is ready to refute them, not by direct answers but by being the index of a pure 'heart, for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." The tongue by its refusal to rush to self defense demonstrates that it is ruled by a heart where all interest in self is dead-it is devoted entirely to its God.

Nor will earthly thoughts prevail in a heart given over to holiness and to the "faith that worketh by love." Such an heart places its dependence not on man nor on self 'but on the One whose holiness it seeks to emulate and of whom it bears witness. It therefore attaches all importance to its great Example and not to the good will of those who understand neither the motives nor the glorious outcome of its devotion to holiness. Unfavorable words and looks are ascribed by such an one merely to lack of information. There is no occasion for alarm or suspicion; for faith drawing upon the unlimited reserve of heaven can afford to go to the opposite extreme, putting a favorable construction upon the words and actions of others, or if this is absolutely impossible, it can at least await developments, in full assurance that even here God will "work all things together for good."

Should our tongue, then, be found running too loosely or too noisily, on the conduct of others toward us, or that which we think they may be conspiring to, do, this should be taken as an indication that the thing needing development in us is faith, a faith that can give absolute security because realizing that no one can go or do beyond the Lord's permission and that we shall be

"strengthened with all might according to His glorious power" for every trial. With such security at our command, to complain of the treatment others give us would be like the world's richest man devoting days telling his friends of the penny the vegetable man overcharged him.

### **Viewing Things in Their Proper Proportions**

It is the flesh that distorts things out of their natural proportions and leads to the almost endless use of a tongue in the discussion of things of trifling worth. Rather, it is necessary that the Christian should consider well his words that they may be to the edifying of others. When faith has restored all things of this life to their proper proportions, the result will be the devoting of our tongues to those things that are worth while, and this in addition to the foregoing will promote the grace of silence. To the natural mind the things that pertain to self are the things of greatest importance, and as a consequence the natural tongue will be found speaking of self, and exposing its ignominy while endeavoring to sing its own praises. It is only because of a sadly disproportionate view that any one can think of speaking of himself inordinately. If one knows of nothing in this world more important to talk about than himself, he can go beyond its bounds and find a God worthy of all his time and praise for all the millenniums of eternity.

It takes the magnifying glass of conceit to enlarge our little affairs to an importance above the eternal things. The life of faith on the contrary is the life of eternity. Its views as well as its aspirations carry it beyond the trivial things of time; and the things of self and earth taking their proper proportion, find little consideration in our conversation. Events therefore which only add to the quietness of spirit of the man of faith, loosen the tongue of the natural man and fill the air with his complaining. Selfishness and suspicion are the cause, a noisy revealing of his helpless condition the result.

It was perhaps to illustrate the inward calm of the heart of faith that Jesus slept during the storm on the Sea of Galilee, and it was perhaps also to illustrate our foolish self-interest and lack of faith that the disciples filled the air with their clamor and confusion when the storm broke. The record says that the Master rebuked the disciples with the words: "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith;" We as well as they, are rebuked by these words. Even such fearful, natural conditions as a storm at sea are not sufficient excuse for our noisy apprehension and dismay. Our words instead of calming the sea without, tell of the storm within. But when faith has brought its spirit to reign in our hearts, the lips may speak with absolute freedom and the revelation will 'be no more of a doubting self but of a confiding trust that accepts every experience as a part of the great working together for good.

Having learned by bitter experience and by Divine revelation our own powerlessness in the presence of our enemies, it is natural that we should be continually turning to some outside power for assistance. Here then is an additional reason why faith should assist toward the grace of silence. If our faith is weak, we will seek consolation in fellow-creatures, or in things which are seen, the temporal things; but a proper faith will find its joys no where except in the Eternal One. Lacking this faith, the trials, which are permitted for our blessing, are passed on by our uncontrolled tongues to the members of our families, for whom they were not intended, and even the poor groaning creation. must have our burdens added to theirs. The contrast with the one who has faith well developed through long and persistent exercise is very perplexing to his natural-minded friends who conclude that such an one has no trials, for he is continually speaking of his 'blessings. But why should he waste time in telling them of burdens which he has left with his Lord by His loving invitation, unless it should be to speak of the love that has lifted the load? A

child who cannot leave his perplexities with a loving father is a strange child indeed. Evidently he has more faith in himself than in his parent.

### **The Ultimate of Faith**

While it takes strong faith to cast all our personal burdens on the Lord and leave them there, and still more to trust Him for complete deliverance and vindication in His due time, the ultimate in faith it would seem is reached when we can trust Him in the affairs we do not understand, and even for the righting of wrongs in the midst of the Church. Doing with our might whatsoever we find His providence would permit to us for their correcting, and calmly and patiently leaving all in the hands of the God of spiritual Israel, takes a faith that can trust Him, come what may. One who has faith well developed can silently trust in the Lord while the weaker brother goes about fomenting further trouble, demeaning himself and disgracing the name of his Master by using carnal methods in a vain effort at readjusting the Church's affairs. The tongue cannot rest until the heart has found its rest in God; and necessarily the tongue that is not governed by faith will be productive of evil, for there are but two masters to serve, the power of evil and the power for good. When self learns to be quiet, God becomes active. "I waited patiently for the Lord," says the Psalmist, "and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry." - Psa. 40:1.

Unchristian controversy, the slaying of brethren with the venom of the tongue that assigns to the Second Death all who in any particular disagree with us, and kindred evils, will cease when faith controls the life. Faith that answers every question calmly and leaves those he does not understand, to be revealed in God's due time, acts as oil upon troubled waters to those kindred spirits who seek the same self-abnegation in the peace-giving presence of God. Faith, not because of indifference, but because of assurance that truth shall prevail, can hold its silence even in the presence of false doctrine when that is best.

There is a due time for the revealing of every truth, and for us to attempt to regulate that time is to set ourselves above our God. Since there is also in everything false the element of its own destruction, truth and righteousness shall ultimately prevail, but in God's time, and not in the time of our appointing. Although always the one most deeply interested in truth, he whose tongue is controlled by faith can have no part in a controversy beyond the quiet stating of what he understands to be the teaching of the Scriptures. Faith leaves with God the result and the time when truth shall do its work of conviction. The results may seem to be only persecution and opposition, but these cannot ruffle true faith.

### **The Restraining Power of Love**

The outgrowth of unbounded faith will be a love without selfishness, and this will be a restraining power as well as a winning influence when in the company of those who love an argument. The greatest blessing received when we are present during a controversy is generally not when we have said most, but when we have said the least. When it becomes more important to prove that God is right than that we are, quietness of manner, the outward evidence of an inward faith, is substituted for the loud and passionate tone. The calming influence of love is the only medium with which noisy arguments may be successfully met. Even the natural-minded perceive this important truth. Surely, then, we who have learned from the Scriptures that "God is love," can never have reason to distrust our course when it is a manifestation of love. Where the way of

nature would only stir up strife, faith working by love, moves calmly on to a victory without the shedding of blood or of tears.

If one does not recognize the grace of silence as an evidence of true sanctification, this subject will appear of little importance. It is nevertheless a fact that the blessedness of true and complete consecration can never be known until our tongues are devoted to the Lord along with all our other powers. Since it is true that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" it must also be true that an unregulated tongue means an unregulated heart. No doubt it is because the tongue is the index of the condition of the heart, that it is true that "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." How startling the effect would be on most of our conversations if we really believed this Scripture. Not to be careful of the use of the tongue can mean but one thing, that we have not faith in this text, or at least that our faith is weak.

If there is no hypocrisy in our claim that it is our delight to do God's will, then we shall be able also to say with the Psalmist, "I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue. I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me." (Psa. 39:1.) Should the presence of the wicked be not sufficient restraint; let us not forget that every word is spoken in the presence of our God. "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let riot thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few." "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak," lest it be said of us, "they set their mouth **against the heavens.**" - Eccl. 5:2; Psa. 141:3; James 1:19; Psa. 73:9.

### **A Heart Devoted to God Eloquent in His Praise**

The ultimate goal of the life of faith will always be not partial silence but complete and unbroken silence-self ceasing forever to speak, and God only speaking through us. The natural mind delights in hearing its own voice, the spiritual delights in hearing the voice of God; the natural, always degenerating, kindles the fire of self in others; the spiritual, elevating and uplifting, reveals the delightfulness of freedom gained in the death of self. St. Paul who heard in his youth the chatter of many eloquent tongues moved by self-love, voicing many fine-spun theories, knew whereof he spoke when he told us that even the speaking with the eloquence of the most skilful of men, or even of angels, would count for nothing without love. Evidently the power for good reposing in the tongue depends not on its eloquence but on the influence regulating and guiding it. A heart devoted to God, a mind stayed on Him, will mean a tongue which, even in its silence, will be eloquent in His praise. "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak. Let our speaking evidence that we have really been begotten "with the word of truth:" It may not take many words to tell all we have as yet learned, but if silence results at times, it is well to remember that "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise." - James 1:18, 19; Prov. 10:19.

## Convention Reports

### Worcester, Mass.

The Bible Students Convention of Sunday, July 29th, at Worcester, Mass., was a day of sweet Christian fellowship. The testimonies and addresses gave much of refreshing and blessing to those in attendance for which thanks was repeatedly given our Father, both the speakers and the listeners realizing that every good gift cometh down from above. About 125 were in attendance. Some interested strangers were present for the public talk of the afternoon, the topic of which was "The only Solution to the World's Problems."

The leader of the testimony meeting suggested Revelation 2:4 as the guiding thought, and a genuine heart searching resulted to those present, as to whether they still had that all-absorbing love for the Lord Himself that led them to lay down their all on the Lord's altar. Some were found rejoicing in that first love and others longing for its return. A previous discourse on "Walking with God" had prepared the minds of the brethren for the testimony meeting. They had been directed to the text, "As ye have received Christ Jesus, the Lord, so walk ye in Him," and were reminded that their present walk was to be energized by that same love which prompted them at first to accept and follow the Lord. To walk with Him would be to fulfill His instruction, "Love one another as I have loved you."

Continuing along the same line was the next discourse based on 1 John, 1:3: "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." Such fellowship is possible only to those "who by reason of use *have* their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." The Church fellowships with Him now while in the flesh that they may "put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created him."

We believe all returned to their homes much refreshed and thankful for the many blessings received.

### Bridgeton, N. J.

August 12th, a little group of brethren met in convention at Bridgeton, N. J. Delightful fellowship was enjoyed in a home, generously opened to the sessions. Helpful topics were considered by the speakers, and many worthwhile suggestions were brought out also in the testimony meeting which closed the convention.

"The mind of Christ" was one of the subjects considered and the thought was, expressed that this mind was possible only to those who are put to death in the flesh that thus they might be "alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord," and which Paul told the Corinthian brethren was to be attained through "the knowledge of God. But some have not the knowledge of God; I speak this to your shame." This knowledge is attained by those who think "upon His name"-His character. The talk closed with an exhortation for each to consider well as to whether the thoughts of yesterday were along lines they would wish to carry through eternity.

Another text considered was "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." Jesus loved to go to the home of Lazarus, the speaker said, not because He could there talk of politics and the doings of Rome. No-such subjects as these would not have drawn Mary to His feet, nor have made that attentive listener unfit for earthly duties when He was present. Jesus' theme was always "the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." If we be risen with Christ there will be no doubt of the evidence that we are alive. Jesus finished His course with the most practical thing ever done He gave His life for mankind.

The talk on baptism preceded a refreshing testimony meeting. The Lord's blessing was manifest throughout the day and again the friends realized "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

### **London, England**

"It is with a sense of deep appreciation of our Heavenly Father's blessing that we look back upon the August Convention in London. The spirit manifested was such as to make it appear impossible for any who attended to go away without feeling spiritually refreshed and encouraged to press along the way with renewed determination to be zealous and faithful to the end. Brethren from all parts of the country were present, and some from various Classes not habitually meeting together, and all appeared to be very appreciative of the opportunity of re-uniting with old friends and of jointly participating in the gathering. Many had come from places where their opportunities of fellowship with those of like precious faith are very rare, and these 'isolated' brethren manifested in no uncertain manner the joy they felt at being for a while in the company of fellow-saints.

"The ministry of Brother Hoskins of Brooklyn, Brother Luttichau of Denmark, and a number of brethren from various parts of England was chiefly devoted to sound exhortation and encouragement in the Christian life, and to a consideration of the strong meat of the Word; those deeper things which make for clear spiritual insight and understanding of our calling as disciples of the Lord Jesus.

"The brethren dispersed at the end with the expressed desire that if our Master so indicates His will, it may be our privilege to re-unite in a similar gathering at some future time and thus keep burning the sacred flame of love. There were some whose monetary assistance was sent anonymously-it is only by this means that their gifts can be acknowledged, but He which seeth in secret has already blessed them in giving. The gathering was made possible by prayer and faith, and prayer and faith prevailed."