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Lest Ye Enter into Temptation

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." - Matt. 26:41.

IN THE direction of loving, self-sacrificing, undying zeal and solicitude for His disciples, there is none in the annals of man to equal that of Jesus of Nazareth. So says the beloved John, "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." (John 13:1.) Perhaps it was in the closing hours of the Savior's life that we discover the finest and most inspiring exhibition of loving concern for His followers, as in the midst of His great sorrow He was apparently oblivious to His own distress, so deeply absorbed was He in these whom the Father had given Him out of the world. And in His soul-stirring prayer, for our consolation, and for the comfort of all the faithful throughout the Age, Jesus added, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word."

It was when they had sung a hymn and gone out from the Passover, that our Master expressed to His disciples the words at the head of this article, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation": while He Himself was entering into an agonizing battle and in the midst of the supreme crisis of His entire career, was submitting His will to the will of God, and praying earnestly, was strengthened. - Luke 22:39-46.

The admonition "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation," expresses an appeal of the utmost importance, and is surely an admonition that has been appropriate for the earnest consideration of God's people throughout all the Age. Unquestionably there have been special times of stress, seasons of severe testing, when this loving admonition to watch and pray and be on guard against being taken unawares by temptation, has come home to the Lord's people with peculiar and unusual force.

Thus the occasion when the Master originally gave this utterance, represents one of those times of great trial and testing for Himself as well as for His disciples. Jesus' earthly mission was about concluded. The gathering in the Upper Room, the partaking of the mystical Supper, and the departure of Judas were in the past. En route to Gethsemane, Jesus sought to impress upon His disciples the fact that they were approaching a great crisis. He called their attention to the

prophecy, "I will smite the Shepherd and the sheep ' shall be scattered." He declared plainly that as a result they would all be offended, downcast, stumbled, amazed. The things that they were not at all expecting would occur. The impulsive Peter, full of confidence: in his own devotion to the Lord, denied this, declaring that it would not be true in his case-that even though it should be true of all the others, he was ready to die with the Master rather than to deny Him. But the Master still urged that the Apostle was in great danger. He was trusting too much in his flesh and not looking to God and prayerfully watching against temptation. Indeed all the disciples joined in the same remonstrance against the accusation that Jesus had made. They declared themselves loyal and ready for death. Ah, truly, little did they know of the severe trials that were soon to come upon them!

Jesus and the Apostles in Gethsemane

Beloved in Christ, we would do well to pause here, to observe the lesson for all the Lord's followers today as well as then. Surely it is entirely proper that we should feel ourselves thoroughly determined to be loyal to the Lord's cause, to our very last breath; for such a determination is quite necessary to victory. The mistake that we are liable to make is in not realizing how severe the trials and temptations may become in not realizing the necessity, of heavenly assistance in our every time of need. Thus wrote the inspired Apostle, "When I am weak, -- then am I strong." (2 Cor. 12:10.) By this he assuredly meant that when fully loyal to the Lord he realized his own weakness and insufficiency, but was strong because then he relied especially upon heavenly aid -- then he watched and prayed and was thus forewarned against the temptations.

The sacred narrative tells us that on arriving at the Garden Jesus left eight of the Apostles near the entrance, and went further into, its shade with Peter, James and John. All had been exhorted to watch, to be on guard against something that was to occur, something of which Jesus knew, but which seemed far off and most improbable to the Apostles. They seemed unable to comprehend the Master's foreboding, even though they sympathized with Him. It was midnight and they were accustomed to retiring early. The strain of the evening and the weighty lessons which the Master had imparted, reacted in drowsiness. They slept instead of watching and praying, and this was true even of the three nearest to the Master. In the midst of His great soul agony and distress, no doubt Jesus earnestly desired to be absolutely alone in His communion with the Father in this tragic hour. And so He went a stone's throw farther into the shade by Himself. Time after time in the agony which came upon Him, He came seeking human sympathy only to find His dearest ones oblivious in sleep. Well had it been declared by the Prophet, "Of the people there was none with Me." (Isa. 63:3.) He trod the winepress of grief and sorrow alone.

In after years the Apostle Paul under the illumination of the Spirit's anointing, explained to us the secret of our Master's victory in this the great crisis of all time: "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared." He was heard of His Father in that He had respect unto His Father's will; He was loyal at heart and in the midst of His great trial He watched and prayed, and thus derived that strength that fortified Him and prepared Him for the great ordeal.

God's People Tried and Tempest-Tossed

This same Apostle affirms that in leading many sons to glory, it pleased God to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering, through trial. Hence this thought is prominently stated throughout the New Testament that followers of Christ must expect to meet the same tests, must be prepared to face severe temptations which will have to do with determining the state of the heart, the measure of loyalty toward the Lord and His holy will.

Glancing backward now over the Age, we observe that history records how the Lord's professed followers have been tried and tempest-tossed, have been confronted with powerful temptations all along the line. Yea, many have yielded to discouragement or to the inclination to be less zealous and less loyal toward the Lord and spiritual things; others have yielded to the deceptive influences and sophistries of the Adversary, and still others have grown tired and weary in well doing, thus disclosing the fact that their consecration to the Lord has been insufficient, has not been wholehearted; hence lacking in faith they have not been sufficiently zealous in watching and praying lest they enter into temptation. Yet there have been a faithful few who have heeded, and profited by the Master's warning, because they have been the fully surrendered ones and in their hearts thoroughly loyal to the good pleasure and will of God.

The closing days of this Age have been declared by Christ, the Apostles and Prophets, to be days of special tribulation, days fraught with peculiar trials and temptations, especially to God's people. For this reason it would seem that the Master's admonition, Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation, would come home to all such with much force, and increasingly so as we realize that the signs are gathering around us that "the end of all things" pertaining to the present order is rapidly approaching. In the language of the poet, our hearts implore,

"Abide with me! fast falls the eventide!
The darkness deepens, Lord, with me abide."

In our Savior's message to the Church at Philadelphia, in pointed and searching manner He makes mention of the trial, or temptation, that is coming upon all them that dwell upon the earth, thus clearly implying that this day of the Lord which has come in the time of the Church of Laodicea, the Church of the last times, has brought with it the temptations and trials of which the Master's message forewarned. We now see that in the gathering and mustering of the various forces, social, political and ecclesiastical, that are to play their parts in the closing drama of this Age, great and severe trials are imminent for all humanity. The hopes of humanity, that they may be enabled to uphold and stabilize the present order of things and preserve peace in their midst, are about to be dashed to pieces. It would be difficult to estimate the intensity and severity of the discouragement and despair that will doubtless seize the hearts of men as they realize ultimately the full import of this day of Jehovah.

The Vigilant and Prayerful Heart

But the trials and temptations that are of the utmost concern are those that have to do with God's people, and that stand related to disciples of Christ as new creatures in Him. The divine promise is that grace and strength shall be given to those who are so fully committed to the Lord as to be counted amongst the "very elect." For, said our Master, they shall be accounted worthy to escape those things coming upon the earth; they will escape them in the sense of being kept and so protected that no harm or injury will come to them so far as their new standing and new relationship in Christ is concerned. And though they may for a time be permitted to share much of the outward trouble and adverse circumstances with the world, yet on account of their strong faith

and implicit trust in God and because they will have been sealed in their foreheads by a knowledge of the divine plans and purposes, they will realize themselves "kept by the power of God unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." But their success will lie in the direction of maintaining the attitude and disposition to watch and pray, lest they enter into temptation, lest they yield to temptation.

Another writing upon this admonition of the Master and its application to His followers, has said, "The word rendered watch, means literally to abstain from sleep; then to be vigilant; to guard against danger. Here it seems to mean to sympathize with Him; to unite with Him in seeking divine support; and to prepare themselves for approaching danger." There has been all along, the tendency to fall asleep spiritually, to yield to the stupefying influences of present surroundings. They are such as would benumb the spiritual senses and cause the individual to fall into a stupor or sleepy attitude spiritually, in which condition or situation he would be subject to the power of the temptations of the Adversary and fall a prey thereto. It was concerning this very point that the Master in describing conditions relating to His followers in the eventide of the Age, said, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."

Unquestionably the watchful and prayerful attitude has much to do with the soul's preparation to meet temptation; the vigilant and prayerful heart is the one that will be most likely to be living near the Lord, in the consciousness of His holy presence; and such nearness to the Lord fortifies one against the power of temptation and puts him in the position of preparedness to deal wisely and bravely with those problems and issues that test the sincerity and integrity of the soul, as well as its loyalty to the will of God.

He Never Fails Us

Again the Word of the Lord urges that the child of God shall be persevering in prayer, "Watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." (Eph. 6:18.) It may be that one reason why our Lord does not answer our petitions quickly is that He desires us to learn to watch for the answer, and thereby get 'the lesson of appreciation and gratitude to Him as we realize that He has given us our request. Should we not therefore pray with all perseverance, watching for His providential leading and direction. Indeed the Lord might see best to defer further the answer to our petitions, either to test our faith or to increase our earnestness and lead us into a better condition to receive the blessing. How truly we all observe that time is an important element in the providences of God. It requires time to become emptied of self and prepared to receive abundantly the mind of Christ.

We all realize at times the seeming utter inability of even those who are very dear to our hearts, to enter fully with us into and appreciate our sorrows and our needs. Hence they are unable to sympathize fully in our struggles and our trials. Truly this realization sends us, as it did our Master, the more frequently to the Throne of Grace, where we are always sure of having the ear of One who understands us perfectly and who will be sure to make all the allowance for our frailty, who knows the limits of our ability to do and to be, in our imperfect flesh, and who can give us the perfect sympathy which none other can give. He never fails to hear and to heed the cry of His children, even though He may for a wise purpose in love, defer for a time, a visible answer to their pleas.

Jacob as an Example

The prayer of Jacob at the time when he was anticipating a meeting with Esau on his return from Padan-Aram, may be considered one of the, most excellent and inspiring examples of earnest, persevering prayer to be found in the Word of God. It is full of confidence and trust in God. It recounts God's promise to his grandfather Abraham, and his father, Isaac, and the renewal of this promise to himself. He mentions to the Lord His promise also to bring him again to his home land. His humility is shown in his words, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast shown unto thy servant; for with my staff [only] I passed over this Jordan [when fleeing from home]; and now I am become two bands." (Gen. 32:10.) He tells the Lord of his fear of Esau, yet shows that his fear is offset by his confidence in the Almighty. It was at this time and doubtless in answer to this prayer, that the angel of the Lord appeared to Jacob, and so full of faith was he in the power of God and in His promise to protect him and make of him a great nation, that he laid physical hold upon the angel, declaring that "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." The angel here appeared as a man; but Jacob had recognized him as the representative of the Lord sent to meet him.

Nor would we suppose that the angel was not sufficiently powerful to release himself from the grasp of Jacob, but rather that God was pleased to bless him, and that these circumstances were designed for the very purpose of drawing out Jacob's longing desire for this blessing of the Lord, to demonstrate the depth and intensity of his devotion. When this was proved, when he had manifested his deep appreciation of the blessing which God alone could give, and this great longing to be in harmony with Him, then the blessing came -- Jacob's victory. God was pleased to reward such faith and energy and zeal: Jacob was only a natural man, yet his prayer has in it a lesson that may be of much profit to new creatures, in Christ; not that we should wrestle with God as did Jacob, for we are sons -of God and have a much closer relationship than servants, and have no need to wrestle with God to gain His favor. Phillips Brooks expressed the true thought very beautifully and forcefully when he said, "Prayer is not conquering God's reluctance; it is laying hold upon God's willingness."

The Church's Gethsemane Experience

There appears to be no room for doubt that the "hour of temptation" is upon all the world today, and the words of the Apostle are quite in order here, "Judgment must begin at the house of God." Since the house of God represents those who now possess the light and who are on trial for life, and since this is the time when He is completing the trial and testing of those who shall have a part inn the Kingdom, the significance is that the present hour is one of great solemnity to the children of God, waiting for the consummation of their hopes, and the great deliverance. Of this time and its solemn significance, Brother Russell has most aptly written and left us a suggestion that is worthy of prayerful contemplation. He said:

"Doubtless in the end of this age, in the closing days of this Gospel dispensation -- there will come Gethsemane experiences to the Church of Christ. Those who will stand those temptations and trials and come off victorious, will be the ones whose faith and trust in the Lord are strong -- those who watch and pray lest they enter into temptation, and who are thus safeguarded against it. As our Lord forewarned the Apostle Peter and the other Apostles of their coming trials, so He has forewarned us of the great and crucial tests near at hand. Let us profit by the experiences of the Apostles."

The Master's Victory through Watching and Praying

Again in reviewing the last hours of our Lord's life and the trials and tests incident thereto, our beloved Brother has left us the following important suggestion, well worthy of our prayerful consideration:

"In the case of our Lord and the Apostles we see illustrated the value of watchfulness and prayer in the dark hour of trouble. Our Lord followed the directions He gave to the disciples: He watched, He prayed, He got a blessing, He was strengthened, and came off victor. They did not watch and did not pray, failing to realize the necessities of the occasion, and as a result we find them scattered, bewildered; and one of them, the very strongest of them all, who boastingly had said a little while before, 'Though all men forsake Thee, yet will not I,' was so overpowered by his surroundings, and so weak through lack of the very strength he should have obtained through watching and prayer, that he denied the Lord with profanity.

"Whenever we find the Lord's people attempting to live a life of holiness and consecration, yet ignoring the injunction of our Lord to watch and pray, we know that they are unwise; and that however much they may be virgins, pure ones, they are foolish: " they cannot hope to gain the victory over self and sin and the Adversary, single handed, alone. If the Master Himself needed strengthening, surely we also need it; and if He received it in response to supplications with strong cryings and tears, it is an intimation to us of the way in which God is pleased to bestow the full assurance of faith which is able to strengthen us as good soldiers to endure any and everything in His name and service. Those who seek the Lord earnestly and in 'prayer are as sure to receive a blessing as was the Lord Jesus Himself; and although there will not come to them the same kind of heavenly messenger' to comfort and encourage them, nevertheless a heavenly messenger of another kind will surely be sent. It may be in the person of a fellow-disciple, able to enter into and sympathize with us in our trials and difficulties, as none of the Apostles could sympathize with our Lord or assist Him. Or it may be that the messenger sent will be one of the Apostles themselves, through the many gracious words of inspiration which God has, communicated to us through them in His Word. But however the strength may come, it must be the assurance, not of men, nor of angels, but of God, that we are pleasing and acceptable to Him, and that we may claim and expect the exceeding great and precious things which He has in reservation for them that love Him.

"So to speak, we are now in the hour of trial which cometh upon the whole world to try them. The present is represented in the Scriptures to be 'the hour of temptation' or testing at the close of, this Age. It is the Gethsemane hour, in this sense of the word, to all who are the Lord's true people, fully consecrated to Him. It is the hour, therefore, in which we, like our Lord, should be seeking the Father's face to receive the full assurance that we are His, and that He is ours; and that we may rely confidently on His strength to carry us through this time. It is the time in which we are to make sure, as we sometimes sing:

**'Oh let no earth-born cloud arise
To hide thee from ,Thy servant's eyes.'"**

Our Redeemer Liveth

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." - 1 Cor. 15:20.

TO THE Apostle, Paul, we are deeply indebted for a proper and clearer understanding of the deep significance of the death and resurrection of our Savior-of its far reaching effects upon the human race. The Apostles in their early experiences seem not to have understood the full meaning of His sacrifice and still less of His resurrection until, by the grace of God, this Apostle to the Gentiles was endowed with wisdom from above and was led by the Holy Spirit to a clear understanding, as seen from a study of this fifteenth chapter of his first letter to the Church at Corinth. It is a most marvelous discourse on the subject of Christ's resurrection, which subject he places above all others as indicated by his statement, "But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not."

Light on the Resurrection Increases

Many among men in his day disputed the resurrection and after reviewing their arguments he leads on in his logical way to where, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." We recall that Paul had been given a vision and a knowledge above his fellow Apostles, with perhaps a keener understanding of the Law and the Prophets, and was quick to see when the eyes of understanding of others were somewhat dimmed. So after discussing the matter up to this point, he quickly reverses his train of thought from the dismal minor key of the preceding verses, and with the joyous thought of one who knows, he says, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." "Now," -- not from the standpoint of time, but from a logical conclusion after a deep study of the whole situation and a careful weighing of the evidence, for and against. And if now he has proven that Christ is risen, then was their faith not vain, then were these who slept in Christ not perished, and they were not false witnesses of God, for the resurrection of Christ definitely proved that His redemptive work was acceptable; that He had fully secured the price and was rewarded by receiving immortality, the divine nature. Hence there was given to Him all power in heaven and on earth. This power 'was to be shared by those of His Body who should make their lives one of sacrifice, suffering with Him that they might reign with Him and be His joint-heirs -- a glory beyond description or human understanding; for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

It is interesting to watch the increasing understanding of the resurrection, from the days when Christ talked with Martha upon this subject, on to the time when Paul discusses it in this Corinthian letter. Martha possessed a doctrinal understanding. She knew that in the general resurrection Lazarus should live. She accepted the fact, but with no special comfort to herself in her hour of trouble. Her beloved brother had been stricken and taken from her in the height of manhood. A happy household had been torn asunder, and her whole thought had been of the Master-had He only been here it would not have happened. And it perhaps seemed cold comfort to her when He assured her -- "Thy brother shall rise again." She did not grasp His thought of the immediate restoration of her beloved, but it gave the Master an opportunity to lead her on until

He could pronounce that most strikingly comforting thought, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." (John 11:25, 26.) Could any words of human tongue be so comforting, so full of significance as these? -- uttered while He still had before Him the experience which could make the fulfilling of this statement possible.

"I Am the Resurrection"

Jesus wept not only because He loved Lazarus, but possibly because He had hoped that these whom He dearly loved and who seemed so responsive to His influences, might still more fully discern the deep significance of His death and that He Himself was the resurrection. In this statement He carries the thought to all faithful followers that belief in an event or a doctrine, while of much importance, in fact often indispensable, is of more importance when properly understood as being inseparable from Himself, as in this instance the fact that He is the resurrection is of greater import than the mere raising of the dead. And so is fixed the thought that the entire Plan is dependent upon His sacrifice, although the Church, His Body, participates in the joint-sacrifices, as His Body, or fails of the promises made to them if they do not so sacrifice.

Christ said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life." He did not say, I promise, or I bring to pass, but "I am." If Christ in us is the hope of glory, if Christ lives in us and the life we now live we live by the faith of Jesus Christ who loved us and gave Himself for us, and if the full meaning of the word is a standing up, being made perfect, then may there not be some deeper meaning to His words? May he not refer to that mystery hidden from the ages and now made known As members of His Body and covered by His robe of righteousness are not we being perfected through suffering? Is the resurrection process not taking place in us at this time, and can we not obtain comfort from the thought that we are being transformed by the renewing of our minds, made perfect in Him? Can we not enjoy a measure of peace and happiness here and now in the thought that we are able to understand much in the Scriptures that is too often looked upon as purely figurative or metaphorical?

The disciples of our Master, after His crucifixion, were uncertain as to His resurrection, although they seemed to have a vague hope that such might be the case. Their very lives were in danger; truly they were as sheep whose shepherd had been stricken.. They were in a dazed mental and spiritual state. Some rumors had reached them, in their places of seclusion, that the tomb had been found empty. Fear evidently filled their hearts, for they gathered secretly in a room with locked doors on that evening of the first day of the week. We can well imagine the topic of conversation with its affirmations, denials, and doubts, as to the truth of these rumors, some claiming they had seen Him as the gardener, others that they had talked with Him on the highway and, He had expounded the Scriptures to them and finally broken bread with them in the identical way with which they were familiar.

"See My Hands and My Side"

"The same day at evening, being the first day of the week when the doors were shut," and their fearful hearts were longing for the old familiar associations, and fellowship, suddenly He appeared in their midst with the old greeting, "Peace be unto you." Thus He proved to them the reality of His resurrection. What a moment this must have been! Their doubts were now removed and so much which had baffled their understanding in the days gone by was cleared away. But

there was yet much to learn and much to test their loyalty -- much which could come only with the manifestation, of the Holy Spirit. They were not able yet to bear it all.

"For those disciples, that day had been a very restless one. They had been troubled by what the women said, and by their own many questionings and thoughts. Sin had come back on Peter and on others,' and the very thing they needed most was that He should stand and say, 'Peace be unto you': See My hands and My side." Those who are trying to live nearest the true Light are most conscious of sin and imperfection. Do we not realize that very often at the end of the day Christ comes to us, when we are troubled with a sense of sin? There never was a day we ever lived in which there were not many things that came short of the glory of God, and there is never an evening in which we do not have to say, Forgive us our debts, our shortcomings, even if we do not need to say, Forgive us our trespasses, our transgressions. There is always the coming short of His glory, even if there is not a voluntary transgression of His will. And so there never is a time when we do not need that He should show us "His hands and His side, and say, "Beloved, there is the guarantee that there is nothing between God and you but one clear heaven of love."

Again thanks be to Him, for as He came to them in that upper room though the doors were closed and locked, He is ever watchful over His beloved. In the dim light of that room they seemed to be alone with the shadows of evening around them, when one of them looked and out of those shadows he dimly discerned the outline of a figure gradually assuming the form of a man until plainly to them all, they saw Him and they heard His salutation. They knew it was the Master by the manner of His speech as they heard the common greeting of the East:

"Peace be unto You"

Not only was this a friendly greeting, not only was it a comforting greeting, allaying their fear, for they thought they saw a spirit, but it recalled to their minds perhaps that occasion when they were gathered in this very chamber to partake of their last Passover, where the Memorial was instituted. It was so short a time, but filled with a lifetime of experience, since He had tried to prepare them for this very hour of darkness and despair of heart, when He had said to them, "Let not your heart be troubled: Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." And those other words of comfort and assurance, that He would pray the Father that He should give them another comforter who should abide with them forever and would bring all things to their remembrance. And then that most blessed of all comfort, "Peace I Leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth: give I unto you."

"The disciples, therefore, were glad when they saw the Lord," with a gladness which we cannot know unless we have gone into the depths of their sorrow as they saw Him taken from the cross and placed within the tomb, seemingly dead, as were their hopes and expectations. In their associations with Him, as He walked among men, a superman, who could raise the dead, heal the sick, and restore sight to the blind, they had hoped He should restore Israel. Surely He must be the Messiah for whom all men were in expectation.

With joy indescribable they now knew for a certainty that He had risen. He was deeply intent that they should know Him, and know the peace which He had promised them. Jesus therefore said to them again, "Peace be unto you." And what a peace the Body of Christ may enjoy today; fear these words are also our comfort, and His resurrection is also the basis of the hope we have within us-a-blessed assurance of faith and of hope. Do not our hearts glow within us as did those of Emmaus as we come to a deeper realization of the full significance of all this and what it

means to all who are privileged to sacrifice with Him in this Age, and fill up that which is behind of His suffering.

Sacrifice must be the keynote of our inspiration-consecration to the utmost and the filling of our hearts with the Holy Spirit to the limit of our capacity. May we have a conscience to know the truth and a courage to be faithful, and thus may we enjoy that peace of Christ which is our proper inheritance.

The Ground of Our Peace

To enjoy that peace there must be a real peace between the believer and God. The fact must be, before there can be a knowledge or a realization of it. The eye does not produce the picture nor the ear the music. In each case the reality exists already and the particular organ transmits the fact to the brain. It is the same in the things of the Spirit. A perfect harmony must exist between God and His children before there can be a knowledge of it. This knowledge is a reflection of the relation in which we stand to God. The peace of Christ can come to us only out of a perfect relation to Him. There must be a complete surrender of our wills, the putting aside the things of the flesh, and the laying up of our treasures in heaven. May we by a rational introspection, determine how it stands between God and ourselves and may our meditations on the significance of His resurrection bring a determination to walk more humbly before our God. "Lord who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor." "I could not live in peace if I put the shadow of a willful sin between myself and God."

"There is no substitute, nor ever can be, for personal relations with Christ, crucified and risen. Would, we taste a peace which is indeed of God? it, must be 'through our Lord Jesus Christ' not as a principle only, but as a person. Faith must see His wounds: faith must hear His benediction, nothing between, resting direct on Him!"

"Wilt thou not visit me?
The plant beside me feels Thy gently dew
And every blade of grass I see
From Thy deep earth its quickening moisture drew.

"Wilt Thou not visit me?
Thy morning calls on me with cheering tune
And every hill and tree
Lend but one voice, the voice of Thee alone.

"Come, for I need Thy love,
More than the flowers the dew, or grass the rain,
Come, gently as Thy holy Dove
And let me in Thy sight rejoice again.

"I will not hide from them
When Thy storms come, though fierce may be their wrath
But bow with leafy stem,
And strengthened follow on Thy chosen path.

"Yes, Thou wilt visit me,
Nor plant, nor tree Thine eye delights so well,
As when from sin set free
My spirit lives with Thine in peace to dwell."

O Death Where is Thy Sting

Paul speaks of Christ as the firstfruits of them that are asleep. This of necessity means that there are, or are to be, other fruits, which thought is borne out in the physical world. The firstfruits of the harvest brings joy to the husbandman because it forecasts others of the same kind to follow. And so the fact is established that a resurrection is promised to all mankind. "And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed His own body." "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

The lessons of this portion of this Corinthian letter definitely settle several points which by many professing Christians are but imperfectly understood. Among these Paul positively teaches, first, that Jesus Christ did rise from the dead and was seen by him, by Cephas, by the Twelve, by five hundred brethren, by all the Apostles, and by James; second, that there is no difference between His resurrection and that of His followers-He was the firstborn of many brethren-the firstfruits; third, that the power of God, the Holy Spirit, was the power through which this was accomplished, therefore, the same power shall operate in the bringing forth of subsequent fruits; fourth, that there are bodies celestial and bodies terrestrial. The latter thought has not been grasped by the many who prefer to believe in the resurrection of the old body. This thought appeals to- the natural minded; hence is the popular conception. But when properly understood, by the development of the eternal purpose of God, will bring peace and joy to all the world.

When we realized our sinful condition, and the purpose of Christ's death and resurrection, and we came to Him and made a consecration of our lives, we were buried with Him and like Him became alive to God. This is the teaching of Sts Paul concerning the resurrection, in its application particularly to the Body of Christ, that His Body members by holy living are being fashioned for that spirit body and for that place which He went to prepare for them.

With this understanding of the resurrection as a feature in the Divine Plan we can agree with, the Apostle that "when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

Established in the Present Truth

"Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth." - 2 Pet. 1:12

REMEMBERING the prayer of our Lord in His closing hours, that His followers might be sanctified through the Truth, the Word of God, we can' not but associate therewith the thought of the sanctification, the development of believers in holiness and Christlikeness, and their establishment in "Present Truth."

True to the promises of the Divine Word, the pathway of God's servants down through the ages has shone brighter and brighter with the light of Truth. As time and events have made due the knowledge of certain truths pertaining to the divine Plan, those who have been in a right attitude of heart have been given to understand the things that were necessary for them in their day. The statement made in the Old Testament times, "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day (Prov. 4:18), though fulfilled in preceding 'dispensations, has continued in process of fulfillment throughout the present Age. Going back to the First Advent of the Savior, we note how distinctly His coming marked the due time for a fuller revelation of the divine plans and purposes. What Christians, by common consent, call the "spirit dispensation" was ushered in; and no statement is more significant of a new dispensation, with a new work, privileges and blessings, than that recorded by the Evangelist, saying of the Savior that "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not, but as many as received Him, to them gave He, power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." - John 1:11, 12.

In fulfillment, of this, we find that those who became disciples of Jesus were admitted into a special relationship, and given to receive certain rich and distinguished blessings, represented in the Savior's address to His followers, "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God," etc. (Mark 4:11.) Following the completion of our Lord's earthly mission and His ascension, there was an even more pronounced manifestation of divine favor, in the coming of the Holy Spirit, which resulted in the enlightenment of those who were in a waiting and ready attitude; and there the Gospel Church was fully instituted. We have abundant testimony in the lives and ministry of those whom Jesus appointed to be the twelve foundations of the Church that a special dispensation of truth was due, the general purpose of which was to accomplish the sanctification and transformation of those who should constitute the Body members of Christ throughout the Age.

Perhaps none, therefore, knew better than St. Peter the meaning of his own language with regard to being established in the "Present Truth." His thought evidently was that of being grounded and fixed in the Truth that was then due to the Church; and, of course, the inference is that there were truths then enjoyed by God's servants that it was not proper to reveal prior to that time; hence the term "Present Truth," as distinguished from whatever truths might have been possessed prior to that time.

"Brighter and Brighter unto the Perfect Day"

Inasmuch as 'the followers of Christ have been admonished to continue to walk in the light and to make progress in the pathway' of truth, we observe in our study of the history of the Church's experience of the past nineteen centuries, that the faithful have been kept, protected, and blessed; with an increasing understanding of the divine purposes, even though it has seemed at times that the surrounding powers of superstition 'and darkness would almost overwhelm the seemingly weak' and insignificant vessels of light. The promise of the Master, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the Age," is seen today to have been verified, and His true followers have never been permitted at any time to be overcome by any deluge of darkness or by the triumph of the forces of evil.

Now that we find it our happy privilege to be borne down the stream of time to the end of this Age, where we witness the closing scenes of this dispensation, we have seemed- to see a new and deeper meaning in the promise of the Savior, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God," in view of the fact that a fuller revelation of the divine program is due to be made known to the Church, according to the promise of the Master Himself, as well as by the mouth of His inspired representatives. (Luke 12:37; 1 Thess. 5:4, 5, 6.) Therefore, the knowledge that has been committed to followers of Christ in modern times has become the occasion for them to make special application again of the language of the Apostle, "though ye know them, and be established in the Present Truth." The assembling together of the various fragments of truth, by which we have been enabled to see the harmonious whole of the divine Plan, has constituted the message for these days that has been most appropriately designated "Present Truth," as distinguished from the more or less hazy and beclouded presentations of the Message of the darker past. Briefly, "Present Truth," to us today is that dispensational truth, or further revelation in the way of a knowledge of the great facts and truths relating to the various features, steps, and developments of the Plan of the Ages and its consummation in the Age to come -- in the glorification of the Church, the removal of 'the curse from the earth, and the restitution of all the willing and obedient of humanity to Paradise.

In the light of "Present Truth," and carefully observing the Apostolic admonition to heed the more sure word of prophecy, the faithful watching class today have been enabled to see more or less clearly where they are on the stream of time; and that in close proximity to the establishment of the Kingdom of God they recognize that it is the time of harvest-the gathering, threshing, and assembling of the faithful unto the Lord. And throughout the days of this harvest of the Age, servants of God have realized it their privilege and mission to herald the message concerning the divine program, and call the attention of all truth-seekers to the fact that this is the "Present Truth," or "light for the last days," by which all the faithful might become so strengthened and fortified as to endure faithfully the remainder of their pilgrimage in the Narrow Way.

Development of the Light of Present Truth

But this knowledge and light which we term "Present Truth for this time, the last stage of the Church's history, has not come all in a flash nor through any miraculous revelation. During the past century or more the sacred page has been gradually illuminated, largely through a number of devout and godly men, because it has been the due time. 'But particularly during the past sixty years or so, this knowledge has been gradually assembled in a very marvelous manner. How inspiring the example of Brother Russell as we observe his maintaining the attitude of progress

into more and more of the light of the knowledge of God! And how keen has been the interest of the Lord's people in the history he has given us of the development and clarifying of the Lord's message of "Present Truth"! Yea, many faithful souls have seen in our Brother's ministry the fulfillment of the Master's own promise concerning the time of His Second Presence, namely "That He shall gird Himself and make them to sit down to meat and will come forth and serve them." How refreshing today, to read our Brother's review of developments Referring to the earlier years of his study and progress he explained:

"When, in 1872, I came to examine the subject of restitution from the standpoint of the ransom price given by our Lord Jesus for Adam, and consequently for all lost in Adam, it settled the matter of restitution completely, and gave me the fullest assurance' that all must come forth from their graves and 'be brought to a clear knowledge of the Truth and to a full opportunity to gain everlasting life in Christ.

"Thus passed the years 1869-1872. The years following, to 1876, were years of continued growth in grace and knowledge on the part of the handful of Bible students with whom I met in Allegheny. We progressed from our first crude and indefinite ideas of restitution to clearer understanding of the details; but God's due time for the clear light had not yet come.

"During this time, too, we came to recognize the difference between our Lord as 'the man who gave Himself,' and as the Lord who would come again, a spirit being. We saw that spirit beings can be present, and yet invisible to men, just as we still hold and have set forth in 'Millennial Dawn,' Vol. II., Chap. 5. And we felt greatly grieved at the error of Second Adventists, who were expecting Christ in the flesh, and teaching that the world and all in it except Second Adventists would be burned up in 1873 or 1874, whose time-settings and disappointments and crude ideas generally as to the object and manner of His coming brought more or less reproach upon us and upon all who longed for and proclaimed His coming Kingdom.

"These wrong views so generally held of both the object and manner of the Lord's return led me to write a pamphlet - 'The Object and Manner of the Lord's Return,' of which some 50,000 copies were published." - Z. '06-230.

This progress into the light, noted in the foregoing as characterizing his earlier years of study, we observe continued on through his life. Referring, to a later period and of the Lord's gracious leading into a clearer appreciation of the details of the Atonement and of the Mystery class of this Age, especially as the light was reflected from the Levitical sacrifices, Brother Russell wrote again:

"I went to the Lord with this as with every trial, told Him just how it seemed to me, how anxious I felt for His dear 'sheep,' who, having their appetites sharpened by some truth, were by their very hunger exposed to Satan's deceptions. I told Him that I realized that He was the Shepherd, and not I, but that I knew also that He would be pleased at my interest in the sheep and my desire to be His mouthpiece to declare the truth, the way and the life to them; that I felt deeply impressed that if the time had come for the permission of a false view to deceive the unworthy, it must also be His due time to have the truth on the same subject made clear, that the worthy ones might be enabled to stand, and not fall from the truth. Believing that the due time had come for the correct understanding of the meaning of the Jewish sacrifices, which in a general way all Christians concede were typical of 'better sacrifices,' and that the Lord would grant the insight as soon as I got into the attitude of heart best fitted to receive the light, I prayed with confidence that if the Lord's due time had come, and if He were willing to use me as His instrument to declare the

message to His dear family, that I might be enabled to rid my heart and mind of any prejudice that might stand in the way and be led of His Spirit into the proper understanding.

"Believing that the prayer would be answered affirmatively, I went into my study next morning, prepared to study and write. The forenoon I spent in scrutinizing the text and every other Scripture likely to shed light upon it, especially the Epistle to the Hebrews, and in looking to the Lord for wisdom and guidance; but no solution of the difficult passage came. The afternoon and evening were similarly spent, and all of the next day. Everything else was neglected, and I wondered why the Lord kept me so long; but on the third day near noon the whole matter came to me as clear as the noon-day sun--so clear and convincing and so harmonious with the whole tenor of Scripture, that I could not question its correctness: and no one has ever yet been able to find a flaw in it. (This has been published in several editions in pamphlet form under the title, "Tabernacle Shadows of the Better Sacrifices.")

"Then I knew why the Lord had led me to it so slowly and cautiously. I needed a special preparation of heart for the full appreciation of all it contained, and I was all the more assured that it was not of my own wisdom; for if of my own why would it not have come at once? I found that the understanding of that subject was bound to have a wide influence upon all our hopes and views of all truths -- not that it overturned old truths or contradicted them but on the contrary, that it set them all in order and harmony and straightened out little knots and twists. For instance, the doctrine of 'justification by **faith**' had always been more or less confused in my mind, as it is in every mind, with the doctrine of 'sanctification' which calls for **self-sacrifice and works**. This was all made clear and plain at once; for the types showed that we all, as sinners, needed first of all Christ's ransom sacrifice, that we appropriate its merits (justification -- forgiveness) to ourselves by **faith**, and that thus we are justified (reckoned free of sin) when, turning from sin, we by faith accept of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf. The type showed, too, that it is only after being thus cleansed in God's sight (by our acceptance of Christ's finished work as our ransom-sacrifice) that God is willing to accept us as joint **sacrificers** with Christ, so that if faithful to the end, following in His footsteps, we should be granted the favor of joint-heirship with Him.

"Here I first saw that the great privilege of becoming joint-heirs with Christ and partakers with Him of the divine nature was **confined exclusively** to those who would share with Him in self sacrifice in the service of the Truth. And here, too, I saw for the first time that the Lord was the first of these sacrifices of the Sin-Offering; consequently, that none of God's servants, the Prophets, who lived and died before Christ, were priests after His order, nor sharers in sacrifice with Him, even though some of them were stoned, others sawn asunder and others slain with the sword, for the cause of God; that though they would get a good and great reward, they would belong to a separate class and order from those called to sacrifice and joint-heirship with Christ on and since Pentecost. Here, too, I first saw that 'the acceptable day of the Lord' signifies this Gospel Age -- the time during which He will **accept the sacrifice** of any who come unto God through Christ, the great Sin-Offering: that when this acceptable day ends, the reward of joint-heirship and change to the divine nature ends; and that when this great day of sacrifice, the Gospel Age (the real day of Atonement), has closed, when all the members of the Body of Christ have participated with Him in the sacrifice of their rights as justified men, and been glorified, then the blessing will begin to come to the world -- the Millennial blessings purchased for men by their Redeemer, according to the grace of God."

Only the Surrendered Heart Sanctified by Present Truth

True indeed, multitudes who have come in contact with and professed a knowledge of "Present Truth," have not proven themselves to be genuine disciples of the Master and have not run well the Christian race-course, even as multitudes who followed Jesus at His First Advent, did not prove to be loyal and true disciples, as the Master said, "Not all that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall inherit the Kingdom of God." But this argues nothing against the 'power and sanctifying effect of the truth in the truly surrendered and consecrated heart. It is to be remembered that the truth results in sanctification only when it is received into good and honest hearts, faithful and obedient hearts, that are given over to His keeping. Indeed it is these that the Apostle is addressing in our text, when he states that he would not be negligent to put them always in remembrance of these things, though they knew them and were established in the present truth. On this point of what it really signifies to be established in "Present Truth," Brother Russell has effectively said:

"To be established in the Truth signifies that we have carefully studied and thoroughly proved it by 'the law and testimony' (Isa. 8:20), and that as a consequence we are convinced of its verity, so that our faith is steadfast and immovable: we know whom we have believed; we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good; we have partaken of the sweets of fellowship with Him; we have partaken of His spirit of meekness, faith, and godliness to such an extent as to be led into a joyful realization of the fulness of His grace as manifested in the wonderful Divine Plan of the Ages; and we have been permitted to see, not only the various features of that Plan, but also the necessity and reasonableness of all its various measures in order to the full accomplishment of its glorious outcome in the fulness of the appointed times. This is what it is to be 'established in the Present Truth.' It is indeed a most blessed condition, bringing with it such peace and joy as the world can neither give nor take away."

Surely the admonition of the Apostle to the brethren of his day is full of precious meaning to all the faithful disciples of the present hour; that accordingly we seek by every possible means to be fortified ourselves and to assist others to remain steadfast in that which is now the "Present Truth," that it may sanctify and separate unto the Lord and unto holiness, preparatory to our sharing with Him His glorious Kingdom, in the inheritance of the saints in light. All such we believe will have before them the solemn warning of the great Apostle Paul, applicable to Christians of all time, to beware of and to put away the works of the flesh, "that ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts... Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice. ... But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law." - Eph. 4:22, 23.

Surely the Apostle's language is so plain that the simplest follower of the Lamb must recognize its spirit and its import—that the image of the Master set before us as our ideal, signifies that we must develop very largely of the love of Christ in our hearts if we would be accounted worthy a share in the first resurrection of the blessed and the holy. So it is in view of this fact that the Apostle earnestly admonishes the Church to be firm and steadfast in the "Present Truth," saying: "If ye do these things ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." - 2 Pet. 1:10, 11.

Lessons from the Life of Joseph

[Contributed]

Scripture Reading: Psalm 105: 17-23; Genesis chapters 37, 39-50

THERE were seven years of plenty in Egypt, and then the seven years of famine came. The famine extended to Canaan, where Jacob lived. He and his household began to be in want. Then Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, so he sent his sons to obtain provisions for his household. The brothers seem to have been slow to start on this journey, and their father had to urge them. "Why do ye look one upon another?" he asked them. "Get you down thither, and buy for us from thence that we may live, and not die." We are not surprised that they did not set out eagerly for Egypt. It was into Egypt they had sold their brother. That was more than twenty years before, but doubtless the memory was fresh in their minds. There are some things we cannot forget. No wonder they had to be urged to start. Only ten went: the father would not trust Benjamin away from himself. Arriving in Egypt, they were ushered into the presence of the governor, and bowed down themselves before him, with their faces to the earth. So Joseph's dreams were fulfilled at last. He knew his brothers. At first he treated them harshly, made himself strange to them, spoke roughly to them. Why did he do this? Was it resentment? Was he repaying the evil they had done to him so long before? No; he was proving them. He wanted to know if they had grown better through the years; so he tested them in different bays. If one has wronged us, treated us unjustly, forgiveness is not all the duty we owe him. We should seek the cure in him of the evil disposition which caused him to sin against us. We should try to make it impossible for him to repeat the wrong to another.

Joseph sought to know before he revealed himself to them whether his brothers had been cured of the evil heart which twenty years before had led them to treat him so cruelly. Were they still hardened, or were they penitent? He found very soon that they were suffering the bitter pain of remorse. He put them for three days into prison, alleging that they were spies. Again they stood before him. Not supposing that he understood their Hebrew language, they talked among themselves.

They said one to another, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us."

Joseph heard their words, and saw that they remembered their sin against him and were experiencing remorse. The first testing was encouraging; they seemed to be truly penitent. Joseph was deeply affected. The record says, "He turned himself about from them and wept." This shows that even at the first interview his heart was tender and loving toward them. Instead, however, of making himself known to them at once, he restrained his heart's deep feeling and turned back to them sternly, saying that one of them must stay in prison while the others returned home with food for their households. Then he took Simeon and bound him before their eyes. Why this seeming severity when his heart was so full of love for them? He was not yet sure enough of the genuineness of their repentance. Perhaps it was the prison that had wrought this penitence in them; perhaps they were-not really changed in heart and character. Mere sorrow for wrong doing is not enough. One may have bitter remorse for a bad past, and yet not be cured of the spirit which did the evil. Would these men do now the same thing, over which they were grieving? Joseph was not yet sure, and he would not make the mistake of revealing himself to them and making known to them his readiness to forgive them until he was satisfied on this point. So he sent them away.

The Wisdom of Joseph

Nine brothers went back to Hebron. On their way home they were startled at finding their money in their sacks with the food. Guilt makes such cowards of men that every new incident fills them with new terror. Finding the money made the brothers afraid. They interpreted this bit of generosity as evidence of enmity, a trick to get some cause of harming them. Thus does a sense of guilt cause unhappiness in the midst of blessings.

The brothers went home. At length they are back again in Egypt, and Benjamin is with them. They had a kindly reception. The governor asked after the welfare of their father -- "the old man of whom ye spoke." He saw Benjamin, and his heart yearned upon his brother, and he sought where to weep. He could not keep back the tears, and he entered his own room and there gave vent to his feelings. Gaining control over his emotions, he washed his face, to remove the traces of his tears, and came again to his brothers. He had them dine with him. Still he did not make himself known to them. He let them start homeward again. They are happy now. Benjamin is safe in their midst -- that fear is past, the fear that he would be retained. Simeon is free too, and returning with them.

But they have not gone far before they are suddenly overtaken by an Egyptian officer who charges them with the theft of Joseph's silver cup. Sack after sack is taken down and searched, in the order of the men's ages. At last the missing treasure is found in Benjamin's sack. Instantly dismay seizes all the brothers. They did not know that Benjamin was innocent, that Joseph had ordered the cup to be put into his sack for a purpose. All the circumstances were against him. It looked as if he were a thief--this youngest brother' of theirs, of whom their father was so proud. Here he was, bringing disgrace upon all of them. Now mark where the test of character comes in. If these older brothers had been the same men they were twenty-two years before, they would have made short, sharp work with Benjamin. But what did they do? They rent their clothes in their sorrow, and went back, all of them, to the city. They hastened to Joseph's house and fell down before him on the ground. Joseph spoke sharply to them:

"What deed is this that ye have done?" There was another burst of penitence: "What shall we say unto my lord? How shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out, the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found." They do not denounce Benjamin and propose to give him up: they will stand together.

Joseph said he could not punish the innocent with the guilty. "The man in whose hand the cup, is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto, your father."

Here was the test. Would these ten men go away and leave Benjamin alone, in the grasp of Egyptian justice, to suffer for his supposed offense? Twenty-two years ago they would have done it., Instead of this, however, we have one of the finest scenes in history. These brothers will not desert Benjamin. The speech of Judah, as he pleads for Benjamin, is one of the noblest pieces of eloquence in any literature, sacred or profane

"Then Judah came near unto him, and said, O, my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn , against thy servant; for thou art even as Pharaoh. My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother? And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he

alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him. And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father: for if he should leave his-father, his father would die. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more. And it came to pass, when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. And our father said, Go again, and buy us a little food.

And we said, We cannot go down: if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down; for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother be with us. And 'thy servant' my father said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two sons: and the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces; and I saw him not since: and if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. Now, therefore, when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life; it shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with' sorrow to the grave. For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father forever. Now, therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad, a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father."

Mellowing Influence of Penitence

No one can read these pathetic words of Judah, as he pleads for his brother Benjamin, and not, see that these men have been wonderfully changed since that day when they sold another brother into bondage, and were deaf to all his piteous cries and entreaties. Judah evidently speaks for all his brothers. We notice particularly in these men a tender regard for their father which they had not shown before. They had seen his uncomforted sorrow all the years since they had robbed him of Joseph; now they cannot endure to cause him another pang. We notice also a tender love for their youngest brother which contrasts wonderfully with their hard-hearted cruelty toward Joseph that day at Dothan. As they were then, they would not have cared what might happen to Benjamin; now Judah begs to take the boy's place and bear his punishment, staying in Egypt as the governor's slave, that Benjamin may return home.

Joseph was now satisfied. At their first visit he had seen their deep consciousness of guilt, as they remembered their sin against him. In this final testing he saw more—he saw that they were changed men. The grace of God had been at work in them. The sin of twenty-two years ago they could not now commit. Penitence had wrought deeply in them, softening their hearts. They were prepared now to stand together as brothers, and together to lay the foundation of national life.

The time had come therefore for disclosure. All doubts are gone from Joseph's mind. As soon as Judah had finished his eloquent plea, Joseph caused all strangers and attendants to go out of the room. No eye must witness the sacred scene which was about to be enacted. When they were alone, those twelve men, Joseph, with streaming eyes and loud weeping, made himself known to his brothers. "I am Joseph," he said to them.

Who can imagine their feelings as these words fell upon their ears? First there must have been terror mingled with their amazement. Again all their sin against their brother rose before them. Here was Joseph whom they had so cruelly wronged. He was lord of Egypt, and they were in his

power; what would he do with them? Twenty-two years ago they had put him in the pit to die, and then hastily lifted him out only to sell him as a slave. They had supposed that they were now done with that "dreamer." But here they are before him in utterly reversed position. Is it any wonder they stood dumb in the presence of Joseph, or that they could not answer him, or that they were troubled?

But Joseph's heart was too full to prolong the scene. "Come near to me," he said. "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt." But he hastened to comfort them. "And now be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life . . . to preserve you a remnant in the earth, and to save you alive by a great deliverance." Then he added, "So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God." Then he bade them hasten to his father with the news and to return, all of them, with their father and their families, to dwell in Egypt, to be near to him. The wonderful scene closes with Joseph's falling upon Benjamin's neck in loving embrace, then kissing all his brothers and weeping with them in the joy of reconciliation. The barriers were now all broken down. The old sin was forgiven. The long-sundered family was brought together again. Estrangement had been healed by love and peace. O what a burden that must have lifted from their hearts, like the burden that rolled away when God forgave us.

Practical Lessons for the Faithful

Here we may pause in the narrative to gather some of the practical lessons. Joseph's dealing with his brothers is an illustration of Christ's, dealing with us as sinners. There is forgiveness in His heart the moment we stand before Him. We have not to excite and kindle love in Him. He loves us in our sins. He is always ready to forgive. But oftentimes He leads the penitent through experience after experience before He reveals Himself in full, rich love, until we demonstrate that our penitence is sincere. These brothers were sorry for their sin when they first stood before Joseph. "We are verily guilty," they said among themselves. That was confession. But had their sorrow for their sin cured them of their wickedness of heart? Mere consciousness of guilt is not enough when we stand before Christ. It is not enough to say, "I have sinned. There is a sorrow because the sin is found out, because it brings shame and reproach upon us, because it hurts us among men, or because it must be punished. Such penitence as this does not satisfy Christ. The sorrow for sin which God wants and waits for is godly sorrow, which works amendment of life, which is not only sorrow for past sins, but which can no more repeat those sins. When our repentance is sincere, true and deep, God makes Himself known to us, grants us forgiveness, and gives us His peace. As Joseph invited his brothers to come and be near him where he could nourish them, so Christ invites His forgiven ones into fellowship with Him, into the family of God, to share all His blessedness and glory.

This story teaches us the duty of forgiving those who have wronged us. It would be hard to conceive of any sorer wrong that could be done to another than that which was done to Joseph by his brothers. There was no sufficient cause, no just provocation, for it, either. It began in a feeling of envy because their father loved him more than he loved them and weakly showed his preference. It was aggravated by the boy's dreams which he in a childlike way told them. Envy grew to hate, and hate ripened into the intention of murder, which by God's providence was softened into selling as a slave. But we have seen how freely and how beautifully it was forgiven. There does not appear ever to have been any revengeful feeling in Joseph's heart toward his brothers. He seems to have kept his heart free from any trace of bitterness, and full of sweet, gentle love, all through the years. Surely it is a beautiful picture, Joseph loving and blessing those

who had sought to kill him, who had caused him years of sorrow. It takes more than mere human sweetness and gentleness to do this. Joseph must have lived very close to God all those years to thus become the interpreter of divine forgiveness.

We are living more than as many years after Christ came to earth as Joseph lived before He came: Have we learned this lesson of forgiveness as well as Joseph learned it? Are we keeping our own hearts sweet and loving under ill-usage? Let us study the picture of this badly-treated brother forgiving those who had so sorely wronged him, until its spirit sinks into the very depths of our spirit, until we can from the heart pray, "forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us."

"As we forgive, forgive us-so we pray.

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Christ might have bidden us beseech of heaven:

'May we forgive, Lord, as we are forgiven.'

But no! He set His bounds of pardon thus
That love, through need, might be more generous."

We are taught here, too, that God uses even men's evil to help advance His Kingdom. Joseph said to his brethren: "Be not grieved, . . . for God did send me before you to preserve life." We can readily see how blessing and good came out of *all* the *evil* done by the brothers of Joseph. **It** shows *how* God's hand is *on* everything. No evil deed of the worst of men is allowed to run riot among the divine plans and purposes, or to defeat His love and grace. This does not make sin less sinful; but it assures us that even the wrath of man shall be made to praise God. It is a comfort to know that while we cannot undo our wrong deeds, God can keep them from undoing us, and can even use them to advance His Kingdom.

(To be Continued)