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"Ye Know Your Calling, Brethren"

"But ye are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."-1 Peter 2:9.

VOCATION" IS the term that describes the special business of any person, while the word "avocation" describes an occasional business; as, the Apostle Paul's vocation was that of a minister of the Truth, while his avocation, or occasional employment when necessary to provide things honest and decent in the sight of God and men, was tent making. Similarly all of the Lord's people should consider that their vocation or calling is of God, and relates to the special or spiritual ministry in which He privileges us to engage as fellow servants of our Lord Jesus Christ. In order to provide the necessities of life for ourselves and those dependent on us, it is necessary that we should have some earthly employment also; but this we should always regard, not as our vocation -- not as our chief or principal business in life-but merely as our avocation, or temporary engagement incidentally necessary to our chief business. Of course it would not be wise for the Lord's people to speak of spiritual things from this standpoint to worldly people. Our Lord warned us against so doing, saying, "Cast not your pearls before swine" -- attempt not to tell the deep and precious things that belong to you as spiritual New Creatures in Christ, and which you only can understand and appreciate through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:14), to those who have not the Spirit -- and who cannot couiprehend your teachings and who would be disappointed in the matter, as swine would be disappointed if you gave them pearls which they could not appreciate, instead of corn which they could appreciate. In our own hearts, however, and amongst the "brethren," this thought should always be uppermost; namely, that our calling, or business, or vocation is of God, -- that we are called to be members of the Royal Priesthood.

We are viewing our text just now specially from the standpoint of the Priesthood, or new race, or new nation, different from the remainder of mankind in that God has invited them to become joint heirs with His Son in the great Royal Priesthood which He designs shall ultimately bless all the families of the earth. The royal feature of the matter belongs to the future; we have no royalty yet. It is only in prospect;- it will 'be attained after we have faithfully performed the service which belongs to this present time -and have thus proven ourselves worthy, according to the divine terms, to be members of the glorified Priesthood through our Lord Jesus' merit, and under Him as our Head. Meantime it behooves us to learn distinctly what is expected of us as respects our vocation in the present time; what obligations attach to us as those who have made the

consecration and 'have been respectively accepted to this Royal Priesthood and anointed with the Holy Spirit in anticipation of our attainment of the goal.

The Apostle Paul (Heb. 8:3) declares that "Every High Priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man [the man Christ Jesus] have somewhat also to offer." The thought is that the High Priest serves, -is an offerer or sacrificer to God. True, the Apostle is speaking here of our Lord Jesus and not of us, but from his own words elsewhere we will know that it is expected of all the members of the body that they shall be joint sharers with their Lord and Master in the sufferings and sacrifices of this present time-, that they maybe counted worthy to share with Him the glories of the future. And the same Apostle explains that He (Christ) is our Head, and that we are, as members of His Body, "filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ," walking in His footsteps. The lesson, then, to each member of this Royal Priesthood, is that the special mission of their office, vocation, calling in the present time, is to sacrifice.

In the light of the Apostle's explanation we can see that our Lord Jesus as the Head Priest had something to offer to God, and that he did offer it in that He offered up Himself a sacrifice. (Heb. 7:27.) We can see how His sacrifice could be acceptable to God, because in Him was no sin-He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. But how can we, who "by nature are children of wrath even as others,"-how can we fulfil our mission as priests to present some offering to God when we have nothing which is our own that would be acceptable, because all we have and are is by nature tainted with sin and under divine condemnation? The Scriptures answer that "that which God hath cleansed," His people are no longer to consider common or unclean; they tell us that God has justified us freely from our imperfections through the merit of Christ's sacrifice; they tell us that we are acceptable to God "in the Beloved."

The Object of Our Justification

The Apostle carries this same thought further, and emphasizes it, saying, "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God [no longer aliens, strangers, foreigners, but redeemed and accepted of the Father] that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Rom. 12:1.) Here the entire matter is summed up. We are not to consider any longer that, after being justified by faith, the Lord esteems us unholy and unacceptable, but are to understand that the very object of our present justification by faith was to make us acceptable to the Father, to make us to be priests, to furnish us opportunities to do the work of a priest in this present time; namely, to sacrifice -- to sacrifice ourselves -- to present our bodies living sacrifices to God through Christ's merit. What a wonderful plan! what a wonderful privilege to be permitted to be priests! what a gracious arrangement! It gives us opportunity of completing the priestly service of sacrificing now, to the intent that by and by we may enjoy the privileges of the other part of the priest's work, connected with the glory and royalty of the Millennial Kingdom.

If then God ordained the High Priest to offer sacrifices, and that was the particular feature of His calling while on earth, so likewise it is the particular feature of the calling of all those who would walk in His steps-ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices to God. The Apostle Peter calls this same matter to our attention in a verse preceding our text (ver. 5), where he declares' the Church "A holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." All, but, says

one, the Apostles differ respecting what shall be our sacrifices. The Apostle Paul declares, "Present your body a living sacrifice," while the Apostle Peter here declares that we should offer up spiritual sacrifices, and our bodies are certainly not spiritual bodies. We reply that the word "spiritual" in this text is not found in the oldest Greek manuscript, known as the Sinaitic. Apparently some scribe of about the fourth or fifth century must have concluded that the Apostle had left his statement of the matter incomplete, and that there would be danger of some understanding him to mean that the Royal Priesthood should offer bullocks and goats; and to hinder such a construction of the Apostle's language, the no doubt well-meaning copyist added the word "spiritual."

But in the light of Present Truth we can see that he erred in attempting to assist the inspiration which guided the Apostle to a proper statement of the matter. We can see most clearly that our Lord Jesus did not offer a spiritual sacrifice, but a human sacrifice for sin--that for this reason it was necessary that He should leave the spiritual condition in which he previously existed and should take upon Him human conditions become a man --that He by the grace of God might taste death for every man. Adam was not a spirit being when he sinned, hence God's sentence was not against a spirit being, but, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Hence it was necessary that the Lord Jesus should become the man Christ Jesus; that as by a man came death, so also by man should come the resurrection of the dead. And as our Lord's sacrifice was not a spiritual sacrifice but a human one, so it is also with our sacrifice: we are not to sacrifice our spiritual natures nor our spiritual interests nor anything else that is spiritual; but we are to sacrifice our justified human natures, our justified flesh, as the Apostle urges, "Present your bodies living sacrifices, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Is Our Sacrifice Complete?

The question should now properly arise in the minds of all who realize themselves as consecrated to the Lord, as members of the Royal Priesthood, to what extent am I fulfilling my present priestly office, and performing daily as I may have opportunity my appointed work of sacrifice--laying down my life for the brethren? Too many, alas! under the false teachings of Babylon, both in word and in custom, have come to consider that money getting and honor getting and ease getting and general self preservation constitute the reasonable service of the Lord's people. Sacrificers are looked upon as deluded fanatics--especially in proportion as the sacrificing is done for the Truth's sake in the interest of spiritual things. We are not, however, to be taught of the world, nor by a cold worldly-wise churchianity; but we are to hearken to the voice of the good Shepherd, to hear His Word, to learn of Him if we would be prepared by Him in the school of Christ for the glorious things promised us as His joint-heirs in the future. "If we suffer with Him we 'shall also reign with Him," is the message.

We can see how the Apostle, even though finding it at times necessary to engage in the business of tent making, might 'be considered as a priest whose time, energy, talents were all sacrificed to the Lord and given freely in serving His people--in doing good unto all men as he had opportunity, especially unto the household of faith : but how can others who have not the opportunity, not the talents, not the open door for such special service as his--how can those who must provide for their own household according to the Lord's Word, be sacrificing priests, when as a matter of necessity nearly all of their time must be given to tent making, shoe making, housework, or whatever other employment providence seems to have opened before them as their avocations? When it is necessary to spend nearly all of eight to twelve hours per day continuously in the service of our avocations, how can we consider or serve the interests of our vocation, the priesthood?

The Lord has very graciously made arrangements adapted to this very condition. He assures us in His Word that it is not the amount we shall accomplish in His cause, but the spirit, the desire and the effort which we manifest that in His esteem would indicate the degree of our self-sacrifice. He graciously declares that if our hearts be given to Him, whatsoever we do may be done as unto the Lord, and if done as unto Him will be accepted by Him. From this standpoint we can see that the work which the Apostle Paul did upon the tents passed to his credit :as a part of his priestly sacrifice, just as much as the other part of his time which he spent in more congenial methods of proclaiming the Gospel. Similarly, we can see that the shoemaker working at his bench, or the tinner at his labor, or the butcher in his shop, or the housekeeper, if at heart fully consecrated to the Lord, would be seeking to do their work as unto the Lord, and that if careful to use his opportunities for proclaiming the Truth, for serving the brethren, for doing good unto all men as opportunity afforded, the improvement of the few opportunities coming to them and their willingness to sacrifice personal tastes and convenience for the service of the Truth and for the brethren, would be counted by the Lord as a full sacrifice, because such a disposition in respect to little things would imply an equal faithfulness in the presence of larger opportunities. - Luke 16:10.

Redeeming the Time

This does not mean that the Lord's people are to be content with the usual routine of daily life in the home or in the shop, and are to say to themselves, "God accepts my labor as thoroughly as though it were given directly to Him in some other more desirable form," but it does mean that each person so situated should day by day carefully scan his earthly duties and obligations to see in what manner he could justly and properly cut off moments, hours or days from the service of earthly things and earthly interests, that now might be given to sacrifice for spiritual things and spiritual interests of himself or others. The consecrated heart, the sacrificing priest, is the one who will improve the moments as they swiftly fly, using them as far as possible in the Father's business. For instance, a workman may not take his employer's time to talk religion to his mate, for that would be unjust and contrary to the divine arrangement; but in the noon hour he may improve opportunities, and instead of engaging in worldly or foolish conversation or rude jest, he will seek to use opportunities to tell the good tidings to others; or if he have no such opportunities, finding no hearing ears, he will use the time in spiritually uplifting himself by study of the teachings and principles of the divine Word. In the evening he may not neglect duties of a social nature toward his wife and children, but will remember that under the divine arrangement he has some obligation toward them in respect to their mental and spiritual development as well as for their temporal necessities, and he will seek to use a part of his time in their service, perhaps sacrificing an inclination to read some story or light literature, or to indolently while away the time doing nothing. In addition to thinking of his obligations toward his family, he will think beyond them of his own spiritual needs and of the Lord's family and their necessities, and will endeavor to judge of the mind of the Lord in respect to how each moment shall be used. He consecrated every hour, every moment, when he presented himself a living sacrifice to the Lord; and the opportunities of laying down moments and hours in the interests of his New Creature and in the interests of spiritual brethren, etc., are coming and going daily, and the Lord is looking to see to what extent he was a sincere covenanter, sacrificer. These sacrifices on behalf of neighbors, friends, wife, children, husband, parents, are accepted of the Lord if done as a result of consecration to Him, and as a result of the believing that these are the opportunities which His providence has opened for exhibitions of the self-sacrificing spirit.

Yielding to the Preference of Others

The same opportunities, though in a different form, come to the youth who is under age and subject to his parents, and to the wife surrounded by family cares and duties. If the consecration be to the Lord, then every sacrifice of our just rights and interests on behalf of ourselves as New Creatures, on behalf of husbands or children, father or mother, neighbors or friends, brethren in Christ, is counted of the Lord as so much done to Him; whereas if the very same services were rendered from any other standpoint-by any one unjustified, and not consecrated to the Lord, or merely done to the individuals and not as a sacrifice unto the Lord-these things would not count to us as priests, as our sacrifices; but when viewed from the standpoint of consecration to the Lord, and faithfully performed as being our best judgment of what would be the Lord's will concerning our use of our time, interests, talents, etc., they are sacrifices wholly acceptable to God, our reasonable service.

We are to remember that abstaining from immoralities, from sins, is not sacrificing. Nothing can be acceptably sacrificed to the Lord that is not of itself right, just, proper. It may be imperfect, as all that we have and do are necessarily blemished by reason of our share with the race in its fall; but unintentional blemishes of proper things are all covered by the merits of our Redeemer's sacrifice, as we have just seen. Another form of sacrifice frequently not discerned by the Royal Priesthood is the opportunity of renouncing -our own ways or plans, our own methods or preferences, and in the interests of peace accepting instead the plans, the preferences of others -- where it is merely a matter of personal preference, and where we believe the Lord will be as willing to have the matter one way as another. We can in the interests of peace sacrifice our preferences to the wishes of others if we see some good can be gained, by such a course; as, for instance, the preservation of the peace of the home or the opportunity of winning our opponent to the Truth, or any good cause. Such sacrifices are pleasing to the Lord, who instructs us through the Apostle that, so far as in us lies, we should live peaceably with all men; and that we should rather suffer wrong and take injury from a brother in Christ than take the matter before the world of unbelievers and thus risk a general odium upon the Lord's cause.- Rom. 12:18; 1 Cor. 6:7.

We have known cases, however, where dear brethren in the interests of peace and harmony yielded their rights-and properly enough where no principle was involved--but who, nevertheless, held a kind of grudge against those to whom they had yielded, feeling that somehow or other they had been defrauded of their rights. This is wrong, and indicates that the sacrifice was not fully made. If the matter in dispute had been fully sacrificed, as unto the Lord, there would surely have been no room for feeling that it had been taken from them. Under such circumstances the Lord's dear followers would do well to make haste to cast out of their minds anything akin to resentment and the feeling that they had 'been deprived of their just rights, and, instead, to take into their hearts that they had fully, freely, absolutely given up the matter in the interests of peace and it was dead, buried forever, with no resentment toward any one, but, on the contrary, with the feeling of joy and rejoicing that this matter had 'been sacrificed to the Lord, to the interests of the home or the Church or what not, because they believed that it would be pleasing, acceptable to Him, and, therefore, their reasonable service.

Development of Whole Will of God

We are to remember that we have each but one sacrifice; that it is to be rendered to the Lord day by day in the improvement of every opportunity, as it comes to us, to serve Him and His. We are to remember that while it consists of many little sacrifices, some of them too small to mention or even to consider, nevertheless it will require all of these to complete the one sacrifice which we made at the beginning of our induction into His family. When we gave our wills, our hearts, we gave our all; and any holding back in any of the little affairs of life -- any refusal to sacrifice that which we think would please the Lord -- is a keeping back of that much of what we have devoted to Him.

The Lord is very patient toward us, and gives us repeated opportunities to accomplish the work of sacrifice; but it must be accomplished, our wills must be slain, must be submitted to the Lord's will, else we shall never attain to, joint-heirship with Him in the Kingdom-never become members of the overcoming Royal Priesthood. He graciously gives us line upon line, lesson upon lesson, respecting this subject; shows it to us in His Word from different standpoints, impressing upon us the necessity of being dead to self and alive toward God through Jesus Christ our Lord-the necessity of developing the various graces of the Spirit which are implied in this sacrificing work. Every one who will be a sacrificer must of necessity be meek, humble, teachable, else very shortly he will get out of the way. He must also learn to develop the grace of the Lord along the line of patience, because it certainly requires patience to deny ourselves and to submit at times to injustice where there is no proper means of avoiding it without doing injury to the Lord's cause or to some of His people. It also implies a cultivation of brotherly kindness and, in a word, the development of the whole will of God in our hearts and lives; namely, love, which must be attained in a large and overcoming measure ere we shall have completed our earthly work of sacrificing.

In our studies of the "Tabernacle Shadows of Better Sacrifices," we saw that every one who took part in the priesthood was required to wash his hands and feet at the laver. We saw that the laver represented the Word, or message of God, and that the water, therefore, represented the Truth; and thus it is the Truth which is to cleanse the Royal Priesthood from the defilements of the flesh. As a whole we are clean, being covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness but in our contact with the world we are to seek to put away the defilements of earth which come to us in connection with our daily walk and service, represented by our feet and our hands. And the Apostle, in the verse preceding our text, is not forgetful to mention this cleansing which all must have in order to be acceptable as members of the Royal Priesthood. In the verses 1 to 3, inclusive, he mentions that those who would be Royal Priests must lay aside "all malice and all guile and hypocrisies, and envies and all evil speakings." As the sacrificing requires all of the present life, so the washing requires all the present life; and only those who both wash and sacrifice will be accepted into the glorious Royal Priesthood of the future.

It will be noticed that the Apostle does not represent that these priests will wash themselves from murders and gross sins, for those who have been begotten of the Holy Spirit are necessarily far removed from any sympathy with any of the grosser forms of sin. What he does show is the more refined forms of evil which still infest the flesh, even of those who have the new mind, and which require to be mortified, rooted out, cleansed away. How "close girdling" are these sins that are mentioned-how many of the prospective members of the Royal Priesthood find that they have defilements along this line, malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, evil speaking! It is safe to say that

every one has some, if not all of these weaknesses in the flesh to contend with-especially at the beginning of his entrance upon the priestly vocation. How carefully all should seek to put all these away! how each should scrutinize, not only every act of life and every word and every thought, but, additionally, every motive underlying his words, thoughts and actions, so that they may 'be more and more purified from the earth defilements and be more and more acceptable to the Lord!

With our very best endeavors we may never get entirely free from all of these "close girdling" sins while still in the flesh; but one thing is sure-the heart must be free from them, else we can never be accepted as members of the glorious priesthood. The heart must 'be so completely filled with the love of God that it will feel a repugnance to all of these evils, which are repulsive to the divine mind; and happy for us it is that God has promised to accept such a condition of our hearts, and that knowing the imperfections of the flesh with which we contend, He is not requiring that we shall attain to absolute flesh perfection, but that we shall be pure in heart in order to see Him and to share in the glory which He has promised to His people.

Love-Ultimate Requirement of All

What we have seen respecting the perfect love which must dominate our hearts in order to enable us to complete our sacrifice in the Lord, is not so different from the Lord's requirements respecting all His creatures. There could be no angel of heaven acceptable to the Father without this spirit of love, of devotion, which, if the conditions in heaven were similar to the conditions now in the earth, would prompt and inspire all of the Lord's faithful angels to do good to the needy ones even at the cost of self-sacrifice and inconvenience. We can see that the same law of love must ultimately be required of the world of mankind who shall be developed under the training of the Millennial Age, the world's school time. They also must ultimately reach that degree of love which, if the conditions were similar to those which now prevail, would lead them to sacrifice in the interest of the needy. Nothing less, than this could be considered as a recovery on man's part of that which was lost-the image and likeness of God.

The peculiarity, then, of this present time and of the Church's position in it, is the fact that we are begotten of the new mind, the new will, the new spirit and law of love, while still sin and death prevail around us. Hence to us living under present conditions, in contact with the weaknesses and imperfections and trials of others, it becomes, necessarily, an evidence of the new mind that, seeing these conditions, we should be permitted to make sacrifices on behalf of the brethren and on behalf of all men as we have opportunity. These indeed are severe testings and trials, which will come to the world of mankind during the Millennial Age, when all conditions will be favorable to the development of the new mind of love. They are more severe testings also than are brought to bear upon the holy angels, who, although possessing this love, have not the weaknesses and imperfections of the flesh, the fallen nature, to contend with in its exercise, and who, therefore, can gain no such victory as the Church of Christ is called upon to fight for and by the grace of her Lord to win.

It is on this account that the Lord has attached to this "little flock," now being selected under these self-sacrificing conditions, so great a reward; as it is written,-"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." (1 Cor. 2:9.) Even though God hath revealed these things to us by His Spirit, which searcheth all things, even the deep things of God, nevertheless it is not possible for us to comprehend, know fully. As the Apostle says, we now see these glorious things of the future

through a smoked glass, obscurely; but by and by we shall see face to face and know as we are known, and appreciate fully the wonderful things which God has declared to us through His Son and His faithful Apostles. Then the royal feature of this priestly office will be added, and they shall be indeed priests, royal, sons of the Highest, and shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.

This royalty, while it will have great dignity, majesty and power, is not attracting us by any illustrations we have in earthly royalty, with its pride and often selfishness and pomp and show. It is attracting us, however, by the glorious things which God hath spoken respecting the work of these Royal Priests-the work of ruling, blessing and uplifting the world of mankind. This glorious hope inspires, encourages and revives the fainting priests who are now sacrificing, and the Lord has so intended. In view of these things let us remember our calling, brethren, and not mistake the avocations of life for the great vocation which God hath set before us in the Gospel. Let us see to it that every day shall witness our faithfulness to our priestly ordination of cleansing, priestly sacrificing, and thus preparing ourselves under the direction of the great High priest for the glorious work that the heavenly Father has arranged for us in His wonderful plan.

-- *The Watch Tower, 1903.*

Jeremiah's Three Questions

[Contributed]

"Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then, is not the health of the daughter of My people recovered?" - Jer. 8:22.

GILEAD was a place of aromatics, and was termed a mountain of spices. It was first called Gilead by Jacob by reason of a covenant that was there made 'between him and Laban, his father-in-law. It is written that "He set his face toward Mount Gilead." The expression was evidently by anticipation, as though given by him in advance of his reaching there, for after arriving there we find him making no further effort to continue his journey, but he remained there until overtaken by Laban. It was as though he had received a certain assurance in advance that a treaty of peace and reconciliation would be made between him and Laban, that the balm of friendship would be poured upon the sore of enmity that had existed between them.

Gilead was very fruitful, abounding in both the necessities and the luxuries of life, thereby yielding both profit and pleasure, being full of people. It therefore was a prosperous land from a material standpoint.

God, in a statement in the Psalms, said, "Gilead is Mine." Many strangers resorted to Gilead to profit by its merchandise; this we will find referred to in the account of Joseph being sold by his brethren into Egypt.

In Jeremiah's use of the words contained in his three questions, we know that he -did not refer to the physical condition of Israel, he did not refer to the natural balm contained in the balsam tree of Gilead, nor did he refer to the physicians of the natural body, any more than do we in using this text which was placed on record for our meditation and our use. Jeremiah uses it in reference to the moral condition of Israel after the flesh, even as we would use it in reference to the heart condition of Israel after the spirit.

Balm Still in Gilead

The balm of the word of the Lord was still in Gilead of old. There were still competent physicians of that word, valiant prophets of God who would have skilfully applied the healing balm, who would have gladly ministered to the sickness of Israel.

Then why was Israel not recovered? Simply because she applied not to those true physicians who had the healing balm, who since the world began had preached of judgments and of Restitution. It is written of Israel that she had "hewn out for herself cisterns, broken cisterns, that could hold no water." Israel repaired not to those true prophets or physicians who held the balm or word of God, but she appointed and hearkened to a false priesthood, who were no longer repositories for the true word of God, but who had become "broken cisterns that could hold no water."

This is why Israel was not recovered. A substantiation of this is found in an overwhelming mass of evidence from God's Word, amongst which we might cite Hosea 8:11-14; Psa. 74:4-9; Mal. 2:7, 8; Ezek. 22:7, 8, 12, 25-28.

Untempered Mortar

In the concluding portion of the last cited Scripture we note the following words, "And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar." How significant, how full of meaning is this statement! Instead of the rightly tempered, perfectly balanced balm which would have been applied by the true prophets of God, these false prophets daubed with untempered mortar, no longer a soothing, healing balm, but in the removal of the spirit of God's law, that law had lost its temper; it had become a dead, lifeless letter, had become unbalanced; and these false prophets, instead of having the true balm with which to heal, daubed with untempered mortar which rendered the recovery of Israel impossible.

And thus do we find it today. Among religious teachers are to be found those attempting to instruct and to teach the people who are themselves lacking in a knowledge of the truths of the Bible. Again there are those who have a great head knowledge of the Scriptures, but who, lacking the love, lacking the spirit of those Scriptures, also attempt to teach others. Both of these classes are equally "daubers of untempered mortar"; and so let us avoid either of these obnoxious extremes, let us be balanced dispensers of the balm of Gilead, the precious Word of God.

As a judgment upon Israel for her neglect of the balm placed in Gilead, for her neglect of the physicians there, Gilead, together with Mount Zion, the holy Sanctuary, was given a prey to the Romans. The fruitful land was turned into barrenness, and it was polluted with the blood of her people. Jehovah who had once said "Gilead is Mine" now has a different story to tell of her. Through the Prophet Hosea He says in chapter 6, verse 8 (Hosea 6:8): "Gilead is a city of them that work iniquity, and is polluted with blood."

Lessons from the Balsam Tree

The balsam tree of Gilead had medicinal virtue all through the wood or tree itself, the seed of the tree, and the sap of the tree. In the wood, or the tree itself, we have a beautiful picture of the Word of God. The balsam tree was a saving, healing tree; the Word of God as expressed in Jesus and the Scriptures, is the only means of salvation, either for the Church or for the world of mankind.

The balsam tree carries a seed with it that well pictures the seed of the new nature; a seed that through the operation of the Holy Spirit is generated within a tabernacle of flesh, which like the seed of the balsam tree, when planted in the ground, germinates and brings forth. What a beautiful picture does it present of our begetting by the Holy Spirit as new creatures, and an earnest, if we shall continue faithful, of the new birth to come -- a birth which shall be not from a corruptible seed, not from a seed which being mortal contains the possibility of corruption within itself, and which under the reign of sin and death must finally eventuate in death and decay. But it shall be a birth from an incorruptible seed, which will never die, and which will never decay, even as says the Apostle Peter: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." - 1 Pet. 1:23.

In the sap of the balsam tree we have a beautiful picture of the Holy Spirit circulating through God's Word. Even as the sap of the balsam tree of Gilead circulating through that tree imparted life and vitality to it, so does the Holy Spirit circulating through the Word of God, impart life and vitality and generating power to it, without which it would be but a dead letter of knowledge, a fit for the head but a misfit for the heart, as sounding brass and a clanging cymbal.

As the sap of the balsam tree generates or causes the seed of that tree to form, so does the Holy Spirit operating within our minds and hearts, generate the seed of a new nature, fertilizing, sustaining, nourishing, and promoting its welfare until triumphantly it shall finally emerge from its womb of flesh.

The leaves of the balsam tree of Gilead were white and were very thickly distributed over its branches, literally covering the tree and giving it a very white appearance. This might very properly picture the covering robe of Christ's righteousness, also the purity and spotlessness of the Word of God. In Psalm 12:6 we read that "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times"; and in Prov. 30:5: "Every word of God is pure: He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him."

The balm of Gilead had rather a sharp, biting taste, but was wholesome to the digestion. How like unto the Word of God, which is indeed sharp and unsavory to the unregenerate appetite. We read that it was folly to the Jews and a stumbling block to the Gentiles, but to the chosen ones of both Jews and Gentiles it was the power of God unto salvation. Ofttimes the truth is sour to the taste, but afterwards it becomes sweet. There is a class who have tasted and seen that the Lord is good, who in days gone by have experienced the healing power of the balm of God's Word, but who for various reasons have again become sick, yet refuse to apply that precious balm for their recovery. They have become deaf to the warnings of the Holy Spirit; they are in the attitude of crucifying the Lord afresh, and of putting Him to an open shame. To such-a class a solemn warning has come through the Prophet Isaiah in the following words "Woe unto them that call evil good, and

good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isa. 5:20.) Such a course if persisted in can have only one final ending.

"The Sympathizing Jesus"

The balsam tree of Gilead exudes or weeps a kind of gum very much in the form of tears, a picture of the tears of grief and sympathy shed by Jesus, that Word which was made flesh and dwelt among us. We see Him over Jerusalem, as He grieved and wept over her, and we hear those sweet words of pathos : "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how oft would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not." And behold Him at the grave of Lazarus, when with a heart full of sympathy for those sorrowing sisters, the emotion of grief gripped Him and He wept tears of sympathy.

The balsam tree of Gilead was first granted to but one land, that of Judea; from thence it was introduced to other peoples; but it was taken to them first by merchants of Judea. And so was it with the balm of the Word of God; to the Israelites was it first given. We read in Psalm 147:19, 20: "He showeth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for His judgments, they have not known them."

We remember Jesus expressly commanding His disciples not to go into the way of the Gentiles nor any city of the Samaritans, but only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But when the time came for the spiritual balm of Gilead to go to other nations and to other peoples, it was even as with the natural balm of Gilead, it was taken to them by Jewish spiritual merchants. To refresh our memories we refer to two Jewish evangelists, Paul and Barnabas where they are spoken of in Acts 13:46 as follows: "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

Grew Only in the King's Garden

Historians tell us that when first the balsam tree grew in Judea, it was permitted to grow in the King's garden only. Subjects of the King had full access to the balm for their needs and sicknesses, but they were not permitted to control the output of the balm or the balsam tree itself. And so is it with the spiritual balm, the Word of God. It was not of men nor did it originate with man, but it came from heaven itself; it was given to man through Jesus and the Apostles and through the Prophets by whom it was preached since the world began.

Historians also tell us not alone that it was permitted to grow only in the King's garden, but that it grew in two orchards of the King's garden; that the King's garden was laid out in two parts or orchards, and one of these orchards was much larger and finer than was the other. What a beautiful picture does this present of that day so shortly to come when there will be two phases of God's Kingdom in operation: not only the heavenly or larger, greater phase of that Kingdom, but also the lesser or earthly phase of that Kingdom which also will be glorious, and from both phases of which shall flow the healing balm of the even-balanced, even-tempered Word of God. Speaking of that time Isaiah says in chapter 29, verse 24 (Isa. 29:24): "They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine." Here we see a day is coming when the spirit of love and the truths of the Bible will go hand in hand, it will be a

rightly tempered, perfectly balanced Gospel, not untempered mortar.

It has been written of the balm of Gilead that it was recommended for the breaking up or dissolving of stones or calcium formations in the body. What a picture again is this of the spiritual balm of God's Word in its power to break up and dissolve the hardest formation of all in a man or woman, a stony heart. Jeremiah 23:29 says: "Is not My Word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" Again we read in Ezekiel (Ezekiel 36:26): "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."

"The Great Physician Now is Near"

Today a world distraught is casting about for healing balm. She sees one by one her concoctions failing to bring peace, failing to bring healing to the sickness of the peoples of the earth. She seeks for balm, but refuses to seek it in Gilead; she seeks a physician, but refuses to seek for him in Gilead. She refuses the only Physician who can heal all her diseases.

Fascism, communism and other isms will be tried by a despairing, dying world, and all failing to bring about healing, this world will finally gaze on a discarded mound of broken cisterns, for even as did Israel after the flesh, even as did many of Israel after the spirit, so will the nations of this present evil world heap to herself cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

But as final destruction descends upon her, there will be those who will cry out: "Save, Lord, or we perish. To those will be granted an opportunity of life in the next Age "wherein dwelleth righteousness." And as the great Physician is then seen pointing the way to the healing balm, to those who shall have been delivered from the besieged city, who shall have been delivered from the power of Satan, He will be seen pointing toward literal Gilead, the Gilead of old, for from Palestine shall the word of the Lord go forth, the healing balm for every ill.

Jeremiah's Cry Goes Forth Today

We sometimes wonder if there are those who, coming among the Lord's people, ever have occasion to ask of us the question of Jeremiah, "Is there no balm in Gilead?" Possibly this question may come from some lonely heart, it may come from some seeker after truth and righteousness. Has such an one ever come to us in search of the true balm of Gilead and gone away without receiving it? This is a question to which each one of us should give serious thought.

And then again in those all too rare moments of self-examination, , does that question come to each one of us? How about **our** heart and mind? Is the balm of Gilead to be found there? Is the true and great Physician reigning within **our** hearts? Does He hold individual *sway* there?

Let us hold fast those spiritual blessings that have been bequeathed to us, ever remembering that we wrestle not with flesh and blood, for our great Adversary is watching spiritual Israel at this time as never before, and if we let down our guard, he will be sure to reach some vulnerable spot.

So let us shine as lights in a dark place. Thus will we be "living epistles known and read of all men;" so shall we fight the good fight of faith; so shall we lay hold on eternal life; so shall we at last be caught up to that heavenly phase of the King's garden, from where we shall be used in

assisting the world up from sickness to health, from death to life, and from destitution to restitution.

"O break my heart; but break it as a field
Is by the plough up-broken for the corn;
break it as the buds, by green leaf sealed,
Are, to unloose the golden blossom, torn;
Love would I offer unto Love's great Master,
Set free the odor, break the alabaster.

O break my heart; break it victorious God,
That life's eternal well may flow abroad
let it break as when the captive trees
Breaking cold bonds, regain their liberties;
And as thought's sacred grove to life is springing,
Be joys, like birds, their hope, their victory singing."

"Would Ye be My Disciples?"

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." - Matt. 16:24.

OUR SAVIOR came into a world ruled by the Roman government at a time when discontent and suffering were the accepted condition of the masses of the people. The stern morality which had made the Romans the ruler of all the world was being undermined, and the leaven of evil was at work. The structure of Roman civilization had already begun to totter. Pagan though she was, she gained her ascendancy through the exercise of the virtues often found in a developing people and cast aside after they reach the climax of power. The fate of the fourth universal power was to be the same as that of the three preceding, and for much the same reason. The wealth of the nation was becoming concentrated in the hands of a minority, the population was drifting from the suburban to the urban. The price of commodities, and even the necessities, had soared beyond the reach of the common people. Taxes steadily increased. A farmer must plant his fields and the bulk of his produce was seized to maintain a standing army made necessary by the internal conditions as well as the dangers from surrounding unsubdued nations. The married state could not be entered into by the lower classes, illegitimacy was common, infanticide was the order of the day, and suicide was almost a necessity to many. The monied classes were given to excesses of pleasure, and the people were exploited by their rulers.

The Jews were among those who were subjugated by the Romans, and their lot was particularly hard because of race hatred of the day. Being a God fearing people in most part, they were attempting to serve Him after a fashion. Though the rulers of their nationality had become as corrupt as their Roman masters, and though these Jewish rulers hated their conqueror with a bitter hatred, they emulated his example and became oppressors of their own people because such oppression was profitable to them.

When Jesus Came to Earth

At the time of the Savior's birth, it is written that all men were in expectation of Him. They dreamed of their deliverance by a coming Messiah, a conqueror who would make them masters of the nations of the world, and restore to them the magnificence of Solomon and the power of David. They still believed themselves the rightful rulers of the world, even though jealousy and suspicion was the state of mind of those who had usurped authority and power among them, that is, the scribe, the Pharisee, and the priest. What the tax gatherers did not exact, the priest and the scribe robbed them of. The moral fiber of the world, Jewish and Roman, had collapsed. This was the condition of the world at this time, and its horrors, etc., can only be imagined.

It was to these that our Master came preaching as though to the deaf. They could not understand the message He gave them. Meekness and humility were unknown to them. Even those who did listen, could not comprehend. A suffering Messiah was not according to their conceptions, and it therefore became necessary for Him to prepare the hearts of even His followers for His message. At the time He uttered these words He had walked among them and shown His power in many ways. He had preached His memorable Sermon on the Mount; He had healed their sick, raised their dead, fed the multitude, endearing Himself to the masses because of the benefits He brought them. He had incurred the enmity of the rulers because He had proved them hypocritical, preying upon the people, exploiting them for personal gain and exaltation. It was after all this that we read: "From that time forth began Jesus to show His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised again the third day."

In remonstrance to this, Peter in his characteristic way said, "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee." The Master, realizing the source of this thought, rebuked him. Peter's mind was of the flesh, of man, fallen, and tinder the influence of the Adversary. It was his love for the Master, but an expression of love after the fashion of men.

The First Exhortation to Self-Denial and Cross-Bearing

It was now that our Lord, for the first time, made known the condition of discipleship. Here He first intimates that there shall be a class of joint sacrificers with Him, that consecration is unto death, that if the body members would reign with Him they must also suffer with Him. Here He laid down the divine law of self-sacrifice confirming the Psalmist who spoke for Jehovah: "Gather my saints together unto Me; those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." It was needful that Jesus make the terms of discipleship plain at this time to those who had walked with Him thus far: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake, shall find it." They must sooner or later, understand that to be thoroughly associated with Him with whom they had cast their lot, meant not only an external walk, but also a heart sympathy and comradeship, and that it would lead them to make the selfsame sacrifice which He must make.

He was making clear to them that He as their Forerunner, was going beforehand to humiliation and death; that He was taking up a cross, and if they wished to be partakers in the glory of the Kingdom, they must likewise lay down their lives. This was a very different proposition from

what they had expected when He first manifested His power and called them to walk with Him. Such a proposition a few months earlier would probably have been met by rejection, but they had learned to love Him; they had come to discern in Him a power not seen by those who did not know Him as they had begun to know Him. They, perhaps in a vague way, discerned that if they were to have a part in His Kingdom of which He had spoken, they must tread in His steps, they must learn to Nerve as He served, they must sacrifice themselves to God. We can imagine that this was, to those who heard Him, a solemn moment, but He had been preparing them for a decision. Christ deceives no man; His words were always simple and sincere. He called His service a yoke, one of self denial and submission to the will of God.

Taking Christ's yoke and engaging in service with Him means activity, and most of all activity in the development of 'character-in the production of the fruit of the Spirit. Men do not sit and sing themselves away to everlasting bliss, as the old hymn goes, On the contrary the Christian life is an everlasting warfare with the powers of Satan. Discipleship with the Master is a privilege for which we pay a price. It costs the disciple something. But the joy of discipleship, of the daily walk with Him, more than compensates for the cost, and the disciple can in a measure understand how He, "for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross and despised the shame." "The natural mind receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God . . . because they are spiritually discerned." And the disciple who does not grow in spiritual discernment is not living up to his privilege, and in the words of the Master: "He that taketh not his cross and followeth after Me is not worthy of Me."

"If any Man Will"

The text we are considering is susceptible of two general divisions. The first portion indicates a condition of the mind or will of the hearer. He must be favorably impressed and must recognize the desirability of following the Master. The Master Himself knows He is offering them something of worth, something which should attract them or probably has already done so, as He has been preparing them for, the thought of sacrifice during the several preceding months, and He sees in them material well suited to His purpose. They possessed the quality of leadership. They were of the type to make good pioneers. They were not of the wise, or rich, or noble, but chiefly of the poor, each chosen for his special ability to perform a certain portion of the work of spreading the truth after the Master should depart from them. The twelve were to become the twelve stars of the new dispensation; the foundation for the erection of an edifice destined to revolutionize the world and establish an order of things then unheard of by any except Himself. They were to become the inspired authority and the mouthpiece of the Creator of all things in so far as He has planned for the recovery of the race and the dealing with His special, new creation.

Now a desire entertained by the human mind with no likelihood of its accomplishment remains only as a wish, but if there is a possibility of its accomplishment it becomes a matter of will. And so when the Master says, "if any man will," He meant that such a thing was possible under certain conditions, these conditions to be made known to them at a later time. In the meantime He continues the work of preparing their minds and of strengthening their wills to the point of determination when the final test comes, and they, through the leading of the Holy Spirit, consecrate themselves to the work of spreading the Gospel news which should appeal to a few of like minds in the days to come, and as the anointing oil poured upon the beard of Aaron ran down to the hem of his garment, so should the anointing of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost extend even to the feet members of the Christ of the present day.

The exercise of the will by a man is a voluntary matter; he may will to do, or he may will not to do. By this exercise of our wills many of the difficulties of the way might be avoided if exercised in a proper way. If we willed to walk in closer union with our Head, if we willed to be filled with His Holy Spirit to a greater degree, we would be more like Him and the temptations and allurements of the things about us would not so often hold our minds. Even though we do not yield, even though we do not sin, yet each deflection requires a certain amount of reparation, a certain amount of making up of time lost if we keep not our minds stayed on Him. If we willed to love more deeply, then would we become more like God Himself, for God is love and from Him flows all His attributes into all His creatures. By deep communion with Him can we attain unto that bond of perfectness and love more deeply, more purely, and more unselfishly. And as we reach this attitude of mind and heart we are better able to show unto others the way of love.

We can reach this condition only through the Master. As we come into closer relation with Him by faith in the merits of His sacrifice, we come into closer union with God, and come to know that only in Him do we live, and move, and have our being. Then with the Apostle can we say that "the love of God constraineth us." Let us open our hearts to the Master, let us fellowship with Him, let us consider the High Priest of our profession, what He has done for us each as individuals and what He has in store for the world. Let us strive to share the measure of the Pentacostal blessing which may be ours for the taking, but ours only if the right spirit and the right condition of heart prevail.

The willing to come after Him can be only at a certain cost. "If any man will come after Me let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me." Thus we find that the second part of our text sets forth three conditions

Self-Denial, Cross-Bearing, and Footstep-Following

God said unto Joshua, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee : I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee : Be strong and of a good courage." (Josh. 1:5, 6.) In our own strength the conditions could not be met. The cost of discipleship could not be paid. In his own strength the rich young ruler was unable to pay the price; he is only representative of us all. The lesson is given us lest we likewise fail to surrender. This young man had kept the law from his youth up, an exemplary young person, but he failed to see the fulness of the vision as many other exemplary men have failed. Of these the poet may well have spoken

"What lack you yet? A pathway, do you want;
Of noble struggle after perfect good?
A chance I give you: leave your cherished sphere
Of virtuous deeds: Sell all and follow Me.'
Think not this test a trial hard and stern,
Coldly applied; by Christ to shame his pride:
No, 'twas a genuine offer, not bestowed On many.
Men were often sent away:
Not the relinquishment of outward wealth,
The chief thing Christ required: but that the man
Set free from earthly things, should then begin
A loftier career, beside *Himself*."

Think what this offer meant. Christ **saw** in him High capabilities: His heart went out To that young man. But it was not to be; His weakness was revealed: before his eyes Rose the heroic vision, and he saw It was beyond his power. The record ends With his discomfiture. He went away A sadder, wiser man. We know no more."

But we can hope for the rich young man that he later came to see the great opportunity of service in the Master's cause. His failure was only natural to the flesh; he did not realize that the Master was testing him and that if he had willed to do His service the help would be given. He had heard enough to assure him. Contact with the Master Himself was enough for one who possessed the true qualifications. The promise of treasures in heaven from one who had authority-how could one resist the opportunity? But the price was too great. Self-denial is a difficult problem, an impossible task in one's own strength, and many to whom the call has come since have lost out because the cost was too great.

Turning Away from Self

Self-denial carries the thought of turning away from oneself, not merely the denial of those things pleasing to oneself. It means the choice between Christ and self. The setting aside the consideration of self, self-elimination absolutely and literally true, with the Master and His service first in all our thoughts. This state of mind can hardly be attained by an instantaneous transformation, but like all the virtues is a matter of growth. As one strives to eliminate self in his life, the Holy Spirit or mind of God comes more and more into the inner life, inspiring that life in all its thoughts. This in turn soon manifests itself in the outward life, and we know that such a one is denying himself, for the logical outgrowth of self-denial is service to others.

Self-denial is not a struggle with oneself constantly if the act of consecration has been sincere and complete at the beginning. With the new mind fixed upon the Master instead of the old self, it is not difficult. The yoke of Christ means service, but it means also service with Him as a yokefellow, dividing the burden, and as He Himself said, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light." How different from the yoke of the Adversary and the burden of sin, the results of which we find so abundantly about us, expressed in the suffering, sorrows, death, and the many ills to which man is heir; all of which he is desperately striving to alleviate by many means. Many of the wise and noble of the earth we find spending their talents, their very lives even, in seeking for the relief of human suffering and ills, all of which amounts to but little, for the Adversary is still the prince of the power of darkness. Man's effort, while of but little use at this time, does point to the possibility that God will bring to pass the needed relief through man himself as His agent when His due time comes and the heart of the world is changed. When He gives them a heart of flesh instead of a heart of stone, then shall He be their God and they shall be His people. Then shall He dwell with them and wipe all tears from their eyes, and "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said, These things are true and faithful." (Rev. 21:4, 5.) "Unto Thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto Thee do we give thanks: for that Thy name is near Thy wondrous works declare." - Psa. 75:1.

In this matter of self-denial it often becomes necessary to deny ourselves of things in themselves not harmful, not sinful. How often the Adversary tempts us in this way; how often the allurements of life, the naturally pleasing things entangle us, and we find them interfering with our Christian development, usurping the time and the energy in our lives-things not sinful, but interfering with spiritual growth. How these things do seem -to multiply in these days. The temptation may come

even through unprofitable discussion of "genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith." (1 Tim. 1:4.) This spirit seems to be operating among the Lord's people now very much and to the detriment of many. When we consider again the High Priest of our profession, can we refuse to drink deeply of His Spirit in order that we may fit ourselves for our part as Body-members of the Christ?

Self-indulgence and self-seeking are two forms of temptations to the Lord's people. We are prone to do the things which are easy and pleasing to the old nature, the old man, whom we have put off, but who seems so determined not to stay put off. And so comes the frequent struggle between the old and the new natures for supremacy. We know the remedy but often fail to apply it: "a closer walk with God!"

We sing these sentiments with much show of earnestness, but so easily forget. So easy to conform to law or ritual but so difficult sometimes to be sincere and truthful. So easy to forget that God looks upon the heart. So easy to forget that to obey is better than sacrifice. So easy to yield to the temptation to serve ourselves, to seek our own ends in His service, our own honor and praise perhaps coming before His glory and honor. We want the approval of men, especially of God's people. We want to know that we walk uprightly before all men; but there is a danger sometimes that this might degenerate into base selfishness. The Lord's people must be ever on guard that their conduct be above self-seeking, self-laudation. Self-denial amounts to nothing in God's sight if done to draw attention to self. It must be an unconscious emanation from a heart pure and undefiled, otherwise it is like the sacrifice of bulls and goats, the blood of which could save no man.

Every act and phase of the Christian life is futile unless inspired by a consecrated mind, and into every thought and phase Christ must enter and play the principal part. Take away His participation in our lives, and we stand as nothing and under condemnation more grave than the condemnation upon the world, for we have had the vision, we have made our choice, and to leave Christ out of our lives means that we become castaways. "There is a sin unto death," and "there is a sin not unto death." Let us avoid the sins of omission as well as those of commission. Let us keep our hearts firmly stayed upon Him from whom alone we can draw our strength. Self-denial is followed in this statement of the Master by cross-bearing

"Let Him . . . Take up His Cross"

Cross-bearing by nominal Christians is but vaguely understood. We often hear of "my cross," "our cross," etc., as applied to any trouble or difficulty, suffering, or sorrow, which the Christian may be called upon to endure. This does not seem to be the Master's understanding of the matter. We would gather from His lips that cross-bearing is a voluntary matter—"let him take up his cross." One is here his own free agent, he may if he wills, or he may not if he so wills. The ordinary ills of life come to all Christians and non-Christians alike. As the result of the fall of man, came the curse. But cross-bearing comes as the result of our Christian living, as the result of our consecration. We know there is a cost to be met. In the early days it might be martyrdom; today our cross-bearing takes on a different form and is a matter of greater refinement -- the setting aside of those things which might minister to our greater physical happiness, our greater earthly welfare; the loss of reputation, etc. The cross may be anything in our experience which may come because we serve the Lord, and so we cannot escape if we would maintain our standing. Compromising may ease the weight of the cross, a little less vigilance may make it easier, a little yielding here and there may be permissible by human reasoning, but these only lead

us farther from the way. Only a greater dependence in the days of temptation, can keep us in our proper standing in the strait and narrow way. There can be no compromise, no lessening of vigilance. The Master made the matter plain when certain of the disciples desired to sit one on His right hand and one on His left. They could not see clearly beyond an earthly kingdom. "Ye know not what ye ask," He said. "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink of?" "If any man cometh unto Me and hateth not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." These are the Master's own words. This is the cost of discipleship.

Our own particular cross seems to be the heaviest as we look at fellow Christians, but how little we know of the cross of others. And sometimes we perhaps magnify our own to such an extent that we may shut away from our vision the cross our Savior bore. Walking in the shadow of His great cross, makes the burden of our own the less. There is a poem, "The Changed Cross," which represents one who was weary in the way and felt sure that none carried so heavy a cross as she. In a dream she was led to a place where she saw many crosses of different sizes and shapes and kind. She saw one of gold and set with jewels. She seized it with joy, so sure was she that she could bear this one, only to find the burden of its weight too great. Then she saw a beautiful cross with many flowers entwined. Surely she could bear this one, but again she found it was not so, for beneath the flowers she found the thorns which made it unbearable. Finally she came to a plain wooden cross without adornment-no jewels, no flowers, but with a few words of love written thereon. This she took up and found the easiest of them all, and as she looked, she recognized her own old cross.

God knows in His infinite wisdom the cross which for us is best. We envy some perhaps who are rich, possibly theirs is the cross of gold. Some whose lives seem to run smoothly and without trouble; one whose cross seems to be entwined with flowers-we do not know the weight of one, or the hidden thorns of the other. But out of the shadow of the great cross comes our help to bear our own, and in His strength we can bear it joyfully. If we will to take up the cross, we are promised help sufficient. He overcame, He bore our sins upon His cross, and as we look and realize the magnitude of that transaction, the all-embracing scope of the work, our hearts must melt within us, our love must go out in ever-increasing streams, and we cry out with joy and happiness with the Psalmist "All my springs are in Thee." (Psa. 87:7.) While the singers and the players on instruments have not yet come, we know that the divine plan depends upon the cross born by our blessed Redeemer. All we have is in Christ. All that we are and all that we hope to be are in Him and through Him, and so we rejoice and say, "All our springs are in Thee." In Him who died and rose again and is now seated on the right hand of God, above all principalities, and all power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named.

To Him we turn as a never ending source of supply of all that we need, now and in the Age to come. Is this true? Do we find in Him all that we need, or do we go to the broken cisterns of worldly wisdom, for new light, for strength? Is He our comfort and our hope? Do we find ourselves more and more dependent upon Him, and more and more devoted to Him? O that we might at all times feel that it is only Himself in whom are all our springs. What would we do without Him? Would we exchange our knowledge of Him, or give up our relationship as joint-heirs with Him?

What a source of comfort and help in the days of trouble and sorrow! What a source of peace and blessedness in these perplexing times! Let us hold fast; let us sing "Savior more than life to me, I am clinging, clinging close to thee."

"Let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." The Master in this last clause put Himself forth as a leader, a great example a perfect man born of woman, that the world might see the magnificence of God's handiwork in its perfect state -- One who was perfect in all things without sin, without spot or blemish.

What does it mean to follow Him? Let us turn our eyes in the direction of that ancient city some nineteen centuries ago. We see our blessed Master staggering under the load of that cross; worn and weary by the three and one-half years of suffering, and we recall His utterance "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." What a sorrowful sight to those who had walked so closely with Him. Was this the invitation He had given them? Was this the fate of all who would follow Him? It was not a very enticing picture. He was literally taking, carrying His cross to the place of execution. This was cross-bearing indeed and symbolic of the requirements of all who will follow after Him. Who among them would have thought such an end possible, and yet He appeals to the will: "If any man will come after Me." The cross must be taken up and the following must be of choice deliberately and with an understanding of its requirements.

He entered into the work of redeeming men with a full understanding that it was a part of the "determinate counsel of God." He saw beyond the ignominious and shameful death; beyond the fall of man, and his need of a redeemer; on beyond and to the point of restitution of all things; and for the joy that was set before Him he endured the cross and despised the shame, fulfilling the prophetic utterance, "Lo, I come, to do Thy will, O God." "I delight to do Thy will, O my God." Such was the spirit which led Him on to Gethsemane, and the Jewish Council; the hall of Pilate and the cross, and on still to the depths of the valley of the shadow, the resurrection, and the ascension.

His true disciples show this spirit of voluntary sacrifice, and joyfully and with love, serve God, the brethren, and even the world in such measure as is possible. We must not falter. Taken bravely, joyfully, the cross is not so heavy, for we look and see

"But if Himself He come to thee, and stand
Beside thee, gazing down on thee with eyes
That smile and suffer, that will smite thy heart
With their own pity, to a passionate peace:
And reach to thee Himself the holy cup
With all its wreathen stems of passion flowers
And quivering sparkles of the ruby stars
Pallid and royal, saying 'Drink with Me.'
Wilt thou refuse? Nay, not for Paradise!"

"The Cost of Discipleship"

"Would ye be My disciples? Consider again:

Can ye follow My footsteps through trial and pain?
Can ye throw away pleasure, and glory, and fame,
And live but to honor My cause and My name?

"Can ye turn from the glitter of fashion and mirth,
And dwell like a pilgrim and stranger on earth,
Despising earth's riches, and living to bless?
Can you follow the feet of the shelterless?

"Can ye ask from your heart the forgiveness of men?
Can ye list to reproaches, nor answer again?
Can ye pray that repentance to life may be theirs
Who've watched for your falling, who've set for you snares?

Attainment of Spiritual Unity

From time to time crises arise in the history of Christian communities which result in dissension, division and a breaking of ties which the association of years has rendered very dear. The claims of opposing theologies seem often to override the spiritual perception of many footstep followers of the Master.

Such a time is surely one for deep heart-searching. There can be no impugning the sincerity of those concerned—only an inexpressible sorrow that the divergence of thought cannot be maintained within the bounds of our common fellowship as members of the Body. We must honor and respect the motives of those who are immediately affected, knowing that they are acting sincerely. And we must avoid the temptation to "take sides."

"Ha," says one, "You would, for the sake of a seeming outward unity, a 'fair shew in the flesh' gloss over the principles involved as of no account, and consider matters of faith and belief as of no importance if so be you may thereby claim a wider circle of associates."

By no means. If outward unity were all that were lost when these things happen there would be little or nothing to bemoan. External unity is dependent upon material factors such as similarity of race, temperament, outlook and the possession of that social instinct which leads men to band themselves together for the better accomplishment of their common purpose. And since any such organization or form of unity must of necessity wax old and vanish away when the factors which gave it form and color have changed, it can be no great disaster if such material unity as may exist among ourselves is shaken and disrupted when that unity, has served its purpose.

What is of greater moment and to be deplored, is the loss of spiritual unity which these events bring in their train; the tendency spiritually to disown those with whom we are not in strict theological sympathy, and in fear lest we ourselves should become contaminated, to withdraw into an exclusiveness none the less soul-deadening because of its very sincerity and insistence upon the highest of doctrinal standards. To contend for the faith, is of profound importance at this

time; to have and too hold very clearly our own understanding of the doctrines is essential; but unless we can enter into calm, dispassionate discussion and united searching for the deep things of the Word of God, in definite knowledge that the development in understanding of the Truth is progressive, and this without bitterness, animosity or bigotry, we shall never attain to the standard set before us in the Gospels and the Epistles which alone will make us in very deed heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ in the Kingdom. - *Bible Students Monthly*, London, Eng.

Letters of Encouragement

Dear Brethren in our Lord:

May joy and peace reign in our hearts through our Savior, Jesus Christ. After a period of deliberation I have finally set my heart on the Lord. It was the breaking down of the unjust teachings of the Catholic faith that finally turned my heart to Jesus. From childhood I have been drilled in the teachings of Hell, Mass, Confession, and other doctrines of the so-called Catholic faith. My father accepted what I believe is the only way on this earth-sacrificing the earthly nature and receiving the spiritual.

I have done some reading, especially Brother Russell's publications, the First Volume of Millennial Dawn. I would like to go further. Many times I come to references to Scriptures; hence I would like to have a Bible of my own. I also wish the Sixth Volume, "The New Creation." I am eighteen years of age, and in Civilian Conservation Corps. If I can be of any service to our Lord here, may He show me, and may I humbly accept in His name. Great and grand are the leadings of our heavenly Father. May we have faith in Him that all things are for our good and that we are called for a purpose. I remain,

Humbly yours in the service of Christ,

F. K. -- N. H.

Dear Brethren:

Enclosed please find \$ for "Herald renewal and the balance toward general expenses. I have no doubt whatever but that the same deep spiritual truths will continue in its pages to help build us up in the most holy faith as it always has done, and I pray that the dear Lord will continue to bless and strengthen you all as you give yourselves into His keeping.

Our little Class is meeting more regularly and I am glad to say, taking more interest in the things spoken of by our Lord in Psalm 19:18-45 and many other places. We have been studying 2 Corinthians in our Sunday and mid-week Bible study, and we have our testimony meeting on Wednesday evening. I can hardly tell' you how we have been blessed and strengthened as we meet together, eager and ready for the Lord's message. He has indeed awakened us to a sense of our blessings and privileges and we feel that He is using us more than ever before. We are rejoicing in His finished work. Praise His dear name! All the Class send loving greetings.

Your sister in Him,
M: L. -- N. S., Can.