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Things Coming to Pass

"When ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the Kingdom of God is at hand." - Luke 21:31.

ONCE MORE has a horrified world been drawn to the brink of catastrophe by the recent shaking events, but again the travail pain has passed and fear-stricken mankind has a period of respite for which grateful thanks have arisen everywhere. We quote Frederick Birchall, writing in the "New York Times"

"Sunshine after the blackest of storms had threatened. Peace after nights of bad dreams. There is the European situation as this week closes. Will the sunshine last? For a brief moment in the midst of wild alarms, the portals of heaven have seemed to open and we have seen within the pearly gates, the golden pastures of peace and plenty that vanished from our gaze a quarter of a century ago. It is either the beginning of a new era or the last glimpse vouchsafed us before a new crisis carries us over the brink to destruction and the abyss below. Which of them it is, let anybody guess, for any ordinary man's surmise is as good as that of the most expert. In this last week Providence has dealt exclusively with the unexpected. One looks back upon that nightmare now and wonders how it escaped becoming real."

The child of God, familiar with the Scripture teaching that the present world distress will eventually culminate in the death of the old order and the birth of the new "wherein dwelleth righteousness," knows also that the final phase, "the battle of Armageddon," the last dreadful spasm, cannot transpire until certain- Scripturally foretold events come to pass. The outbreak of another European war would embroil mankind in a conflict of annihilation. The means of destruction perfected as a result of the lessons learned during the World War conclusively prove this. Seemingly, the creation of death-dealing mechanisms is the all-engrossing activity of the European nations, ever accelerated by the increasing national hatreds augmented by the ambitions and plans of the dictators who have arisen in recent years. The Prophet Joel declares: "Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up; beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears; let the weak say, I am strong." (Joel 3:9, 10.) Verily this is to be the "time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation;" a time in which, as the result of 6,000 years of the reign of evil, mankind will have reached a condition so dire and desperate that but for the mercy of God "there should no flesh be saved." But the end is not yet. St. John, in vision, saw four angels holding back the four winds which, when loosed, would constitute a destructive whirlwind, bursting in fury

over the entire earth. But the command was: "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. (Rev. 7:1-3.) While this work of "sealing in their foreheads," (giving God's faithful children an intellectual appreciation of His character and Plan) has been in progress for some time, it is still going on, and is, therefore, not fully accomplished. Consequently the four winds are still being held in check, not yet permitted to blow in all their fury.

Again, the little horn of Daniel 7:24-26 -- the Papacy -- which **was** to be "consumed and destroyed to the end," is not yet fully consumed. The ten horns of the beast, which, for one hour (preferably translated "at one and the same time," namely, throughout the period of the false millennium, 539 A. D. - 1799 A. D.)* gave their power and authority to the beast, were to turn against the "woman" (Rev. 17:16) and accomplish her destruction. While this is measurably in the past, the consuming and destroying begun in 1799 is not yet complete. The ten horns themselves, together with the two-horned beast (elsewhere called the false prophet) are shown to be still in existence **after** the woman's destruction, and are themselves destroyed by the armies of heaven after the marriage of the Lamb. While the exact meaning of all these symbolical statements is not yet clear, enough is discerned to show that many important events foretold in the Book of Revelation still await the future for their complete fulfillment.

* See "The Revelation of Jesus Christ," Vol. II, page 373, published by our Institute.

The crisis through which the world has recently passed, was therefore but another of the spasms of the "creation which groans and travails in pain" . . . "waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God." (Rom. 8:19-22.) And we are now experiencing a brief peace. It is a peace for which a terrible price has been paid, in not only the cruel amputation of a small, helpless nation, but also in the tremendous increase in prestige of the dictators before whom the forces of democracy have submitted. In strong terms the former war premier of England, David Lloyd George, has called this yielding, the end of liberty, and has assailed England and France for their retreat from freedom and for permitting democracy to suffer the most humiliating defeat inflicted upon it for generations and to now lie cowering and intimidated before the dictators. Another writer, Dorothy Thompson, in the "Kansas City Star" says:

"What happened Friday is called 'Peace.' Actually it is an international Fascist victory. . . The 'Four Power Accord' is not even a diplomatic document. It is certainly not a normal treaty. It is such a fantastic piece of paper that it is difficult to describe except' as a hurriedly concocted armistice made in advance of a war to permit the occupation by German troops of a territory which by sheer threat and demonstration of force they have conquered by 'agreement.' . . . Let us not call this peace. Peace ;is not the absence of war. Peace is a positive condition-the rule of law. This peace has been established on lawlessness and can only maintain itself by further lawlessness. This peace has been established by dictatorship and can only maintain itself by further dictatorship. This peace has been established on betrayal and can only maintain itself by further betrayal. - This is peace without virtue. Therefore it is not peace but the initiation of a terrific world crisis."

Thus do statesmen and informed news correspondents realize that the present "breathing spell" is deceiving, and that portentous events still await suffering humanity. But though this present "peace" is so strongly condemned by some, others warmly sympathize with those who labored to bring even this "peace" about. Who that reads the words of Prime Minister Chamberlain in the House of Commons recently, as he defended his course at Munich, can fail to be moved by his statement of the issue as it finally presented itself, and of the Gethsemane through which he

passed? Said he: "I have been charged with cowardice, weakness, presumption and stupidity. I have been accused of bringing the country to the edge of war and have been denied the merit of snatching it back to safety. Nobody who had been through what I had to go through, day after day, faced with the thought that in the last resort it would be I, and I alone, who had to say that Yes or No which would decide the fate of millions of my countrymen, their wives and families, could readily forget it."

We quote the "St. Louis Post-Dispatch":

"England wanted peace. France wanted peace. The civilian populations of those countries saw themselves in imminent danger of bombardment by a superior German air force. They were faced with a war more dreadful than any similar experience in the history of mankind. Who can blame them, who can blame Chamberlain, for recoiling? And at Munich, let it be recalled, was heard the voice of the American President, speaking, as we believe, the overwhelming desire of the American people, calling for negotiation, negotiation, negotiation, to the end that peace might be saved.... The issue that Chamberlain faced at Munich was war or peace. It may be granted that the peace for which he cast his vote is built on an insecure foundation. None knows that better than Chamberlain. 'Let no one think because we have signed this agreement between the four Powers at Munich,' he told the Commons, 'we can afford to relax our efforts or call a halt in our armaments at this moment.' Yet peace it is, and the world today is a brighter world than if Europe resounded to the tread of marching men, and the air were filled with death-dealing planes, and the fumes of poison gas, rolling through the town and field, were tearing at the lungs of men."

From a political standpoint, the far-reaching implications of the Munich agreement are startling. The Italian papers have joyously interpreted the agreement as another victory for the totalitarian states over the democracies. But it was not only another victory. It was probably, because of the manner in which it was achieved (the threat of force, feared by the democracies, who thus revealed their -own weakness), because of 'the actual gains it registers, and because of the things it makes possible, the most far-reaching, the most complete victory for dictatorship since Mussolini came to power in the march on Rome. The future is fraught with fear for a distraught world.

But what a joyful contrast when we turn to God's Word to learn the outcome of all these things and to read God's promise of the reign of the Prince of Peace at whose bidding convulsed humanity will become still. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." - Isa. 2:2-4.

The Sacrifice of Thanksgiving

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me? . . . I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord." - Psa. 116:12, 17.

THE PSALM from which is quoted the above text was to the Israelite a very important one, for it was one of the group comprising the great "Hallel," the six Psalms from 113 to 118 inclusive. The word! "Hallel" in the Hebrew means "He hath praised." These Psalms were set apart to be sung on the occasion of their festivals, especially at the Passover celebration.

It may well have been the one which was sung by our Lord and His eleven Apostles before leaving that upper room on that last night when He gathered with them to institute the memorial of His death, for it is recorded that "when they had sung an hymn they Went out into the mount of Olives."

It is a pleasing thought that our Savior found comfort in singing the praises of our heavenly Father. As an Israelite indeed, He was faithful to all their ordinances and ceremonies, and could sincerely join the Psalmist when he gave voice to such sentiments as, "I love the Lord, because He hath heard , my voice and my supplications. Because He bath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live." (Psa. 116:1, 2.) And again, "The Lord is high above all nations, and His glory above the heavens. Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth Himself to 'behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth! He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill: that He may set him with the princes of His people." - Psa. 11:4-8.

What cause for gratitude and thanksgiving these statements of the Psalmist give to those who are prospective members of the *Body* of Christ

How May We Maintain a Thankful Attitude

In these statements beautiful thoughts are expressed, not only concerning the relationship of the Psalmist to God, but also concerning the exaltation of those who have come into covenant relationship with Him }n the Gospel Age and who maintain that relationship by continuing to call upon Him as long as they live, and continuing to offer unto Him the sacrifice of thanksgiving. In this experience is the fulfillment of the Psalmist's words "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill, that He may set him with the princes of His people." How our hearts "burn within us" as we realize the import of these sentiments sung so often by God's people of old, and yet but dimly understood by any of them except by Him who should play the all important part in raking this consummation possible.

When one contemplates the Divine Plan, or the "eternal purpose of God" as the Apostle speaks of it, how insignificant become the things which before seemed so important in life. The question then is forcefully brought home to us, "What shall I render unto the Lord?" How can we maintain that thankful attitude, and how can we best pay our vows unto the Lord? The words of the Psalmist are still as applicable as they were when he uttered them, for all things were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come. What shall we render unto Him for all our benefits

What Shall I Render?

It is not known precisely to what experience in his life the Psalmist makes reference, but it must have been a severe one, for he says, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me." In the midst of his trouble and sorrow he called upon the name of the Lord: "O Lord I beseech Thee deliver my soul." This must have been a sincere cry, for the Lord heard him, as indicated in the further expression: "Return unto thy rest, O my soul: for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. For Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling." He is here communing with his soul and endeavoring to find a fitting way of expressing his gratitude and thanksgiving.

What shall I render unto the Lord is the question of the moment, and his language here leaves the impression that he is perplexed, puzzled as to the right thing to do in return for all these benefits. He is not only thankful for the help received in this most severe trial, but he remembers that there are other benefits which he has received, and so he includes them all in his question, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits?"

On another occasion during one of those quiet hours in communion with the Lord, he gives voice to what seems to have been much in his mind. Here (Psa. 103:1-5) we may learn of the thoughts which were his when he meditated upon the benefits for which he was indebted to the Lord—a song of praise which can be appreciated to the full only by those who have made a covenant by sacrifice unto Him who is able to keep all that is committed to Him

"Bless the Lord, O my soul:
And all that is within me, bless His holy name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And forget not all His benefits:
Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;
Who healeth all thy diseases;
Who redeemeth thy life from destruction;
Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;
Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things;
So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle."

To what sublime heights does the spirit of the Psalmist rise as he gives utterance to these sentiments, for he must have been close to the Lord when he bids his soul to bless and to forget not. The Psalmist's thoughts may well be adopted by the consecrated believers of this present dispensation of grace to whom the spiritual promises have been made, although spoken by one to whom had been promised only earthly blessings. It is well for the Lord's people to draw near to Him and bid all within them to bless His holy name and forget not all His benefits. Let us in our quiet hours review these benefits on which the Psalmist delighted to meditate.

"Who Forgiveth All Thine Iniquities"

There are five thoughts here, the first three of which speak of those things associated with sin, its cause and its effects. The God whom he blesses is He who is able to forgive all his iniquities, and to the Psalmist this was a marked tribute, for he was surrounded by hosts of men who knew not

God, but who worshiped idols -- the handiwork of men themselves. But his God was the maker of the heavens and earth. He could forgive sins. Of this the Psalmist had no doubt. Therefore, he could rejoice and bid his soul and all that was within him, bless the holy name of God. Here was the deepest sense of gratitude and thanksgiving. Then too, he was given health and his life was protected from disaster. How wonderfully these "benefits" find their counterpart in the experience of the Christian! He, too, realizes the "forgiveness of iniquities." (Matt. 9:2). Since the death of Jesus and the outpouring of the Spirit, there remains "no condemnation" to them "that are in Christ Jesus." And while the promises to these are spiritual rather than physical, yet the effect of this realization of sins forgiven tends to physical health. As Brother Russell has well said:

"Few recognize the influence of the mind over the body. God has so organized our beings that pure, noble, holy thoughts in general have not only an elevating and ennobling effect upon the mental and moral constitution, but an invigorating influence upon the physical system. And, on the contrary, every unclean, ignoble, unchaste, unholy thought (as well as act) has a direct effect not only toward debasement of mind and morals, but toward the generation of seeds of disease already in the constitution of the fallen race."

Indeed, the disease is removed, displaced, by the ease, the peace of mind, and spirit of repose which is the happy portion of those who in this Age "wholly follow the Lord"! Again, while the Christian's earthly life is consecrated to death, the new life begun in him by the spirit-begetting influence of the Father is carefully guarded from danger. How often the Tempter's snares would have proved overwhelming but for this gracious protection, we can only dimly realize now. One day, when by His grace we reach, the other side, the full story will be told us, and we shall praise Him as we should. Meanwhile we know that we are "kept by power of God."

Crowned With Lovingkindness and Tender Mercies

The remaining two points in the Psalmist's song of thanksgiving show the result of coming into a heart harmony with God. In their application to the consecrated of this Age, they are realized only by faith in the redemptive work of our Lord. If he would be a disciple of Jesus he must take up his cross daily and follow Him. Then having presented his body a living sacrifice, the justified believer gradually becomes transformed by the renewing of his mind. He is thus able to appreciate the next two benefits mentioned by the Psalmist: first, "Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies"; and second, "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things: so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle."

Here the Psalmist's thoughts again soar into a realm of the highest atmosphere. He is speaking of what St. Paul terms, the fruit of the Spirit, which develops in the consecrated to a greater or lesser degree, but which exists in God in a perfect degree. The lovingkindness of God is expressed in His provision for the consecrated to have membership in the Body of Christ, whereby those who avail themselves of this grace become heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. This word, lovingkindness, is compounded from two words of somewhat similar character, but carries a higher, stronger, and more emphatic meaning than either alone, there being no single word in any language capable of expressing the Psalmist's meaning in its fullest degree.

Consider the man who has had his iniquities forgiven, whose diseases have been healed, whose life has been redeemed from destruction, and who has been crowned with lovingkindness and tender mercies. These benefits have come to him because he has come into covenant relationship with the God of the Psalmist and the heavenly Father of the consecrated. This being true, can he

do otherwise than bless the Lord and render thanks for all His benefits? Such a man has renounced the hidden things of shame, does not walk in craftiness, nor does he handle the Word of God deceitfully but by manifestation of the truth he commends himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. This man has put on the "new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him," and it is as though his youth is renewed like the eagle, for he is now able to soar to those heights which lift him above the sordid things of the flesh. He is risen with Christ and he seeks those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, his affections are on things above, not on the things on the earth. For he is dead and his life is hid with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is his life, shall appear, then shall he also appear with Him in glory. Can such a man do anything less than to offer unto God the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call upon the name of the Lord as long as he lives?

When one has passed through the veil of tears, has suffered a harrowing experience, he will, if properly exercised, consider the source of his help and seek to know how he can properly express his gratitude and thanksgiving to any who have helped him to any degree.

"Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies." "God: is love," and His mercies are always prompted by love; hence they cannot be other than tender. Mercy is sympathy in action and is one of the grandest of attributes. When exhibited by man it may not be accompanied with that tenderness that characterizes the mercies of God; but if one would be godlike he must have that love that will overflow and "delight in mercy."

I will Pay My Vows unto the Lord

The Psalmist was one who was endeavoring to live close to the Lord, and evidently communed much with Him, seeking guidance, and giving thanks for that guidance, in the affairs of life. He is found constantly voicing these sentiments in the many songs of praise' attributed to him, and in many of which are found some of the most sublime expressions ever coming from the human heart. These find their counterpart in the experiences of today. How often do These sublime thoughts come to mind as one visits ,the sick or watches by the bed of the dying, giving comfort and strength to one in need. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me." How many times this beautiful sentiment has proved strengthening in life's darkest hours! I Again, how often do we find ourselves not quite so consistent in these hours as we had thought ourselves to be. God sometimes brings us low in order to permit us to search ourselves and,' with Him, to determine whether there be any weakness in us. We may have preached to others and failed to learn the lessons ourselves. In' effect, if not in words, we may question the Apostle's statement that all things work together for good to them that love the Lord, those who are the called according to His purpose. Our experience may seem just a little different from anything which the Apostle had known, and we may have a measure of doubt as to whether or not it is included among the "all things" to which he refers.

With the sentiment of gratitude in his heart the Psalmist asks himself the question: "What shall I render unto the Lord?" And his answer is, "I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord."

The Psalmist had vowed to walk before the Lord in the land of the living. This vow unto the Lord is a comprehensive one and seems to correspond to the vow of consecration on the part of the follower of Christ. He states first that he will take the cup of salvation. If one be consecrated, he has

already laid his all upon the alter of sacrifice, he is a living sacrifice and can **offer** no more; but he can constantly **take** more in addition to those things already received, and thus develop as he becomes emptied of self and permits himself to be more and more filled with the Holy Spirit, yielding himself completely to its influence, and so constantly making progress into the likeness of his blessed Redeemer.

In Everything Give Thanks

"Be ye holy for I am holy, is the goal for which the Christian is bidden to strive. And in order to attain that state of perfection he takes the cup of salvation and drinks daily, hourly, and constantly to the utmost of his ability as a fallen creature, redeemed and consecrated unto God. His defects are covered with the robe of righteousness. One day he will be clothed in white raiment of his own Yet never will he forget his obligations to his blessed Redeemer. And what beauty of character shall be his after the final tests have been met and he has entered into the promised inheritance when this mortal shall have put on immortality and death has been swallowed up in victory." Thanks be to God which [now by faith] giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Let us therefore be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as we know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord. May we be able to drink of that cup of which He drank even though it be as bitter and ignominious as was His. As we have borne the image of the earthly, may we even so bear the image of the heavenly.

Many cups may be offered us as we go through life; but let us reverently, firmly hold the cup of salvation, remembering that we have vowed to "walk before the Lord in the land of the living." May we be instant in season and out of season to witness to His goodness, in the depths of sorrow as well as in the heights of joy, for we know that the experiences of life are working toward the perfecting of character. In whatever station, we can with the Apostle give thanks to Him who is our salvation.

"O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms."
"Bless the Lord, O my soul."

Sublime Paradoxes and Consolations

"As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making- many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." - 2 Cor 6:9, 10.

IN HIS various epistles it seemed fitting to the Apostle Paul to introduce occasionally a personal testimony of attained results in his own Christian life. He delighted to testify of the grace that had come to him, and to give glory to, God for the power given him in the discharge of his apostleship. Such personal references were never expressed in any spirit of self-exaltation, but solely to magnify the lovingkindness of God, and to impart to others some of the inspirational influences of the message he had dedicated his life to declare. Thus in his second letter to the Corinthian Church he deemed it timely to again point to his credentials as one of the "workers together with God, and this in turn led him into presenting a remarkable set of paradoxes of which the text above is a part.

What contrasts he employs as he shows seemingly impossible results from adverse circumstances. From the standpoint of faith, he sees in disabilities and disheartening trials an occasion for computing the riches which can flow out of such experiences. Well he knows that since "all things work together for good" to the child of God, these seemingly unfortunate and hindering circumstances must have associated with them good cause for thankfulness. He has learned that for the one called of God, ill shall work good beneath His control, therefore "no evil shall befall" such.

Comfort for the Tempted and Tried

Every trial the love of God permits means an overruling of His grace and power; indeed, it represents a peculiar and personal attention on His part toward the one He is proving. God by special promises has pledged Himself to come particularly close to those whom in love He chastens. It was the remembrance of these facts that enabled Paul to look upon and interpret his adverse experiences as he did, and thus turn trials into triumphs. In this view of things the Apostle reveals that he had advanced far in the school of Christ. Since it is written, "Through much tribulation ye shall enter the Kingdom," it is important that we too have learned that there is this drawing near to us on the part of the Lord when fiery trials and deep waters are appointed providences for us.

How comforting are His assurances: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Isa. 43:2; Heb. 13:5.) What can such promises mean to us if they do not convey the thought of God's personal attention when our pathway is beset by special testings and difficulties? Then, "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" becomes an assuring word, full of encouragement to such as are willing to submit themselves under the mighty but loving hand of God. Only from this standpoint can the silver lining of each dark cloud be seen, and faith be made strong to trust Him, come what may.

The Apostle could well use these paradoxical terms as respects his own reaction to trial. He was "unknown" by many; his Jewish contemporaries utterly failed to see in him "a chosen vessel" commissioned to declare the unsearchable riches of Christ. How comparatively few, -even of those enrolled among the number of believers in Christ, really knew him, and yet he could rejoice to be known of God, known and loved by grateful converts and faithful co-laborers. Truly he could say of his daily life of devotion to Christ and His people, "I die daily," and yet he lived an abundant life "by the faith of the Son of God." What chastening he endured, and yet he was not disheartened nor killed thereby. Sorrow he knew, even to many tears, yet never without strength to "rejoice in the Lord alway." He experienced poverty because of his acceptance of Christ; yea, how great a wealth of worldly honor and possession he laid aside to become a bond-slave of Jesus Christ but how rich he has been privileged to make many, even we ourselves. What treasure he has laid up in heaven in the rewards he merited and in the love and gratitude of all the redeemed from his day to our own, who shall meet him there as overcomers. As respects this world and that which it counts treasure, he could surely claim to possess "nothing," but who more than he could lay claim to possessing "all things"? He had learned that everything worth having was found in Christ, and aside from Him all else was but loss and dross.

This abounding inheritance he sums up in the familiar words, "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." - 1 Cor. 3:21-23.

Adversity Turned into Blessedness

The various epistles of the Apostle furnish us with ample testimony that he himself being rightly exercised by all his experiences and circumstances, reaped the promised afterward of blessing. It is the more important therefore that we now concern ourselves with the question of whether we have as yet learned his secret of blessedness through manifold temptations. Have we learned to let faith counterbalance the sunshine and shadows of daily experience by the same rule as Paul? Can we testify that we have discovered how to extract sweetness from otherwise bitter circumstances, and to convert stumbling-blocks into steppingstones? Have we exercised faith, patience, and submission to the divine will when our way led through deep waters and through the fires, so that those deepest shadows and darkest hours are now among memory's most hallowed resting places? The divine consolations given to us by our compassionate God and Father are ours to the degree that we learn how paradoxical the trials of life and the rewards of faith can be. And how many of God's dear children have learned through experience that it is indeed true as the poet has suggested, behind some frowning providence God often "hides a smiling face."

The "exceeding great and precious promises," which the Apostle Peter tells us have so much to do with our being made partakers of the divine nature, must never be forgotten by us. Calling to mind these unailing promises, and particularly so in times of adversity, is a source of needed comfort and strength. If Jesus, in a perfect understanding of the Father's will, and in His unimpaired powers to fulfill that will, needed to meditate much on "the joy set before Him" in the revealed purposes of God, and was thereby given assistance to "endure the cross, despising the shame," how much need there must be for us to keep the comforts and consolations of the Scriptures before our mind. And what promises and consolations God has furnished us! Surely these "things not seen" except to faith, will be effectual in turning our seeming adversities into triumph and blessedness.

In this connection we quote from an article on the subject of "Consolation" penned over forty years ago, which appeared in the Watch Tower of July 15, 1895:

"While the Word of God abounds in precepts and admonitions, in warnings and instructions, and while it lifts high the standard of moral excellence-so high that in our weak and fallen condition we cannot attain unto it, and in our efforts to do so in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation we must 'of necessity encounter the wrath of all the powers of darkness strongly entrenched in the hearts of fallen fellow-men, this same blessed Word comes to the faithful children of God in the very midst of this battle of life with sweet and refreshing :consolation.

"Consolation! What is it? Oh, you who have never enlisted under the banner of the cross, you who have never made an honest endeavor to withstand the powers of darkness, to fight the good fight of faith, to stem the current of your own fallen nature's tendencies, or to contend earnestly for truth and righteousness in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, what can you know of the sweets of divine consolation? It is the balm for wounded spirits on the battlefields of time; the cooling draught for fainting souls hard pressed by the relentless foe; the soothing caress of a loving hand upon the fevered brow of a noble contender for truth and righteousness; the gentle whisper of hope and courage when the heart and flesh begin to fail -- that is consolation, divine consolation, the only consolation that has any virtue of healing and refreshing in it. But it is reserved only for those noble souls who are faithfully bearing the burden and heat of the day; while those who listlessly drift with the current of the world's favor, and of the downward tendencies of the carnal nature, can never have an intimation of its sweetness.

Delight Thyself in the Lord

"It is to the faithful soldiers of the Lord that the above words of the Psalmist [Psa. 37] are addressed-to the persecuted, tempted and tried. Hear them, tempest-tossed and fainting souls: they were long ago penned by the Lord's Prophet for your edification -- 'Fret not thyself,' but 'trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.' How strong is the Lord, how wise and good! His promises have never failed to those that put their trust in Him. We may feel that our efforts to be good and to do good are very unproductive, and that the opposition from within and without is very strong; but it is when we are weak -- when we thus realize our own incompetency-that we may be 'strong in -the Lord and in the power of His might.' Let us endeavor to make straight paths for our feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, and then lay hold of the Lord's strength to help us pursue our course in the narrow way of difficulty and trial. The fact that we are weak and lame does not separate us from the love and power of God; for 'He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust.' He knows that we have the treasure of the new nature in earthen vessels, and therefore it is that, while we strive to overcome, we have His proffered sympathy and aid and the imputed righteousness of Christ for our all-sufficient covering. 'Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land; and verily thou shalt be fed.' Our food and shelter will be sure He will never leave nor forsake His own, but will make all things work together for good to them.

"'Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.' This delight in the Lord is a still more advanced step in the Christian life. It is a blessed thing to learn to trust in the Lord; but it is when continued trust and responsive providences have ripened into personal acquaintance and fellowship with God that we learn to delight in Him. Yes, it is when heart answers to heart, when pleading prayer brings recognized answers of peace, when the divine care and love are specially seen in the guidance of our way: in a word, when we come to feel that the

Father and the Son have so clearly manifested themselves to us that we can recognize their abiding presence with us. Ah! then it is that we begin to delight ourselves in the Lord. Then, however dark may be the way, or however heavy may be the storm that rages about us, the balm of divine consolation is always there, so that the child of God, though often troubled on every side, is not distressed; though perplexed, he is never in despair; though cast down, he is not destroyed; and though persecuted, he is never forsaken.

"To delight thus in the Lord is to have the affections centered in Him; it is to have the heart in such sympathy with righteousness and truth as to see in God the fountain of all goodness and all truth, the One altogether lovely. The Psalmist expresses such an attitude of heart when, personifying our Lord Jesus, he said, 'I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart.' And again, 'O how love I Thy law! It is my meditation all the day.' And again, when he says, 'O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is. ... Because Thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise Thee. . . . My soul shall be satisfied with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips when I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches. Because Thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice. My soul followeth hard after Thee: Thy right hand upholdeth me.' - Psa. 63.

Rest in the Lord

"Such an experience springs only from the felt consolations of divine grace in times of sore and pressing need, and however great the afflictions or the trials of faith, patience, and endurance that lead to such an acquaintance with God, there is great cause for rejoicing in them; for

'E'en sorrow touched by heaven, grows bright
With more than rapture's ray,
As darkness shows us worlds of light
We never saw by day.'

"When the heart has been thus centered in God, it is its most natural impulse to commit its way to Him. As one has beautifully expressed it:

"We'd rather walk in the dark with God
Than go alone in the light;
We'd rather walk by faith with Him
Than go alone by sight.'

"And how precious is the promise to those who thus learn to trust in the Lord and go on doing good, no matter how obstinate or fierce may be the persecution it may excite, and who delight in the Lord and confidently commit their way to His loving wisdom. Surely they shall have the desires of their heart, and no good thing will He withhold from them. Their fervent prayers avail much, and in His own good time their righteousness, however misrepresented and evil spoken of now, shall be brought forth as the light-clear, cloudless and widely manifest; and their judgment, the justice and righteousness of their hearts, as the noonday. And even while we remain here as aliens and foreigners in the enemy's land, verily we shall be fed, both with temporal bread and with the bread of heaven for our spiritual sustenance. 'Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness.'

"But the Psalmist adds one more important word of counsel to the Lord's beloved children. It is this-'Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.' Do not make the mistake of expecting Him to give you the desires of your heart at the very instant of your request; to make your path peaceful, easy, and pleasant as soon as you commit your way to Him; and at once to bring forth your righteousness as the light and your judgment as the noonday. He has not promised to do that. Time is necessary for the working out of His kind providences in our individual affairs; for God works on philosophical principles and for lasting and blessed results. So:

"If not today, be thou content, poor heart!
God's plans, like lilies pure and white, unfold;
We must not tear the close-shut leaves apart;
Time will reveal the calyxes of gold.'

"Thus waiting, under severe trial or affliction, will indeed be a blessing in disguise, if the soul be rightly exercised unto patience, endurance, faith, hope, meekness, longsuffering, kindness and true Christian fortitude. And it will be in the darkness of these waiting seasons that the blessed stars of hope will shine the brightest, and the bright Morning Star, the harbinger of day, will shed His beams into the deepest recesses of our hearts. 'They that wait upon the Lord,' says the Prophet (Isa, 40:31), 'shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.'

"Blessed promises! and, to the praise of His abounding grace, His saints of the past and present all bear ample testimony of their fulfillment."

"Who need faint while such a river
Ever flows our thirst to assuage?
Grace, which, like the Lord, the giver,
Never fails from age to age."

A Hope Both Sure and Steadfast

Let us then place our two sets of texts side by side, the texts with which we began this study, and those from the thirty-seventh Psalm around which the lengthy quotation has just been given. "By honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as', dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." (2 Cor. 6:8-10.) Then from the Psalmist, "Trust in the Lord, and do goody; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." - Psa. 37:3-7.

With such sublime paradoxes and consolations woven into the fabric of our faith, and such a God to guide our way, may we find ourselves becoming more and more possessed of the confidence so beautifully expressed by the Psalmist: "I will trust and not be afraid." Thus out of adversity we shall reap "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," and looking back praise the way He led us day by *day*.

- *Contributed.*

In the Vineyards of Grace

The Two Vineyards

"The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant." - Isa. 5:7.

FOR A very long time Jehovah planned for the planting of His typical people in their Palestinian home, there to be His vineyard and His special and peculiar care. For centuries He had been preparing this place, and preparing them to occupy it. Everything in their experience from the time God called Abram from Ur of the Chaldees, to the time when Joshua led the hosts of Israel triumphantly across the Jordan into the promised Canaan, was something intended of God to better fit them to live the typical life for which they had been separated and called.

Most beautiful for situation was that land beside the sea—a land of 'mighty rivers and lakes, towering mountains, fertile valleys and crystal brooks. Into this specially prepared place the Great Husbandman "brought a vine out of Egypt." Of this event King David sang 'long afterward: "Thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. Thou preparedest room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with it, and the boughs thereof were like goodly cedars."

In the land of promise the twelve-tribe vine of Israel "sent out her boughs unto the [Mediterranean] sea, and her branches unto the river."

When Jehovah brought His people out from among the idol-worshipping nations, He made a covenant with them, gave them laws and ordinances and placed them under the special protection of a most wonderful theocracy, the like of which never has been known. In this way He "fenced" His vineyard and hedged His people in, that they might not be corrupted by the heathen about them, and diligently sought 'to weed out from among His plants everything that would degrade or offend or make trouble.

With great carefulness Jehovah built up this typical people from the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and, before their entrance into Canaan they were highly developed under the priesthood of Moses and Aaron. Seemingly the vineyard was most promising because of both hereditary and natural advantages. Beautifully the inspired writers tell us of the planting of the vineyard, and that it was with the purest stock, "wholly a right seed," or the "vine of Sorek." - Jer. 2:20, 21.

"Now will I sing to my Well-beloved a song of my Beloved touching His vineyard," sang Isaiah. "My Well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill; and He fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine-press therein."

How wonderful the tower! Never was Israel's glory exceeded by a building more magnificent than the temple in the midst of the vineyard where Jehovah dwelt between the Cherubim and watched over His own. The wine-press signified every possible good influence which was lavished upon them for their profit and encouragement. They had the continual and effectual ministrations of the priest hood. In times of declension and apostasy God sent His prophets to warn and lead them back into the right paths. It would seem that their vats would continually have overflowed with the choicest of spiritual wine—wine of the Kingdom to come.

The Husbandman hath long Patience

With infinite patience and love the Husbandman watched and waited through the long centuries. Finally He went "down into His garden." "He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes."

His vineyard was seemingly a failure, and surely a disappointment. Perhaps the men of Judah, His "pleasant plant," may have sought a controversy with the Lord, or at least tried to defend themselves against His just anger and judgments; but once more He gave them opportunity to speak for themselves: "O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt Me and My vineyard. What could have been done more to My vineyard that I have not done in it?" But the men of Judah were silent. They could assign no reason for their idolatry and wantonness, their perverseness and manifold digressions from the paths of rectitude and holiness.

At this point listen to the lament of the Prophet as he voices the judgments of 'Jehovah: "And now, go to, I will tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be trodden down; and I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard -of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant and He looked for judgment, but 'behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry." - Isa. 5:5-7.

Could the Prophet have sung a song of greater pathos and desolation? His loyal heart was breaking with sorrow for his countrymen, for he saw them in vision scattered to the far corners of the earth smitten, crushed, persecuted, undone. It was breaking for the land of his nativity, but more than all else was Isaiah jealous for the courts of the Lord's house and the worship of Jehovah, above whom they had been commanded to love and exalt no other gods. His soul loathed the idolatry which surrounded him. Jehovah had looked for the wholesome clusters of judgment and justice among His people, and instead, oppression sprang forth in great profusion. He had expected righteousness, but there came up to His ears the cry of the wronged. Was it a hard thing he had asked? Micah replied: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." - Mic. 6:8.

The vats were empty. The fruits of judgment, righteousness, justice, mercy, humility had not been grown in the vineyard of Israel, and no wine came forth from the wild grapes and apples of Sodom. The judgments of the Lord, so long withheld, could not, now be kept back, for the "due time" had arrived when the program of God must go forward. The judgments fell in all their awful severity, and Israel was no longer known as the vineyard of Jehovah.

It was in the dateless past that He determined to have "a name in the earth" (Psa. 48:10) and when Israel, His typical people, failed to bring forth the fruits of righteousness, His program was not thwarted, but delayed. For this seeming interruption Jehovah had made ample provision in His Plan of the Ages, and continued working "all things after the counsel of His own will." - Eph. 1:11.

"I Am the True Vine"

In due time from "the men of Judah, His pleasant plant," there sprang forth "a root of Jesse" (Isa. 11:10), a "Righteous Branch" (Jer. 23:5) even the "true Vine," Jesus Christ. (John 15:1.) Again a vineyard of the Lord was established.

Having noted the care with which was planted the typical vineyard when God separated Israel from the "nations round about" which would hopelessly have swallowed her up in idolatry, it is easier to understand the immeasurable love with which the Father prepared this place for His own elect, in which they were, to "bring forth their fruit unto holiness," and be "to the praise of His glory." - Eph. 1:12.

The fallow ground was broken up, for the Vine could not be planted among thorns, nor could Jehovah consistently "rain righteousness" upon soil which was not properly tilled. As He prepared for the planting of Israel, so again He set His vineyard in "a very fruitful hill"-in "a horn, the son of oil" (Isa. 5:1) -- denoting great fertility and immense possibilities for the new planting in which the branches of the Vine were to grow and "abide."

"I am the true Vine," said Jesus. Long afterward Paul, in his inspired epistle to the Romans, explained to believers in "the new and living way" the philosophy of the union of the branch with the Vine. He used the figure of the olive tree. In the eleventh chapter he traces the calling out of the elect class-those who eventually will be able to qualify as members of the Body of Christ, who remain in the vineyard "until the end" and keep in vital union with their Lord. These elect ones came first from the Jews-the Jewish remnant; and others subsequently from the Gentiles.

Paul explains that "the original root out of which this class would grow was the 'promise of a seed' made to Abraham. He then proceeds to show how the natural descendants of Abraham, to whom the privilege was first extended, failed to grasp the true meaning of the promise, were found unfaithful and were broken off-all except a faithful remnant. He further explains how these broken branches were again replaced from amongst the Gentiles. . . . The 'root' was the Abrahamic promise; but God was looking for the 'seed of Abraham.' Jesus told the Jews of His day that they were not Abraham's children from God's viewpoint, even though they could claim natural descent from him. He sought those who had the faith and obedience of Abraham. He found some among the Jews; later He gathered from the Gentiles. Did He then plant a new tree or start a new root? No. He did the more reasonable thing. He grafted 'wild olive branches' into the original 'tame olive' which was originally intended to be all natural Israelites. These grafts from wild olives, the Apostle states, were to bear the fruit of the root-the faith and obedience of Abraham. Hence they lost their wild nature, partook of the sap of the root and trunk of the tree, bore tame olives and became absorbed into the original tree. We are told that the olive tree works 'contrary to nature' in grafting operations. In the case of apples or other fruit, the fruit always will be the fruit of the graft; but with the olives the fruit will be that of the root. Therefore the Apostle's illustration is very much to the point."

This vineyard of the Lord's planting is at once separated from the rest of the world and its pollution in a most peculiar sense. It has been taken out from among the "former things." Those who have been planted and established in this garden of grace have heeded the call to come out from among the enemies of the Lord who show so plainly that they do not love Him nor sympathize with nor appreciate the sacrifice which He made for them. They have found how impossible it is to have the Spirit of Christ and still have fellowship with His opponents, and are

separated from them in the sense of no longer having fellowship and communion with them upon any common ground. There is no common ground, for the world does not love the truth nor understand the things of the Spirit; but seeks to break down the protecting walls which surround the vineyard and entice those "in Christ" from the way which leads to the reward of "the prize of, the high calling of God." - Phil. 3:14.

All along down through the Gospel Age the Great Husbandman has been selecting His own and calling them into the vineyard. As He has done so He has fenced them in with the laws and ordinances of . pure grace; and yet has He given them the fullest possible liberty in Christ Jesus. He has hedged them about in every possible way that they might not wander from the confines of the vineyard or fail to follow "in His steps." The sweet influences of the Holy Spirit, the divine Word, the love of co-laborers, the "ministering spirits," experiences of joy and sorrow and all means of grace, combine in the wine-press or vat into which the juice of the fruit must run, for "it is the crushed olive that yields the oil, the pressed grape that gives forth the wine. It is the broken and contrite heart that is", most rich in holiness and fragrant in grace." - Psa. 51:17.

"From vintages of sorrow
Are deepest joys distilled;
And the cup outstretched for healing
Is oft at Marah filled."

Let not the Christian heart shrink from this separation from the world. It is not a painful process, but rather, joyous and satisfying. Are we not separated "**unto Him?**" Is He not the "fairest of ten thousand fair"? We shall find in the vineyard only those choice, spirits with whom we shall be able to commune. It will not be a crowded place in these days. There will be ample room for the use of all the talents and graces, and the exercise of all the energies we possess. It is only the humble ones who can bear the discipline and pruning. But oh, the joy of those who are "rightly exercised thereby."

From season to season it will be discovered that there is always something more to be done. The branches never can cease to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. 3:18.) There always will be more fruit to be borne, and the quality must continually be improved. The fact that the Husbandman is using us and constantly showing us through His Word some greater excellence to be attained, proves the vineyard and its work are truly His and that He approves the service we can give.

Let our chief concern be about the "fixed and indisputable conditions of discipleship that must be appreciated and conformed to by all who will pass full approval at the hands of Him who is 'no respecter of persons.' These conditions remain inflexible and involve discipline, sacrifice, and full surrender." The vineyard privileges are too sacred, and the responsibilities far too great to be undertaken by those of frivolous mind and unregenerate heart. But once the decision is made, "let not your heart be troubled," but "have faith in God." We are to sing, "A vineyard of red wine." The promise is: "I the Lord do keep it." And because He is keeping it He is keeping us. "Our Beloved has gone down into His garden," and we know that for all He has given us grace to undertake, He will give us grace to perform; that nothing shall hurt nor make us afraid so long as we remain within this holy enclosure. This is the place of God's love, and the Holy Spirit broods over His vineyard and waits to baptize every heart in the dews of divine grace.

"Awake, O north wind and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits." - Cant. 4:16.
- *Contributed.*

Songs of the Pilgrims **A Meditation in Four Parts on Psalms 120, 121, and 122**

Part II - Psalm 120

"Kept by the power of God through faith." - 1 Pet. 1:5.

AS WE begin our study of the first of the three Psalms, namely, Psalm 120, we are likely to be disappointed; for the Psalm seems to be almost wholly taken up with a bitter denunciation of the tongue, that little, but unruly member, which setteth the whole realm of nature on fire, and is itself set on fire of Gehenna. And we are likely to ask: "What has a song about lying lips and the fate of slanderers, to do with a joyful pilgrimage? How did **this** Psalm ever find its way into this little collection of sacred songs to be sung in connection with a trip to the Holy City? But as we grow more familiar with it, and ponder its teachings, we believe we shall see that these pilgrims were guided by a spirit of wisdom in taking this prayer against lying lips on their lips as they started on their pilgrimage.

"To the Lord do I cry when I am in distress,
And He heareth me.
O Lord, deliver my soul from lying lips,
From the guileful tongue.

"What shall He give to thee, and what more shall
He give to thee
Thou guileful tongue?
Sharpened arrows of the Mighty One,
With coals of broom.

"Woe is me that I have to sojourn in Mesech,
That I have to dwell beside the tents of Kedar !

"Too long hath my soul dwelt
With them that hate peace.
As for me, I am for peace;
Put when I speak, they are for war."

Is This Song out of Place?

The song opens with a general expression of trust in God as hearing prayer, and saving those who call on Him out of all their distresses. "In my distress I cried unto Jehovah and He answered me." No opening could be more appropriate than this. It is thus that we, through our Lord Jesus Christ, enter the presence of the Divine Majesty. By expressing our trust in Him we deepen and confirm it and encourage ourselves to ask the help or grace we need. It is only in the next verse that the special topic of the Psalm is introduced; and it is from this point onwards that the Psalm seems, but only seems, inappropriate to the occasion. Planting himself on his habit of crying unto God in his distresses, and on the assurance confirmed by long experience that when he cries God hears

him, the Psalmist ejaculates: "Deliver my soul, O Jehovah, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue."

This, then, is the special distress of the moment. He is aspersed by the bitter waters of calumny; he is bitten and torn and infected by that unruly pest which no man bath tamed nor can tame, which is full of deadly poison.

Whatsoever a Man Soweth

In the fever and indignation of his spirit he demands what is to be the doom of the tongue, the guileful tongue, which has pierced and burned him to the quick. "What shall be given unto thee, thou deceitful tongue?" he asks. "What and what more?" -- the very form of his question indicating that no single doom, no light judgment, will content him. The inward oracle responds to his indignant demand, as in the next verse we read "Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper."

What a depth of meaning is in that reply! Jeremiah tells us that the tongue is an arrow shot out (Jer. 9:8), and here the Psalmist is told that it shall itself be shot through with sharpened arrows of the mighty, sharpened arrows as from a hero's bow. Again, St. James tells us that the tongue is a fire (James 3:6), and here the Psalmist is told that it shall itself be devoured by fire -- a fire, moreover, of coals of juniper, which retain their heat for an incredibly long time. In short, the verse gives a poetic expression to that sacred law of retribution which pervades the Scriptures. Men are to receive according to their deeds. Those whose lying lips shoot out arrows of calumny shall be shot through with arrows; those whose guileful tongue kindles a blackening fire on their neighbors, shall themselves be consumed with fire. It is the old law -- old, but never out of date, that as men do, so it shall be done unto them; that as they sow, so shall they also reap.

Even this terrible retribution hardly contents the Psalmist. The mills of God grind too slowly, he thinks, though they grind exceeding small. The divine judgments tarry before they come. In verse 6 he gives expression to this emotion. "My soul hath long [too long is the sense here] dwelt with them that hate peace. O that the arrowy lips were at **once** transfixed! O that the burning tongue were **at once** consumed in the flame itself hath kindled!" Doubtless the doom will fall, but meantime what has he not to suffer and to expect from the malice of these evil men? Hence he sighs out in verse 5: "Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell among the tents of Kedar." He dwells among a people of unclean lips and rancorous tongues, a people whom he can compare only to a barbarous tribe which haunted the Caucasus, and to one of the Arabian hordes which roamed through the desert-these, Mesech and Kedar, being the express types of fierce and implacable cruelty. And the poet selects them, one on the north and the other on the south to indicate, presumably, that he was encompassed by men whose false, cruel tongues, were as fierce and implacable as the fiercest (barbarians known to Israel. Too long has he had to dwell among these haters of peace. When will their just doom fall on them He is for peace; he longs for it, and pursues it; but they are everlastingly disposed to quarrel with him. If he so much as opens his mouth, let him say what he will, they declare war against him. They are determined to quarrel with him; and they find new cause of offense in his words even when he speaks most peacefully to them.

Now that this is a graphic and telling sketch of a man smarting under the whips and spurs of malignant tongues we shall probably admit. That he should entreat God to deliver him out of so deep a distress and wonder in his prayer that the God who had always been so prompt with His

help should be so tardy in granting him this deliverance; that he should anticipate, with stern exultation, the doom that would fall on his adversaries when his prayer **was** answered, and mourn that it should be so slow to fall-while all this falls very far short of what we would expect of a footstep follower of Jesus in this Gospel Age, it accords very well with our sense of what a pious Hebrew, placed in conditions so unhappy would be likely to feel. And yet we cannot but ask: But why was this Psalm included in the "Pilgrim Songs"? In what sense would it accord with and express the moods of men who were starting from their distant homes to travel up to Jerusalem, that they might spend their annual holy day in the temple? On the surface it does not seem appropriate to the occasion. Is there anything in it which as yet we have overlooked, that would make it appropriate?

Let Your Speech be Always with Grace

To reach the answer to this question we have but to recall that this song was commonly sung at the commencement of their journey, as they bade farewell to home. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that half the miseries of human life spring from the reckless and malignant use of the tongue. And these wicked tongues generally wag fastest behind a man's back, and amid the excitements of social fellowships. We judge these sins of the tongue all too lightly until we ourselves are injured by them. Yet, as soon as we consider, we see that it is from the bitter waters of this fountain, that most of our miseries flow; that the world would be a changed world-yea, that the Church would be a changed Church, if none but true and kind words were spoken in it. And, the Hebrews were a proud, reserved race, very jealous of their reputation, very

conscious of the stains which lying lips might bring upon it. As they left their homes for days or weeks together, would they not feel that they left their reputation at the mercy of their neighbors; that in their absence, and behind their backs, words might be spoken, false words, the ill effects of which they could never undo? Would they not also feel that in the gossip of the caravan as it journeyed from station to station, they themselves might be tempted to speak unadvisedly, bitterly, untruly, with their lips-might yield to the temptation, and say words they would rue for many a day to come? Was it not well then, that they should commence their journey with a prayer that they might be delivered from lying lips and guileful tongues? And was it not well also that they should strengthen themselves in the love of the truth by recalling the doom which awaited the lips which were as arrows, and the tongue that burned like a fire? The Psalm may have been composed for a special occasion of which we have lost all trace; but no man who knows the weakness of the human heart, and the miseries which come of false and malicious speech will long wonder why it was adopted for general use.

God of Peace, Grant Us Thy Peace

Consider, too, the passionate longing for peace which breathes through the closing verses of the Psalm, and how that makes it a song, not for a day, but for all time. Think what man's common life is like; how full of fret and care and strife; what a babble of conflicting voices from within and without are forever falling on his ear! In the market, in the factory, in the office, what rivalries, what unethical methods! In politics, what differences of thought and opinion, what contradictory claims, what bitter enmities! In the home, even, what care and sorrow, what disappointment of reasonable hopes, what selfishness too often prevails! Is it any marvel that a Hebrew with a deep longing for peace, should cry as he started for the temple: "Let me get out of all that, at least for a time. Let me be quit of this fever and strain, free from the vain turbulence

and conflicting noises of the world. Let me rest and be refreshed in the sacred asylum and sanctuary of the God of peace. God of peace, grant me Thy peace, as I worship, in Thy presence, and let me find a bettered world when I come back to it, or, at least, let me bring a bettered and a more patient heart to its duties and its strifes."

The prayer of our Psalm, thus read, is surely not proper to the Hebrew time alone, or to any certain time alone, but to all time and to all generations. Cannot **we** sympathize with it? Are our wills never chafed by collision with other wills, or even with their own contending volitions? Do **we** never grow sick of the incessant and conflicting claims which are urged upon us from every side? never grow weary of the noise and turmoil and confusions of life? Does it not at times seem to us as though all lips were lying lips, and every tongue a guileful tongue, even our **own**, which will not express, which **we** cannot tutor to express, what is in our heart; which makes us appear hard when our hearts are full of tenderness and compassion, and contentious when we long for peace, so that we are misunderstood by our closest friend and belied by our own words? Surely we, too, know what it is to groan under the heavy and weary weight of this confusion and distress and to cry to God: "Hide us in the secret of Thy pavilion from this incessant strife of tongues." When we come together in our ecclesias week by week, to worship God, when we meet in the mid-week for our Bible studies and prayer meetings, do we not do so in the hope, nay, in the confident-expectation, that we shall find God in the midst of us, and that in His presence and in that of His dear Son we shall find rest; that we may be lifted, if only for an hour, above the tumult and the strife; and that, as we return to the duties of our secular lives, we may carry back with us a strain of music -at least some faint echo of the melodies of spirit which have been ours-to which our feet may move with a more steadfast and tranquil obedience than hitherto?

God of peace, grant us Thy peace, that our restless hearts may rest in Thee. Amen.

Messages of Encouragement

Dear Brethren in the Lord:

You will find enclosed one dollar for another year's subscription to the "Herald." The Lord continues to bless and supply the needed strength for His people through various ministrations, and in this we find the regular visits of the "Herald" comforting and helpful. Various phases of God's truth continually brought to our attention give strength and courage, stimulating faith and greater activity in the witness of the glorious message of truth. May you ever seek to honor the Lord's Name and His Cause as daily you serve Him and His people. The dear Lord bless you abundantly and find you worthy of His love and favors.

With kind Christian love and best wishes in the Lord,
Yours in Kingdom Joys,
C. H. G. -- Ind.

Dear Brethren:

Greetings of love in the Lord. The "Herald" came this morning. Many thanks for past blessings. May I ask you please to renew the "Herald," as I am one of the Lord's poor... I am unable to attend meetings, so I look forward to the "Herald" each month with joy, and this month seems to excel all others. The article on "Love to the Uttermost" I have read and reread; in fact, it is one big blessing to me. I do thank our heavenly Father for providing such food to sustain us in this world of unrest.

With many thanks, and may God bless and keep you all in His love.
Mrs. A. H. E. -- Eng.

Dear Brethren of the "Herald"

I have for several months now received a copy of the "Herald," which I desire to thank you for. They have come at a time when I have most needed them. I always knew I could have the "Herald" free, but I did not like to ask for it. Owing to an ailing body and continued unemployment, I am unable to send a subscription; however, the "Herald" has come as an unexpected blessing. I have the Volumes of our dear Brother Russell, and my Bible, which satisfy my wants, but the "Herald" seems to me like a tonic. It has cheered me, and comforted me when I most needed it, I have thanked God for those responsible for its publication. How good it is to know that our dear Master has provided for His children in this way. The truth satisfies as nothing else can. I thank God for the day "He brought me out of darkness into His marvelous light." What a hope is ours! What stupendous and colossal prospects are, before us! "Happy Zion, what a favored lot is thine!"

May the Lord continue to bless you in your labors and sacrifices.
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
J. B. S. -- Eng.

Dear Brethren:

In reply to your letter re the "Herald": I am sorry I have been unable to send in a subscription, but work has, been so scarce lately and I have been in very poor health for a long time. I do appreciate all your kindness in sending me the "Herald." It has been a great help to me and I have always found that it contains nothing but the truth on every point of the Christian life. My only worry is that I find myself unable to live up to its teaching. Now as the time seems to be drawing to a close and we consider what manner of persons we should be, I feel that I have failed in such a lot of things; but I do thank God every day that he has allowed me to see the light as it is. It makes life worth living to know that although sorrow may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning, and that God still cares for the poor fallen world. . . .

I am sending price for a half year, and by that time I hope I will be able to continue with my subscription. May God bless all your efforts in His work.

Yours in the one hope,
Mrs. E. W. -- Ire.

Dear Sir:

I was lent one of your pamphlets entitled, "What is the Soul?" I read it diligently and was greatly enlightened regarding the Truth, and now it is my sincere wish to continue in this light as is revealed- by your further writings, and become consecrated as, are the other brothers here. I have ever been in search of the truth. Now the time has come when I should embrace it with all my heart, and this I am resolved to do.

I most sincerely thank you for the privileges granted to-the Truth seeker of Jehovah's plans and purposes for mankind as shown in your pamphlet. As it is my ardent wish to continue my study, I would like to have a copy of "What Say -the Scriptures about Hell," and all your free literature. I should also like to have the interesting and instructive work entitled, "The Divine Plan of the Ages." I am enclosing the amount.. Thanking you in anticipation,

Yours most respectfully,
S. R. -- B, W. I.