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"Many Infallible Proofs"

No. 1

A short series of meditations, both devotional and doctrinal, on "Jesus and the Resurrection."

"The Lord is risen indeed." - Luke 24:34.

THE STORY of our Lord's resurrection is one of exquisite pathos and beauty. His crucifixion had created despair-had smitten the Shepherd and scattered the sheep. In loving secrecy and weeping silence the faithful few had removed the body from the cross and laid it in the new tomb of Joseph. The great feast came, and while Jerusalem kept holy-day, the disciples had to bear, as best they might, their bitter shame and ruined hopes. But the women could not forget the marred visage, now rigid in death, but once so expressive of holy and beautiful life, and with characteristic devotion, waited to seize the earliest moment to look upon it once more before the effacing fingers of decay had swept the lines of its lingering beauty, and in the little ministrations of tender regretful affection at once express and relieve the sorrow that burdened their hearts. So, in the dim dawn of the morning after the sabbath, they stole to the tomb, only to find in it no buried Lord. **The thought of a resurrection did not occur to them;** they thought only that the grave had been rifled. One of them, Mary of Magdala, fled, in an anguished woman's way, blind to everything but her awful loss, crying: "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." But the angels within the tomb, and the Lord without, made the tear-blinded women awake to the strange glad truth: "He is risen, as He said."

Begotten Again unto a Hope of Life by His Resurrection

Before this truth was brought home to them they were in despair. Their hopes were buried in His grave. They had trusted in Jesus, and had entertained high hopes, but now, since Jesus had died, they were sad, their hopes having withered. How different with them when the fact of His resurrection was made known to them! What joy displaced their dejection! It became true of them then, as it has of us who have believed since-they were, and we have been, begotten again unto a hope of life, by His resurrection. Because He lives we have grounds for hoping that we shall live also. In His resurrection lies our assurance.

It is an interesting study to trace in the Gospel narratives and in the Epistles, the harmony which obtains in the various references to the appearances of our Lord. Matthew, Mark and Luke, Peter, John and Paul all make mention of His resurrection. Each account is different, depending upon the point of view of the writer, but they are unanimous in affirming the fundamental fact that Jesus did indeed rise from the dead. Moreover it is not difficult to combine all these various appearances now distributed amongst the Gospel writers and in the Epistles, and arrange them into one complete and connected picture.. By so doing we perceive that our Lord's first work was that of consoling and encouraging. To Mary Magdalene and the other women He first appeared, turning their sorrow into joy. This was early in the morning on the very day He arose. That same day, in the afternoon, those two downcast disciples who were on their way to Emmaus found their hearts burning within them as a Stranger talked with them and finally revealed Himself as their Lord. Unable to contain themselves, although the hour was late, they hastened back to Jerusalem to tell the good news. But the Lord was traveling faster than they knew. Before they got there He had appeared to another; doubtless before He had appeared to themselves, even. There was one of His disciples whose heart was breaking-one who in an evil moment had denied His Lord. What passed 'between our Lord and Peter we do not know; however, we who are in any measure acquainted with Jesus and know something of His grace can well understand the peace and comfort which possessed Peter after that meeting. At all events, Peter had not been slow to tell the good news, for when the Emmaus disciples came breathlessly with their story they were told: "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon." Then, once again, in the late evening of that wonderful resurrection day, while they were rehearsing their own experiences to the Apostles, and how Jesus had been known of them by the old familiar habit of His, of first blessing and then breaking the bread, He once more appeared in their midst, saying, "Peace be unto you."

That Glad Resurrection Day

On the very day of His resurrection, then, first to the women, then to Peter, next to the Emmaus disciples, lastly to the Eleven -- four times in all -- Jesus appeared, each time bringing a sense of peace and comfort, hope and joy. What a day to be remembered for all time!

A week later He appeared to the disciples again, this time for the special benefit of Thomas, who had been absent on the previous occasion, and who had doubted.

Some time later, just when we may not know precisely, Jesus appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, no doubt taking His last leave of the collective Church then. His next appearance seems to have been to James, His "brother," or "kinsman," as the word more exactly means. This appearance is mentioned by St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians, although it is not mentioned elsewhere in the Scriptures. St. Paul, we know, had become personally acquainted with James at Jerusalem, and no doubt learned about this appearance of Jesus from James himself.

Still another appearance to His disciples is recounted 'by the Apostle John, in the last chapter of his Gospel. Seven of the disciples had gone fishing. Perhaps they had grown weary with waiting for the Lord to manifest Himself again. We do not know. At all events they had toiled all night and caught nothing. And, it will be remembered, Jesus revealed Himself to them by telling them where to cast their net to secure a big catch of fish. Finally He took His last leave of them, just before His ascension, leading them out as far as Bethany, appointing them to be His witnesses -- witnesses not only of all the wondrous things He had done and taught in their midst during His ministry; witnesses not only of the fact that He had been crucified and buried; but witnesses especially of His resurrection.

Have I Not Seen Jesus Christ Our Lord?

And yet once more, in order that he, too, might qualify as a witness, Paul was given a glimpse of the resurrected Lord in that never-to-be-forgotten journey on the Damascus road.

St. Paul never forgot this commission. In all his Epistles he speaks of the resurrection of Christ. And when, at the close of his life, the Apostle writes to his son in the faith, Timothy, he reiterates the matter in these words: "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead, according to my Gospel. But while he mentions the resurrection in all his Epistles, there is one Epistle in which he undertakes to expound the matter in great detail. It is his first letter to the Corinthians. There, in the fifteenth chapter, he unfolds the subject at length, affirming his faith, first, in the resurrection of Jesus; second, in that of the world of mankind as a whole; and third (third in point of mention, though second in order of accomplishment), in that of the Church. Most of the discussion we hope to present in the remainder of this series of meditations will be drawn from this heaven-sent exposition by "our beloved brother" Paul. However, for this meditation let us content ourselves with reviewing the ground already covered.

How Firm a Foundation is Laid for Our Faith!

The doctrine of the resurrection is so fundamental to our faith that all Christians should be thoroughly established therein -- "able to give a reason" for their own hope, and their hopes on behalf of others. Junior students of the Scriptures, especially, and all newly consecrated ones, are urged to become very familiar with all the Bible has to say on this most important subject; while those who have been long in the way will, if they join us in these meditations, experience once again the comfort to be derived from a consideration of "these words." (1 Thess. 4:18.) For example, in the previous paragraphs we have listed all the recorded appearances of our Lord. Let each ask himself the question: Do I know how many there were? To whom they were vouchsafed? In what order they occurred? Where they took place? What the total period of time was during which they all happened? -- all, that is to say, except that to Paul. To get the most out of this first meditation the reader will do well to trace in his own Bible the ten appearances mentioned, and to prayerfully ponder the related contexts of each. Those who do so for the first time will be astonished to find how firm a foundation is laid for their faith; that to the Apostles our Lord showed Himself alive after His passion by "many infallible proofs, being seen of them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." - Acts 1:3.

Our Lord Showed Himself Alive

To assist the student to accomplish, with the minimum effort, the searching of the Scriptures suggested in the previous paragraph we submit the following brief summary:

Appearance No. 1.

To whom-Mary Magdalene and the other women.

Place-At the sepulcher, Jerusalem.

Time-Resurrection Day, early morning.

Scripture-Matt. 28:9; Mark 16:9; John 20:1-18.

Appearance No. 2.

To whom-Peter.

Place-Secret meeting.

Time-Resurrection Day, during daytime.

Scripture-Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5.

Appearance No. 3.

To whom-Cleopas and another.
Place-On road to Emmaus.
Time-Resurrection Day, towards evening.
Scripture-Mark 16:12; Luke 24:13-35.

Appearance No. 4.

To whom-Ten Apostles and others (Thomas absent).
Place-Jerusalem.
Time-Resurrection Day, evening.
Scripture-Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36; John 20:19; 1 Cor. 15:5.

Appearance No. 5.

To whom-Thomas and the rest.
Place-Jerusalem (most probably the same place and circumstances as in appearance No. 4).
Time-The first day of the next week.
Scripture-John 20:26-29.

Appearance No. 6.

To whom-The seven.
Place-By the Sea of Tiberias.
Time-Uncertain (This was the third appearance to the "disciples"-the previous two being appearances Nos. 4 and 5).
Scripture-John 21:14.

Appearance No. 7.

To whom-The Eleven in the midst of five hundred brethren.
Note: Matthew mentions only those who were receiving the apostolic commission.
Place-Galilee.
Time-Uncertain.
Scripture-Matt. 28:16; Mark 16:7; 1 Cor. 15:6.

Appearance No. 8.

To whom-James.
Place-Uncertain (Paul probably learned about this appearance from James himself).
Time-Uncertain.
Scripture-1 Cor. 15:7.

Appearance No. 9.

To whom-The Eleven.
Place-Bethany.
Time-Ascension Day (at the close of forty days).
Scripture-Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:6-9; 1 Cor. 15:7.

Appearance No. 10.

To whom-Saul (afterwards called Paul).

Place-On the Damascus road.

Time-Some time after the Ascension.

Scripture-Acts 9:5; 1 Cor. 15:8.

"This Jesus Hath God Raised Up"

It is strengthening, too, to faith and consecration, to trace in the Acts of the Apostles how our Lord's chosen "witnesses,"-witnesses of His resurrection-(John 15:27; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8, 22) -- proceeded to carry out their commission. Our Lord had said: "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." But first they were to receive "power." "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem," was His word, "until ye be endued with power from on High." (Luke 24:49.) Accordingly we find them waiting at Jerusalem in prayer and supplication (Acts 1:14), until they had received the promise of the Father. Then commenced the work of witnessing, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:4.) One cannot but be impressed with the prominence given to the "resurrection of Jesus" in this, their first witness given under the guidance and in the power of the Holy Spirit:

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth . . . ~by wicked hands have crucified .and slain; **whom God raised up**, having loosed the pains ["grip," Fenton] of death; because it was not possible that He should be holden of it." - Acts 2:22-24.

"**This Jesus hath God raised up**, whereof we all are witnesses." - Acts 2:32.

"They taught the people, and **preached through** Jesus the resurrection from the dead." - Acts 4:2.

"Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, **whom God raised from the dead**, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole." - Acts 4:10.

"**The God of our fathers raised up Jesus**, whom ye slew." - Acts 5:30.

Thus it was that at Jerusalem "with great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all." - Acts 4:33.

"I know that my Redeemer lives;
What joy the blest assurance gives!
He lives, He lives, who once was dead;
He lives, my everlasting Head!

"He lives, to bless me with His love;
He lives, who bought me with His blood;
He lives, my hungry soul to feed;
He lives, my help in time of need.

"He lives, and grants me daily strength;
Through Him I soon shall conquer death;
Then all His glories I'll declare,
That all the world His life may share."

My Vows Unto the Lord

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call up on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people." - Psa. 116:12-14

FIRST of all let us note that this is a very **personal** matter: "What shall I render." The Psalmist here through inspiration speaks for **me**. It is my problem that he sets me to thinking about. And this first thought contains a lesson which, if I will but learn it, will be exceedingly profitable to me. To impress this lesson the writer will continue this article to the end in the first person, making personal application of each lesson. Very much of the discussion which takes place among Christians, even among Bible Students, concerning the **practical walk** of the Christian life, fails to profit us much because we apply it to the **other** brother or sister instead of to **ourself**. It is only as I take these things we get from the Scripture and apply them to **myself** that they are going to profit **me**. The Word says to "work out your **own** salvation with fear and trembling" -not your brother's salvation. I am to share with my brother all the good things I see in the Word, I am to impart freely to him all the knowledge I gain concerning God's plans and purposes and methods, His desires concerning His children; but God places a special duty on me to take of His Word and apply it to **myself** that I may be a laborer together with Him. Therefore, whenever I read an admonition of Scripture, or hear a discourse, or a testimony, let me learn to apply its lessons chiefly to **myself**, remembering that it is not to me but to his own Master that my brother standeth or falleth.

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" The statement implies that I have been the recipient of **many** benefits at the hands of the Lord. And as I examine my life I find that I can say again with the Psalmist (Psa. 40:5-8): "Many, O Lord my God, are Thy wonderful works which Thou hast done, and Thy thoughts which are to usward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto Thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered." And again, (Psa. 68:19): "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation." Daily His goodness has followed me through the years that are past, daily His watch-care is still over me, and daily is His love still manifested, loading me with benefits, as I shall see if I but have faith to **know** that He is causing all His providences to work together for my welfare as a New Creature. And the recognition of these facts, if I have a proper sense of things, brings forth in my heart a sense of gratitude, causing me to say, **What shall I** render unto the Lord?

What was it that transpired in my life that brought me to this state of mind? For I was not always thus. Let us permit the poet to tell of --

"When I Met the Master"

I had walked life's way with an easy tread;
Had followed where pleasure and comfort led;
Until one day, in a quiet place,
I met the Master, face to face.

"With station, power, and wealth for my goal,
With food for my body, but none for my soul,
I had entered to win in life's swift race,
When I met the Master, face to face.

"I had built my castles, had reared them high,
With their turrets had touched the dome of the sky;
I had vowed to rule with an iron mace,
When I met the Master, face to face.

"I met Him, and knew Him, and blushed to see
That His eyes, full of pity, were fixed on me.
Then I faltered, and fell at His feet that day,
While my castles dissolved, and melted a' ay!

"Melted away; and in their place
Naught could I see but the Master's face.
Then I cried aloud, O make me meet
To follow the steps of Thy wounded feet!

"He smiled, and took me by the hand.
Now life is glorious, sweet, and grand,
E'en since one day, in a quiet place,
I met the Master face to face."

As I look back over the past and review my occasion for gratitude, I think of that time when I was in the condition which the Apostle describes as "having no hope, and without God in the world." But God, in His loving mercy, brought home to me a sense of the unprofitableness and the unhappiness of sin, of my lost condition in His sight, and so aroused in me a desire to seek His mercy in the forgiveness *of* my sins, to be cleansed from the defilements of the flesh, and made acceptable in His sight, that I might serve Him. He made me to realize that an attitude of loving service toward Him is the only proper attitude of the created being toward his Creator.

And when over a period of years I had demonstrated, although in faltering manner, the sincerity of my **desire** to serve Him, He opened to me a vision of the privilege of consecration, of presenting my body a living sacrifice, made holy and acceptable by justification through faith in Christ Jesus. (Rom. 12:1.) After taking time to reflect upon the importance of this step, counting the cost, as Jesus admonished, the decision was reached, my vows unto the Lord were made, and the sacrifice was laid upon the altar, there to be maintained until it shall have been entirely consumed, when this feeble life shall end. Such are the vows referred to by the Psalmist, vows to crucify the old nature, that self-will shall no more be recognized when it conflicts with the will of God.

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people."

By taking the cup of salvation we understand the Psalmist to mean that whatever experiences the Lord might consider necessary for him he would joyfully accept. The attitude of our dear Master was, "The cup which My Father hath poured, shall I not drink it?" And we are privileged to follow in His steps, for to His disciples He said, "Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I shall drink of." Our Heavenly Father has made a provision for those who have made a full surrender of themselves to Him. The experiences which He has arranged for them constitute the cup of salvation. And in accepting this cup from the Lord we are accepting all the experiences which

come to us in His providence, whatever they may be, whether of joy or sorrow, of pain or pleasure.

The words of Jesus, "Shall I not drink it?", should be the language of our hearts, for He supervises all our experiences; it is He who, as antitypical High Priest, is offering that sacrifice we have laid upon His altar. Therefore, joyfully will I "take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord," for grace to help in every time of need.

Yes, I must call upon Him for grace, for I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing, and that only by His **grace**, that is, the divine influence acting within my heart to regenerate, sanctify, and keep it, shall I be able to walk pleasing to Him. But I find that His grace is sufficient for me, for His strength is made perfect, or more accurately, the perfection of His strength is made manifest, in my weakness. If I feel that I am strong in my own strength, I shall strive in that strength, and shall accomplish nothing, for His grace will not then be able to work in me. But when I realize my own weakness, and rely only upon the strength of **His grace**, when I realize that I am **weak**, then shall I be strong indeed, through His grace. And so I find His promise (2 Cor. 9:8), is **just** what I need: "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all circumstances, may abound to every good work." There is, then, no **necessity** that I should ever fail to glorify Him. Continually, then, must I call upon Him for grace to help.

"I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people." I will keep my sacrifice upon the altar; for "whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake shall find it." (Matt. 16:25.) **Now** is the acceptable time, **now** is the day of salvation. **Now** is the time sacrifices are to be offered; and he who having made vows of consecration puts off the offering of his sacrifice, may find when he is ready to offer it, that the time for those sacrifices is past; may find himself without the oil in his lamp when the bridegroom is ready to go in to the marriage and shut the door. For certain it is that the time is fast approaching when some will be compelled in sorrow to say, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." Therefore let me **now** joyfully fulfill my vows, in the **presence** of all His people, that is, while they are still present, and before they go in with Him to the marriage.

Seeing that a night cometh wherein no man can work, I should be grateful for any and all practical suggestions which will show me how I may fulfill my vows and continue the work of presenting myself a living sacrifice, "cleansing ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Cor. 7:1.) Looking over the various helps that have been given outside the divine Word itself, helps which are intended to show us how to make practical application of that divine Word, I find none that is more practical, and hence more helpful, than that known as "My Morning Resolve." Let me therefore dwell for a while upon the various suggestions of that Resolve. And as I do so, let me think of it as **my resolve**: a determination made with firmness of purpose, to follow this course of action.

"My Morning Resolve"

"My earliest thought I desire shall be:

"What shall I render unto the Lord for, all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord [for grace to help]. I will pay my vows unto the Most High now in the presence of all His people.' - Psa. 116:12-14.

"Remembering the divine call, 'Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice' (Psalm 50:5), I resolve that by the Lord's assisting grace I will today, as a saint of God, fulfill my vows, continuing the work of sacrificing the flesh, and its interests, that I may attain unto the heavenly inheritance in joint-heirship with my Redeemer.

"I will strive to be simple and sincere toward all.

"I will seek not to please and honor self, but the Lord.

"I will be careful to honor the Lord with my lips, that my words may be unctuous and blessed to all.

"I will seek to be faithful to the Lord, the truth, the brethren, and all with whom I have to do, not only in great matters, but also in the little things of life.

"Trusting myself to divine care and the providential overruling of all my interests for my highest welfare, I will seek not only to be pure in heart, but to repel all anxiety, all discontent, all discouragement.

"I will neither murmur nor repine at what the Lord's providence may permit, because

"Faith can firmly trust Him, come what may."

Let us consider this first paragraph:

"Remembering the divine call, 'Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice' (Psa. 50:5), I resolve that by the Lord's assisting grace I will today, as a saint of God, fulfill my vows, continuing the work of sacrificing the flesh and its interests, that I may attain unto the heavenly inheritance in joint-heirship with my Redeemer."

This gathering together of the saints, let me carefully note, is not a gathering together into any earthly organization, but a gathering unto our Head, a drawing near to Him in the spirit. It will, therefore, in so far as it fulfils this Scripture, be wholly devoid of any sectarian spirit; it will be a catholicity or breadth of spirit which will recognize Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life, and therefore will recognize that **all** who are in Christ are in the way, and are in the truth, and have passed from death unto life, and will treat all such as brethren. It is true that not all will have the same measure of knowledge of divine truth in all its numerous branches of history, type and antitype, admonition and experience. When the Apostle speaks of "the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God" (Rom. 11:33), it suggests the wealth of truth that there is in the Word; and with our varied capacities for discovering hidden truths, for mentally grasping them, and for retaining them in our memories, it is inevitable that there will be among the saints

various degrees of knowledge. But because my brother does not see with me on matters of interpretation, if I am devoid of a sectarian spirit, I shall not be heard to say that he has "gone out of the truth" as long as I have reason to believe that he is still in Christ, for he could not be in Christ, who is the truth, without a knowledge of the way of salvation, and of the truth essential to salvation.

This gathering the saints together unto Him is an emphasis on the oneness of the Body of Christ, and is referred to by the Apostles Paul and Peter under the injunction to "be of one mind." Paul refers to it in 1 Cor. 1:10-13, and there makes it clear that he does not mean by being of one mind that they may not differ in their understanding of such passages of scripture as require to be interpreted, but that the differences of mind among them which were causing divisions was due to a spirit of partisanship, sectarianism, of looking to earthly leaders. He says:

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in -the name of Paul?" We are not called to be gathered around any man, but to be gathered to our Lord.

It is a matter of oneness in our daily *walk* which I find the Apostle enjoining, in Phil. 3:16, "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." The oneness which Paul sought was a oneness of spirit and purpose, which will necessarily 'be reflected in our daily walk. He again refers to it in Phil. 2:2, 3, "Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."

How this oneness of mind can 'be demonstrated in our daily conduct is brought out by the Apostle Peter in 1 Pet. 3:7-9, "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them [your wives] according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be humble; not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise, blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing."

That this correcting of my conduct to manifest the oneness of the Body with its Head, Christ Jesus, is one phase of carrying out my vows of consecration, the presenting of my living sacrifice, the Apostle shows in 1 Pet 4:1, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." If self is being crucified, sin is not having dominion over me. The perfecting of such a mind through a firm resolve, daily carried out, by God's assisting grace, will evidence me to be one of His saints and will constitute a fulfilling of my vows, as I continue the work of sacrificing the flesh and its interests, that I may attain unto the heavenly inheritance in joint-heirship with my Redeemer.

And let me emphasize in my mind that this is a continuing work, never a completed work. I shall never reach the place in this life when I may safely cease to sacrifice the flesh and its interests; when I may say, I have run well for a time, now I may relax my efforts a little. As I look at my Pattern and Guide I see on His part no relaxation of effort to sacrifice Himself, but on the

contrary, I see His sacrifice continuing until it culminates in the supreme act of pouring out His life upon the cross. And if I am to walk in His footsteps, if I am to attain to a heavenly inheritance in joint-heirship with Him, I too must continue firm to the end of my earthly course, never ceasing to sacrifice earthly interests for spiritual ones, to lay down my life for the brethren, and to lay up treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal.

"I will strive to be simple and sincere toward all."

In this clause of My Morning Resolve I declare what my attitude shall be toward all with whom I come in contact this day, whether they be in Christ or out of Christ. I will be simple toward all. Now simple means unpretentious; unostentatious; unaffected, or unassuming; humble or lowly; also, not complex, subtle or over-refined mentally, as in ideas. The Apostle gives me the same thought when he says: "Be clothed with humility." (1 Pet. 5:5.) That word "clothed" comes from a Greek word which means first a string, then a garment fastened by strings, and then, specifically, a slave's apron. The Apostle's thought in the statement that I should wear a slave's apron of humility is that I should be willing to render **any** service, however menial it may appear. Coming as it does from Peter, I perceive that this is the lesson he learned from our Lord when the latter washed the feet of Peter and the other disciples. Again, it is the lesson of the good Samaritan. This is to be my attitude, throughout this day, toward all with whom I come in contact.

Then I am also to be sincere toward all. The Apostle gives me this thought when he says: "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ." (Phil. 1:9, 10.) The word here translated "sincere" comes from a word which means the sun's rays, and to judge; and so, literally, "judged by sunlight"; hence, tested as genuine; and is also translated "pure." There is to be no sham, no pretense, in my conduct, but I am to be open and genuine in all my dealings. In two other places the Apostle presents this thought, saying in Rom. 13:13, "Let us walk honestly, as in the day," and in 1 Thess. 5:5, "Ye are all the children of the light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness." Evil deeds are kept hidden, and so are called works of darkness; but as a child of God, **my** conduct toward **all** persons is to be such that I shall not be ashamed to have it made known to all, open, as it were, to the sunlight.

"I will seek not to please and honor self, but the Lord."

Jesus said to the Jews, "How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" (John 5:44.) Of Himself, Jesus said, "If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing: it is My Father that honoreth Me." (John 8:54.) Likewise I shall find that all the honor I may seek for myself will in the end of life profit me nothing.

If I would seek not to please and honor self, but the Lord, I can attain to it by only one pathway, and that way is the way of death to self. As long as self is permitted to live, self will be pleased, self will **rule**. But when I have, through the crucifixion of self, learned to say with Paul, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world," (Gal. 6:14) I shall find that I am able to please and honor not self, but the Lord. That the way to this victory is only through the death of self, Jesus pointed out in John 12:24-26: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto, life eternal. If any man

serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be. If any man serve Me, him will My Father honor."

Jesus laid aside His glory and humbled Himself to the state of humanity, and then still further humbled Himself, even to the sacrifice of the human nature. And if I am to follow Him and be with Him, I shall have to follow Him in His path of self-sacrifice before I may follow Him in His honored and exalted station.

"I will be careful to honor the Lord with my lips, that my words may be unctuous and blessed to all."

Unctuous means anointed, as with the holy anointing oil of Scripture, and therefore, used in a religious sense it means, shedding forth a divine or spiritual influence. Blessed means happy, and when used in connection with unctuous means spiritual joys. My words, therefore, are to be such as will tend to shed forth an influence of spiritual joy. And let me note that this should be the influence, not only of my words to the saints, but of my words to **all!** True, the worldly person may not be in an attitude to **receive** a spiritual blessing, but **that** rests with **him**, not with **me**; nor do I **know** what has transpired in his heart, that he is not hungering for some spiritual help, or that my words will **not** bring him a blessing. Therefore, as the Scripture says, (Isa. 32:20) I must "sow beside all waters," knowing "not whether shall prosper either this or that." - Eccl. 11:6.

But **how** am I to **do** this? Does it mean that I am to talk of precious spiritual things to those whom I have reason to believe have no appreciation thereof? Surely not, for I am not to cast my pearls before such persons. (Matt. 7:6.) But I am to let my "speech be **always** with grace, seasoned with salt." (Col. 4:6.) That standard will rule out all **angry** words, and all **unkind** words. If my heart is truly filled with God's love, I shall find the Apostle's words true, that "love is not provoked to anger," for "love is patient and kind." (1 Cor. 13:4, 5.) If I am **careful** never to utter **unkind** words, I shall not only make others happier, and lighten life's burden for them, but shall also make my own life happier, both at home and abroad. And I must not put off until tomorrow doing that kindness; or speaking those gracious words, which I should do or speak today. Well has the poet reminded us:

"We will be so kind in the afterwhile,
But what have we been today?
We will bring to each lonely heart a smile,
But what have we brought today?"

- *Contributed.*
(To be continued)

St. Peter's Sifting and Conversion

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." - Luke 22:31, 32.

THE WORDS of our text, as all will recall, were spoken by our Lord in the "upper room" just before He instituted the "Memorial" which we considered in our last issue.* In our Authorized Version the meaning and effect of the passage are somewhat obscured. A better translation is given by Weymouth, who renders it: "Simon, Simon, I tell you that Satan has obtained permission to have all of you to sift as wheat is sifted. But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail, and you, when at last you have come back to your true self, must strengthen. your brethren."

All to be Sifted-Not Peter Only

From this translation it will be seen that not only Peter but all of them were to be sifted. Our Lord's prayer, however, was for Peter. "I have prayed for **thee** that thy faith fail not." Why this was so, we hope to see as our meditation progresses.

In thus warning the disciples of their danger, our Lord lifted, as it were, the curtain which hides the invisible world from us. Just as in the case of Job Satan was seen seeking permission to test that worthy one, so Jesus sees Satan earnestly begging permission-nay, even as having secured permission of God to test these, His chosen ones. Satan, who has already, by Judas' own consent, obtained full possession of **his** heart, is now preparing for an attack on the others whose heart-loyalty he had so far never disturbed, but over whom he now hoped to obtain the mastery. As God's sieve-holder, so to speak, Satan had asked that they all be put in the sieve, and be thoroughly shaken-his hope being to find them, at the last, not wheat, but chaff, no better at heart than Judas. Then would he have them all for his own.

Such sifting would not hurt any true wheat, although it would separate any chaff which might cling to it. Now Peter was true wheat at heart, but there remained much chaff in him, and from the fact that he was also prominent-a leader of the others-and that therefore much depended on him, Peter was to be the most severely shaken of any. Satan knew Peter well, counted on his fall, hoped it would be permanent, and that through his fall he would overcome and permanently scatter the rest. Jesus therefore addresses him as the one peculiarly exposed, and through him, as the mouth or representative of the company, the others.

But Peter was not ready for the warning. Instead of being overwhelmed by the fear of any impending fall, he is sure he will stand firm as a rock. "I am ready to go into prison and into death for Thee." But Jesus knew better, and, as we know, foretold him of his coming fall. "Wilt thou lay down thy life for My sake? Verily I say unto thee, Peter, that before the cock shall crow twice, thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest Me."

Peter a Mixture of Strength and Weakness

St. Peter is so human, his character presents that same mixture of strength and weakness which we find in ourselves, that of all the Apostles he is the one likely to appeal to us most. Of some of them we know so little that we can be said to scarcely know them at all. And on the other hand those with whose characters we are acquainted -- James, for instance, and John, and Paul -- seem to have made such remarkable progress in the school of Christ; they have followed the paths of righteousness with so steady a purpose, and such consistent faithfulness, that while we greatly admire them, we are apt to look up to them as having reached heights which we can hardly hope to attain. But it is not so with Peter, great as he is. **He** seems to be more on our level, travels by the path **we** tread, wanders from it, and stumbles in it, as we ourselves wander and stumble. His very faults endear him to us hardly less than his virtues. They are so entirely natural, so closely akin to the faults of which we are conscious in ourselves, that fellow-feeling makes us kind and lenient in our judgment of them and of him. His impulsiveness, and self-confidence, his passionate zeal, his promptness to speak and to strike, all serve to engage our interest, our compassion, our sympathy, and make us feel more at home with him than with men of a nature more finely balanced and composed. He has plenty of faults, but they are not mean and petty. As we study them carefully, we find that for the most part they result from impulses and emotions that are good in themselves, but carried to excess. The important quality of self-control is lacking.

Such natures are very lovable, but they lie open to many perils. And it is not until they have been subjected to testing and trial, and successfully endured temptations, and been approved of the Lord, that they can be greatly used in the Master's service.

Peter no Worse than the Others

But though the impulsive, self-confident, temperament has special dangers of its own, it does not follow that on the whole it is more perilous than other temperaments, cast in a different mold. Certainly Peter did not fall lower -- he did not fall quite so low -- as his fellow Apostles did, although the common belief is that he did. Their promises of loyalty to Christ were as confident as his; their unfaithfulness to their vow of loyalty took place sooner than his. When our Lord warned the Eleven: "All ye shall be offended in Me this night, if Peter was the first to say: "Though I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee," yet we are expressly told that so "likewise said they all." If Peter denied Him in the hall of judgment, **they** did not even follow Him to the hall, did not stop to be questioned,-denying Him in deeds, which speak louder than words, even before Peter denied Him with oaths and curses. If when He was led away captive by the soldiers, they "**all** forsook Him and fled," Peter was the first to recover himself in that shameful flight, and while they scattered every one to his own, he at least followed Jesus "afar off" to see what would be done unto Him. In short, they fell before Peter fell, and more utterly than he fell, as **Jesus had said they** would. For what He really recorded and foretold in our text, was that, while Satan had obtained permission to try and sift them all, Christ had prayed that **Peter's** faith might not wholly fail, that **he** might be the first to recover from their common fall, in order that when he was converted, he might strengthen his brethren. Rather than think of him, then, as weaker and worse than his brethren, we should think of him as the last to forsake his Master, and as the first to reascend the heights of faith; as the one who, having come back to his true self, as Weymouth's choice phrase puts it, was a fit instrument in the Lord's hands to strengthen his brethren.

Self-Confidence Must be Displaced by Humility

Let us now consider the passage attentively, to learn, first, what it was that was sifted out of Peter, and second, how it was sifted out of him.

First, then, what was it that was sifted out of Peter? This may be told in few words. The cause and spring of the most obvious defects in the Apostle's character was that large and assured confidence in himself which made him so quick to speak, so prompt to act. But throughout the Scriptures self-confidence is everywhere shown to be the opposite of faith or confidence in God. Everywhere there, too, we are taught that God dwells only with those of a humble, lowly, contrite heart. If, therefore, God was to take up His abode with Peter, -if the impulsive and ardent strength of the man was to be schooled into steadfastness, and hallowed by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, in order that, being himself led and controlled by the mind of Christ, he might rightly lead his brother Apostles during those first critical months in which the foundations of the Church were to be laid -- then, obviously, his self-confidence must be purged out of him, and be replaced by the humility with which God delights to dwell. On no other terms **could** he be fitted for the work to which he was called. And therefore it was that Satan "obtained" him, that is, obtained permission to sift and purge self-trust out of him. If the process was severe, the task and honor for which it prepared him were great, and greatness is not to be achieved on easy terms. If we are tempted to think the process too severe, let us ask ourselves whether any milder process would have sufficed.

Humility Difficult to Acquire

That point is one which is easy to decide. We all know men who think a good deal of their own opinions, and who have a very good opinion of themselves; self-confident men, always ready with their advice and censure, however difficult and complicated that may be of which they speak, and however ignorant of it they may be; men who believe, apparently, that all the world is out of step, and that they were born to set it right; men who assume to teach, to judge, to rebuke, even those whom, when pushed, they acknowledge to be far wiser and better than themselves - just as Peter rebuked Christ, and said: "This be far from Thee, Lord!" Is it easy, when this self-confidence has been much and long indulged, to purge it from them? We all know that it is not easy; on the contrary, it is hard, so hard as often to seem impossible. We have seen such men tried in many ways; the advice they gave has been followed and shown to be disastrous, or their censures have been disregarded with manifest impunity; their own affairs have fallen into ruin about them while they were affecting to guide the counsels of the Church or nation; shame has invaded their homes and families through their sins or their neglect; they have been publicly censured and disgraced; and yet, when all was done, we have seen them carrying the same pretentious air, and heard them taking the same tone of assurance, apparently as full as ever of confidence in their own wisdom and importance. Of all qualities, self-confidence is perhaps the last which most of us lose; of all virtues, humility the last that we acquire. We need not wonder therefore, to find St. Peter exposed to a most penetrating and fiery trial. For, strange to say, his self-confidence, though it had been so often rebuked, comes out more conspicuously than ever in the last moments that he was to spend with the Son of Man - the need for sifting grows most apparent as Satan draws near to sift him.

Peter's Self-Confidence Conspicuous Just Prior to His Fall

On the very night on which Jesus was betrayed, and as they gathered round the table at which they were to eat and drink with Him for the last time, Peter and his brethren contended among themselves which of them should be greatest. The couches on which they reclined at the Last Supper each held four or five, and each, according to Eastern custom, had its highest and lowest place. Possibly it was in claiming the better places on these couches that the contention broke out, if it was not rather in the strife as to which of them should wash the others' feet. The petty and shameful strife was silenced by the gracious rebuke of Christ. But the flush and excitement of it seem to have left their traces on Peter's mind, for when, to enforce His lesson of humility Jesus arose and girded Himself with a towel, and began to wash their feet, Peter first exclaims: "Thou shalt never wash my feet!" and then: "Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!"

No doubt the impulses which moved Peter to these exclamations were fine; but impulses which lead a man to correct Divine Wisdom now in this way and now in that, betray a blind and impetuous self-reliance, however fine they may be in themselves. Emotions, however good, become evil, they become both signs of evil already existing, -and indicate evil about to take place, when they run to excess. The wish to be near Christ, and to stand high in His love and esteem is good; but it becomes evil when it grows into a wish to be nearer than others, and to stand higher than they. The reverence which prompted Peter to cry: "Wash not my feet, Lord," was good; and the love which prompted him to cry: "Not my feet only," was also good. But reverence becomes irreverence and love unloving, when they lead us to assume that we know what is meet and right better than our Master and Lord, and when they lead us to presume to suggest that there may be something lacking in the way He takes with us.

However good Peter's impulses and motives, then, it is easy to see that even at the Lord's Supper he was in his most self-assertive and self-confident mood. And the impression grows on us as we follow him to Gethsemane. There, in the Garden, he shows that he trusts more in his own loyalty than in the wisdom and grace of his Master. "Though all men should be offended in Thee, yet will not I" he cries. And when the Lord repeats the warning, Peter only "speaks the more vehemently," saying, "If I should die with Thee, I will not in anywise deny Thee. Even when he falls asleep in the Garden, thereby belying his vehement protestations of loyalty and love, and proving that he could not watch an hour with Him with whom he thought he was ready to go both to prison and to death, his confidence in himself is no whit abated. Startled from his untimely slumbers by the clash of arms and the glare of torches, St. Peter, having a sword drew it, and smote off the ear of the High Priest's servant, never doubting but that that was the right course to take, since it was the first that suggested itself to his mind. He looks to His Master for no sign, waits for no word of command, or he would not have fallen into that sin. Christ has to undo his evil work and to rebuke his spirit. Peter is put to shame but not to a saving shame. As his Master will not let him fight, he runs away, forsaking the Friend for whom he had professed himself ready even to die. As he runs, however, his natural boldness returns; he detaches himself from the other disciples who have also forsaken Jesus, and turns back to follow his Lord, even though following afar off. But when he reached the palace, instead of pressing close to his Master's side as much as to say: "I, at least, will be true to Him," he lingers in the open court, outside the judgment hall, and joins with soldiers round the fire, casting in his lot with the very men who had arrested his Lord, instead of with the Lord Himself. And here, when he is questioned, he again and again denies Him, affirming in the broad Galilean accents which betray him, "I know not the Man." Not only so, but with the furious passion and impulsive vehemence which are a part of his nature, he backs his denial with oaths and curses.

Peter Broken at His Strongest Point

Now it occasions in us no surprise when we learn that a man who is an habitual liar has been discovered in an untruth, or that a man known for his cowardice has once again proved to be craven-hearted. But Peter was one of the bravest of men, possessed of fearless, honest, speech. He was a veritable John the Baptist, whose disciple he had been, and was always outspoken and courageous. It surely must have been in a moment of passionate excitement, and bewilderment, that **he** told a lie, and denied the Master he loved. Such sins were certainly foreign to his nature, sins from which he might well have believed himself safe.

It is a cruel spectacle -- one of the saddest on which the stars have ever looked down -- a brave man turned coward, a true man turned liar, a strong man weeping bitterly over those very sins which, of all sins, might well have seemed impossible to him! But would anything short of this open and shameless fall, this break at his strongest point, have been sufficient to purge him of that self-confidence which we have seen to be so powerful and active in him right up to the very moment of his fall? And if nothing else would have so suddenly and sharply sifted it out of him and brought about in him the humility which fitted him to receive the Holy Spirit and become a pillar of the Church which our Lord was about to redeem with His precious blood, shall we be disposed to complain of the severity of the process by which he was purged from a dangerous self-trust and made meet for a service and ministry so honorable and blessed? Shall we not rather ask that we, too, may be sifted, even by the most searching trial, if we, too, may be thus made to possess the Holy Spirit in larger measure, and to be better qualified and fitted for the Master's service?

"I Have Prayed for Thee"

We have seen how Satan obtained Peter that he might sift him. But if Satan **obtained**, Christ **prayed** for him, and even **obtained** him in a far higher sense; for **He** obtained that Peter should be sifted only, not completely overthrown, that however heavily his faith might be tested and strained, it might not snap and part; that the sifting should issue in his conversion, and complete restoration to favor and joyous service. It is to this second part of his experience that we now turn our thoughts. For the conversion and restoration of Peter were no less complete and wonderful than his fall. Space is sufficient to tell this part of the story only very briefly, but fortunately it is very familiar to our readers, so that few words will suffice.

St. Peter's conversion began at the very moment when he had fallen lowest. For it was when he had denied his Lord for the last time that Jesus turned and **looked** upon him; and this look was the turning point in the great crisis of his life. Jesus does not **speak** to him; words are not necessary; and even in the very depth of his fall Christ is too tender and considerate of Peter to confirm the suspicion of the bystanders and to prove him to be the disciple he has denied himself to be. He simply looks at him, -- bends on him, we may well believe, a glance of blended pity, reproach, and love. And that look is sufficient. As he met it, Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him. And when he thought thereon, he wept -- wept bitterly.

Peter True Wheat at Heart

There we have the true Peter. He did not seek to stifle his conscience. He did not try to forget his Lord's prediction. He remembered it. Not only so, but he thought upon it. Scholars tell us that the word translated "thought thereon" (Mark 14:72) literally means "flung himself upon." With passionate vehemence he flings himself as on the sharp edges of his Master's gracious warning and rebuke-bruises himself against them, rends and tears himself upon them, till the difficult tears of a strong man in his agony are wrung from him. The man is all broken with remorse. He cannot face his old comrades, for though their sin has been as great as his, it does not seem so to him. Nothing seems to, him quite so had as his own miserable failure and denial of his Lord. So he creeps away into seclusion, withdraws into a solitary hiding place, where he may weep alone, and see no reflection of his shame from other eyes; and here, apparently, he remained during the days that Jesus remained in the tomb. For, of all the other Apostles, only John seems to have had any idea where he was to have sought him out, and to have spent an hour with him, when he could leave Mary, his mother now.

Now when men have fallen into a great sin, a great shame, a great misery, we all know how apt they are, as they brood over it, to recall the similar sins of which they have been guilty, to deepen their anguish by tracing back their recent offense through previous offenses which led to, which paved the way for, their last and crowning transgression. We may be sure, therefore, that in his solitude and grief, Peter would compel himself to dwell on the many occasions on which he had been betrayed by his self-confident temper into sin and shame. He would recall, for instance, how boldly he had once cast himself on the billowing waters of the lake in Galilee, only to lose courage and faith, only to sink and perish, but for the grace of Christ. He would remember how, while he had been the first to confess Jesus as Christ, the Messiah of God, no sooner did Jesus begin to speak of His death and of the glory that should follow, than he had rudely broken in upon Him with: "There shall no such thing happen unto Thee." And as he flung himself upon these remembrances, he would feel that his recent sin was but a repetition, only on a worse scale, of former sins; that what he had to mourn over was not simply this faithless act or that, but a radical weakness in his very make-up, a self-reliance which was perpetually leading him astray and landing him in open guilt and shame.

"Go-Tell My Disciples-and Peter"

And how wonderfully does the Master meet the need of His sorrowing, contrite follower. Not only does the risen Lord tell Mary Magdalene to go tell His disciples and Peter that He had been raised from a grave that could not hold Him; not only does He confirm this special and tender sign of grace by appearing to Peter before He appears to the other Apostles; but having touched Peter's heart with these proofs of a love stronger than death, of a love not to be alienated even by Peter's unfaithfulness and desertion; having thus shed the light of hope into the darkness of his remorse and despair, and turned his remorse into a humble and healing contrition, our Lord proceeds to convert him, and to prove him converted, by leading him to unsay all his foolish boasts, and to retrieve all the failures which had sprung from too much confidence in himself, from too little trust in God and in Jesus.

It was on that never-to-be-forgotten morning when after toiling all night and catching nothing Jesus appeared on the shore, told them where to cast their nets, and after they had come to shore with a multitude of fishes, had Himself prepared breakfast for them. Now on the night that Jesus

had been betrayed, Peter had boasted of a love beyond that of his brethren. "Though all should be offended, yet will not I." And this vain boast had been followed by no less than three open and shameful denials of his Lord. These false steps have now to be retraced, these failures to be retrieved. Hence when they had had breakfast, Jesus turns to Peter with the question: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" -- do you still hold by your boast? But Simon had not been sifted in vain. There is a tone of shame and disavowal in his reply: "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee" -- Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee, not more than these, perhaps, I no longer measure myself against them; they may love Thee more and better than I; still, I love Thee with all my heart, and this **Thou knowest**. Three times the question is repeated, till "Peter is grieved." He does not see, what **we** see plainly enough, that as he has been guilty of three denials, so our Lord is constraining him to undo them as far as they can be undone, by witnessing three good confessions. Once Peter's grief would have been anger had he thrice been asked: "Lovest thou Me?" He would have exploded into vainglorious boasts, perhaps have even rebuked the Lord for suspecting his fidelity. But there is no anger, no boasting, no vainglorious self-confidence now. All that has been sifted out of him; and he answers only by a quiet appeal to the Searcher of hearts: "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

Peter's Complete Restoration

Ah! he is truly converted now, and thrice is he reinstated in the pastoral, under-shepherd's office. "Feed My lambs" -- those who are just beginning in the path of discipleship. "Feed My little sheep" -- those who have been in the way some time, and who are already somewhat developed in grace and knowledge. "Ah! Peter, you are a new man at last. I can depend on you now. There is no pastoral duty to which I hesitate to assign you, now. Feed not only My lambs and little sheep, but feed My sheep, too, those who are full-grown, matured Christians. You will be profitable to them also. Henceforth your ministry will be blessed to the whole Church."

How complete was Peter's restoration is strikingly seen by comparing the conversation which took place between Peter and Christ before Peter's sifting, with a fragment of the conversation which passed between them after Peter's conversion. The first conversation went this way: "Whither I go thou canst not follow Me now." "Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake." "Wilt thou lay down thy life for My sake? Verily I say unto thee, A cock shall not crow till thou hast denied Me thrice."

In the second conversation Jesus says to His sifted and converted disciple: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou was young, thou didst gird thyself, and walkedest whither thou wouldst; but when thou art grown old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not. This spake He signifying by what death he [Peter] should glorify God. And having thus spoken He saith unto him, Follow thou Me."

Could Peter's restoration be more complete? Christ now foretells Peter, not an open and shameful denial of his Master, but a public and honorable death for his Master. It is no longer: "Thou wilt not lay down thy life for My sake," but "Thou shalt lay down thy life for Me." It is no longer: "Thou canst not follow Me," but "Follow thou Me." And this striking change and contrast indicates that at last Peter was truly "converted" -- converted from rashness to sobriety; from vainglory to humility from self-confidence to self-distrust and steadfast trust in God. Every step of his fall has been retraced, every failure retrieved. He is now prepared to become the temple and mouthpiece of the Spirit of God, a solid pillar of the Church against which the waves and (billows of temptation will beat in vain.

The Lesson for Us

As we close this meditation on St. Peter's sifting and conversion, let us not do so without making practical application of its lessons -- each to ourselves. As we examine our own hearts it is possible that we may find there the self-same condition which proved such a hindrance to Peter's development and usefulness, until it was sifted out of him. Or it may be that our difficulty is along other lines. None of us will be wise if failing to walk in the footsteps of Jesus to the best of our ability, we rest complacently in the fact that years ago we were converted, and did consecrate ourselves to God. That consecration will avail us nothing, if in the present we cease to watch, and strive, and pray. We need a daily conversion, a life-long conversion -- from impurity to holiness, from worldliness to spirituality, from selfishness to love. So long as there is any evil in us, we need to be changed, turned, purged, to have the evil sifted out of us, just as Peter, long after that moment of supreme spiritual perception in which he confessed Jesus to be the Christ of God, needed to be converted to a truer, higher, and more steadfast faith in Him.

And on the other hand, if because of our failure to watch and pray, we have been permitted by God to be sifted by Satan, and have fallen into a shameful denial of our Lord, by our conduct if not in our words, let us be comforted in the thought that, provided our repentance be real and earnest, He will not cast us away. If we prove the sincerity of our repentance by forsaking the evil, whatever it may be, by undoing, to whatever extent it may be possible, any wrong we may have done, and by determining by God's grace to walk circumspectly and worthy of our high vocation henceforth, we may take comfort from the restoration of Peter. For how large, how generous, how unqualified is the trust our Lord reposes in those who have truly repented. How complete is His restoration. How full and free and final is His forgiveness. The love of Christ truly passeth understanding. It is all powerful -- it conquers everything. When there has been true and thorough repentance, the past is forgiven and forgotten, as if it had never been. Praise God for a Gospel full of both truth and grace.

The Crystallization of Character

NO CHASTENING for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby," says the writer of Hebrews at the end of that very comforting statement beginning with the 6th verse of the 12th chapter to the effect that the very fact of our being sons of God means that we are to expect chastening from the hand of our Father. And yet we read of Paul and Silas singing praises unto God when they had been thrown into prison at Philippi; and Peter exhorts: "If any man suffer as a Christian let him glorify God on this behalf." - 1 Peter 4:16.

The explanation of this apparent mutual contradiction is to be found in the root meaning of the Greek word translated "chastening." This meaning is "child," and the original meaning of the word itself, "paideia," is "rearing of a child." This meaning is exactly in harmony with the preceding thought expressed in the passage in Hebrews-the chastening of sons or children. This is obviously something apart from "suffering as a Christian," and seems to be restricted to something between God and His children in connection with the formation of character, the analogy of rearing the child being maintained. We all know that our parental chastening was not a pleasant experience at the time, but we know that it worked out in us the desired after result. The word "afterward" in the passage in Hebrews seems to be the key to the correct understanding of the verse.

In our grown-up lives in which we are the children -- God's sons -- how many, many times do we not have experiences which leave us humbled in the dust because of our abject failure to come up to the desired standard of conduct, and we feel terribly discouraged. Paul wrote to Timothy (1 Tim. 1:5) that the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart; and years before that the Psalmist had prayed in anguish after he had committed a terrible sin: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." (Psa. 51:10.) Finally, Jeremiah said, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9.) We do not know our own hearts, and when God in answer to our prayers to create in us clean hearts or to help us in the renewing of our minds, gives us experiences which show us some of the dark things in our hearts of which we were unaware, we seem to ourselves to be so hopelessly bad that there is a very strong temptation to become discouraged and give up. This is where we have to trust God to the utmost of our power; and keep on casting *all* our care upon Him. What does it all mean?

In the chemistry laboratory at school when we wished to obtain some copper sulphate crystals, we took a solution of copper sulphate -- a beautiful transparent blue solution-and boiled it down to about half its volume. After all that boiling there seemed to be no difference at all, for it was still a clear transparent blue solution. However, the solution was put aside. Next morning we would take up the glass containers with the copper sulphate solution which the day before we had put away as nothing but a solution, and there lying at the bottom of the container were the beautifully formed crystals we were wanting. These had gradually formed as the solution cooled off after its drastic boiling down process.

So it seems to be in these painful experiences we have in our Christian walk. Before we know where we are, we get into a state of turmoil -- a sort of mental ebullition-our pride or something else we thought we did not have or had overcome long since, comes up to the surface and boils over, and goes on boiling over, perhaps for hours or it may even be for days, and at the end of it all we are humbled and realize that we have failed. There seems to be nothing to show for all our

careful walking with God, our studying, and our fellowshiping with others of like precious faith. We certainly feel very chastened. The days go by and the experience becomes a memory; and then another experience comes to us, and to our joyful surprise we find that what affected us so seriously in the previous experience has no effect now. We are quite strong on the particular point -- that portion of our character has crystallized. How has this happened? It is the "nevertheless afterward" portion of the statement in Hebrews which has been quietly working in us. The chastening parts -of the experiences are the conscious parts and are of the utmost importance, for it is only as the conscious mind is rightly exercised by the experiences that the subconscious mind can do its quiet, unseen work of yielding the peaceable fruit of righteousness. It is another of those divine paradoxes: the failure part of the experience is necessary that there may be the ultimate triumph; or using our Father's own words: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness." - 2 Cor. 12:9. *Contributed.*

Annual Meeting of the Pastoral Bible Institute

Due to be Held June 3, 1939

Members of the Pastoral Bible Institute are hereby reminded of the privilege which is theirs of nominating in the pages of this journal the brethren they wish to elect as directors for the fiscal year 1939-1940. While the attention of new members is especially drawn to this matter, we desire to emphasize in the minds of old members also, not only the privilege, but also the responsibility which continued association with this ministry brings.

All should be aware of the fact that the affairs of this Institute are in the hands of seven brethren who are elected from the Institute's membership to serve for a period of one year or until their successors are elected. In accordance with the; by-laws the next annual meeting is due to be held Saturday, June 3, 1939, at two p. m., in the parlors of the Institute, 177 Prospect Place, Brooklyn, N. Y.

The seven brothers whose term of service will expire next June are:

Bennett, S. D. Jordan, J. C.
Blackburn, J. J. Read, P. L.
Boulter, B. Stiles, C. E.
Thomson, P. E.

The brethren named above are pleased to report that a spirit of Christian love and harmony exists in their midst and they have reason to believe that the Lord has seen fit to bless their association in this ministry. The pleasures of this service they would gladly continue, sharing its joys and responsibilities if that be the Lord's will; and they earnestly pray that His will may be expressed in the vote of the members'. However, the present directors realize that those carrying on any work often fail to see opportunities for improvement and expansion apparent to others not charged with such responsibility. For this reason changes in office not infrequently have beneficial effects. They desire above all things that the work of the Lord (for the furtherance of which this Institute was formed) be prosecuted with the greatest possible efficiency, and to this end are ready cheerfully to step aside for others whom the membership believe to be fitted for the work. They therefore urge upon all the members of our Institute that they make this a special occasion of prayer.

If after prayerful meditation any are led of the Lord to nominate other brethren and will forward the names, and addresses of such brethren so as to reach this office on or before April 15, 1939, such names will be published in the May issue of the "Herald," that all members may have an opportunity of voting for them.

Encouraging Messages

Dear Brethren:

I enclose \$ towards my subscription for two years, and, the balance as a small donation. I regret it is so very small. Please send me some leaflets for distribution. I enjoy the "Herald" very much, and it is a great help to me in trying to follow in the Master's walk.

It is a great pleasure to me to find you keeping straight on, neither turning to the right or left, with no "slogan," just the "Word of God." Some of the Lord's people find so many things to differ on. It seems to me it is caused by a lack of love, which we have been warned by the Bible over and over again will be very prominent in these last days of the Church. One would think as we see the "time" closing in, all the brethren would become more considerate, more helpful, and loving to each other....

Since last writing, my dear sister passed away. Although she had a very trying illness, she was full of the spirit of the Master to the very end.

With much love and good wishes to all the members of the Institute,
You brother by His grace,
C. E. B. -- S. Africa.

Dear Brethren:

With some of us it is not so easy to express our thoughts as we would wish in writing, but I am thankful for the messages received through the columns of the "Herald" from month to month, and wish that instead, it was from week to week. I cannot say with what delight it is to have them to ponder upon from day to day. And how it has lifted my soul above the sordid things of this life. In the December "Herald" the text 1 Tim. 1:15 carries a new meaning, higher than it ever meant before that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. What a name, embodying the whole human race! And what love and grace, and at what cost with all the scorn and abuse and shame! My prayer is that God will from time to time increase the light of His precious truth to you all, and that His children may be abundantly fed.

I have had the privilege of hearing some of the brethren of my gathering from England at a reading meeting put out the same truths about God's grace to sinners, apart from the Church, in the same terms as expressed in "The Divine Plan of the Ages," and my heart just leaped for joy to see these truths expanding.

My hope and wish for 1939 is for one year of blessing in His enlightened truth for His children and the world in general.

I enclose \$ for my yearly contribution and as a help to some other poor saint.
Yours in Christ,
L. H. -- B. W. I.

Dear Friends:

I am writing to thank you for your kindness in sending me the "Herald" for over two years free of charge. I am now able to pay for it, and enclose \$ to be put on the subscription list again. I am hoping to be able to send you something towards the expense of the back numbers some time during the coming summer. The articles are very inspiring, and I pray that the dear Lord will help me to be very appreciative of them.

Thanking you once more, and with Christian love and greeting for your peace and happiness during the coming year,

Very sincerely your sister by His grace,
E. A. L. -- Mass.