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Things Coming to Pass

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

THE WORLD has now witnessed the crushing of the Polish cause by the Russian and German juggernauts and the disappearance of Polish independence in the resultant partitionment of the nation between her two great adversaries. And the war has undoubtedly taken a very bad turn for the Allies with the virtual intervention of Soviet Russia on the side of Germany. Until recently the present conflict has been termed by the people of London and Paris "a war that is no war." While it has been prosecuted ruthlessly and relentlessly by the Germans in the East, where they have wiped out the Poles in a four week campaign, the fighting in the West has been of a sporadic and desultory character, confined largely to skirmishes and artillery duels. While Warsaw has been laid in ruins by German bombers, London and Paris have not once been raided from the air. The French and British armed forces let Poland go under without altering their tactics, which seemingly have consisted of a cautious probing for weak spots in the German fortifications, and digging in for anticipated counter-attacks. But this idyllic situation may change overnight if the British and French reject Fuehrer Adolf Hitler's "peace ultimatum," supported by Russia, for the calling off of hostilities on the basis of the recognition of the liquidation of Poland. At the present writing their course is yet unknown, but unquestionably Germany may be expected to open a furious offensive just as soon as the Allies formally reject the German proposals. And the dreadful consequences of the full unleashing of the weapons of destruction are being fearfully apprehended in the light of the overflow of Poland and its resultant ruin so speedily accomplished by the modern tanks, armored cars, trucks, howitzers, and planes. The present "quiet" situation on the battle front is deceptive and belies the furious preparations for the long intensive conflict expected.

The great unknown factor on the world horizon is Russia. The alliance between Germany and Russia is a development hardly thought credible as late as a few months ago, not only by the people of other countries, but by the overwhelming majority of Germans and Russians themselves. Here are two countries, the first representing Fascism and the second Communism, each in its most extreme form. For years each of these two systems had represented itself as the exact antithesis and enemy of the other in what each had declared to be a life-and-death struggle. The leaders in each country denounced the leaders of the other in the most abusive terms. Each imprisoned or executed many of its own citizens on the charge that they had been friendly toward the other country. How, then, has it become possible for these two nations to form an alliance

which threatens to act against the British and the French? The factors involved are many and are yet till obscure. But it is becoming increasingly evident that whatever may have motivated Hitler to unite himself with Russia (probably an act of desperation to prevent a war on two fronts), both Stalin and Hitler certainly completely distrust each other and for the strongest of reasons. The alliance, while it may exist as long as there are common spoils to be seized and divided -- presumably in the Baltic and Balkan states -- has an inherently unstable character. There must be profound misgivings about it within both Germany and Russia.

If army circles, as a Berlin correspondent informs, "frankly declare that Germany must now prepare for the inevitable dispute with Soviet Russia that must come some day," we may be sure that the opinion is shared by other elements in the population. However anxious Hitler may have been to start this war, it is no longer his war, but Stalin's, which Hitler is fighting for him and under such conditions as Stalin creates from day to day. It is very probable that Stalin entered into his pact with Hitler to make sure that Hitler would fight, to make sure that he would go on fighting until France, Great Britain, Germany, and as many other capitalist states as the Kremlin can maneuver into it, are exhausted, and until as much of the world as possible is ready for swift and easy conquest by the Red dictatorship. Russia will not be exhausted by participation, but will watch her opportunity to roll quietly out upon every scene of devastation and exhaustion, and plant the sickle and hammer banner upon it. Hitler broke Poland just quickly and thoroughly enough for Soviet Russia to move into almost bloodless occupation and exploitation of more than half of it, and, while he races his divisions across the breadth of the Reich to face Anglo-French invaders, he glimpses over his shoulder a giant that has put one shoulder up against East Prussia and another athwart his contacts with Hungarian grain and Rumanian oil. He sees Russia using his war with the West as a cover for bringing a Russian fleet out of the Gulf of Finland into the Baltic, and for a Turkish deal that may, as he gets deeper involved beyond the Rhine, mean the substitution of the Red terror for the Nazi terror among all the Slavs of the Balkans. Yet, how can he resent any advantage that the Kremlin now takes of the close neighborly relations that have been established? It is already obvious, also, that the Soviets have not discarded the Communist revolutionary theories because of their alliance with Germany.

How, it may well be asked, do Hitler's backers -- the class who have to direct his war for him -- relish the prospect of the forces he has deliberately unleashed sweeping up to their borders? The Red army has reached the East Prussian frontiers. How do the Junker landowners and hereditary leaders of Germany's army enjoy the picture of their neighbors, the Polish landowners, being hunted down "with arms, scythes, pitchforks, and hatchets" by their peasants, as the Red army's proclamation, issued at the frontier of Poland, urged? And how must the Rumanian, Bulgarian, and Jugo-Slavian landowners feel? And also Hungary with its permanently landless proletariat of 2,000,000 living well below the hunger line? For the Red army always carries with it the doctrine of the peasant's right to seize land from the landlords wherever it goes. And now the revolutionary torch is being carried to the tinder of the Eastern and Central European peasant's discontent. These possibilities are sufficient to cause "men's hearts to fail them for fear." It would not be wise for the student of God's Word in the light of world affairs to disregard the fact that Russia's actions have revived the specter of world revolution. People throughout the world who hate cruelty and oppression naturally were shocked and horrified at the Soviet Union's cynical action at the end of August, giving Germany just the assurance she needed to launch a savage assault on Poland and plunge the world into war. That the Soviet Union knew that the Russo-German pact would tip the balance in favor of war is hardly questionable, despite voluble protestations that it would promote peace. But to shake hands with an enemy and encourage him in rash adventures is also a method of compassing his destruction. There is much room for thought for the student of Bible prophecy in the present shaping of world events.

Two minor items, relating to the present war, we present as being interesting by way of contrast. From the "New York Times" we quote an excerpt from a letter by the Rev. James Plowden-Wardlaw of Cambridge, England:

"And so, as the battle is forced on us, we will devote ourselves with one will to see it through; for we are fighting that the human race may preserve the seven freedoms of Christian civilization. German culture, despite its many merits in music, philosophy, and scholarship, is fatally lacking in these seven freedoms. Germany is trying to impose this imperfect and mischievous culture on Europe and, in fact, the rest of the world by war. England and France are resisting. Will America, the home of these seven freedoms, fail to help to rescue the world from their negation?"

From the "Chicago Tribune" we quote an item from Manchester, England:

"Canon Stuart Morris, head of the Peace Pledge union, announced at a meeting of the union today he was renouncing his orders in the Anglican church as a protest against the attitude of a great part of the Church of England toward the European war. Even if our cause had been the most just of causes,' lie said, 'it remains true that no cause, however righteous, can possibly be achieved by a resort to violence and a denial of all that we mean by righteousness.' The Rev. Mr. Morris, 49 years old, is a member of the general purpose and church electorate subcommittee of the Church of England."

In all these notes of confusion, contradiction, intrigues, and perplexity that beset the "groaning creation," the Christian can raise his heart in praise and thanksgiving to Him who knows all things from the beginning and who will cause the present "distress of nations with perplexity" to be changed to shouts of gladness and joy, in the near at hand Kingdom.

"And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us; this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." -- Isaiah 25:9. - *Contributed by W. J. Siekman*

"In Everything Give Thanks"

"In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."-1 Thess. 5:18

AS ALL are aware, the national thanksgiving festival, which we celebrate this month, is not a new one, but has existed in the nation almost from the beginning of its history. Instituted in 1621, it was proclaimed as a national holiday by President Lincoln in 1864, an example which has been followed by all his successors in the presidency. In November each year, the nation pauses to formally acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, and to express thanks to Him, for peace and safety, for bountiful harvests, abundant rains, smiling skies, and for general national health and security.

Our Favored Lot

If this custom is commendable in the citizens of the United States, how much more appropriate it is to us who profess to be but aliens and foreigners here, having our true citizenship in heaven?

Surely the occasion is one which naturally leads us to consider the many causes we have for returning thanks to God, the Giver of every good and perfect gift, and to ask ourselves how deep does the spirit of gratitude penetrate our hearts.

St. Paul, in Col. 1:12, 13, brings forcibly to our mind the wonderful favors which have been extended to us over and above all those that occasion the national rejoicing and thanksgiving. There he writes that in his prayers for the Colossians was included the desire that they should be found "giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son." While as pilgrims and strangers sojourning in the most enlightened and civilized lands of earth and while thus blessed with a large measure of temporal prosperity, we are especially favored, first, in that we have been delivered from the power of darkness; secondly, in that we have been translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son; and thirdly, in that we have been made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Sometimes, when opportunities for comparison of circumstances are lacking, or those less favored in life do not come closely under our observation, we fail to rightly appreciate the common, temporal blessings that fill our daily pathway. If the humblest in this favored land could form an idea of the gloom, and want, and degradation of millions of their fellow-men abroad, they would indeed see much cause for rejoicing over their richer inheritance. There are the poverty-stricken, ignorant, starving millions of Russia; the hunted and persecuted Jews the benighted sons of Africa, China, India; the toiling exiles of Siberia; and the poor of Palestine, Ethiopia, and Egypt; to whom the humblest little American home would be a great luxury. Let us not forget to thank God that the lines of His providence have fallen to us in such pleasant places; that civilized ideas have scattered the dense darkness of the ages past; that we are permitted to live in a land of liberty, of education, and of general enlightenment. What a blessing it is to be relieved from the superstitions which retard the progress of so many of our fellow-men from advancement in civilization; and how great are the temporal advantages arising from progressive ideas, general education, and personal liberty -- advantages of peaceful home and family life, of comfortable dwellings, and neat, convenient furnishings, of medical skill, of commercial enterprise, of religious freedom, of a free press, and of an open Bible. What inestimable privileges are these! And yet most peoples of earth are denied them! We who enjoy them are only a small minority of our common humanity.

Why are we Blessed Above Others?

Let us appreciate these temporal favors more and more, and use them to the greater honor of God. And while, doing with our might what our hands find to do, we realize the inability of our own efforts to lift the pall of darkness, ignorance, and superstition from the rest of the world, let us rejoice in the near approach of the Kingdom of light and peace; and the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, which in due time will scatter all the gloom. And let us further consider that our present vantage ground is not ours because God is a respecter of persons, but because He is thereby preparing us to have part in His great plan for blessing all the families of the earth. As He prepared an Eden, like an oasis in the great world-desert, to be a suitable place for the trial of Adam and Eve, so He has prepared certain places and conditions for the development and discipline of His Church; not an Eden, however, but a place and station where civilized conditions exist, and where the general enlightenment may be used for either good or ill, and thus the choice of the individual be made manifest.

Thanks for Christian Fellowship

In St. Paul's writings are suggested many particular instances or causes for thanksgiving. Outstanding among them are three, namely, (1) Christian fellowship (2) inner strength (3) the privilege of service. Let us consider each of these in turn.

First, Christian fellowship. In Phil. 1:3 these words appear: "I thank God upon every remembrance of you." This sentence is so like, so characteristic of, the great Apostle. Words of similar import may be found in all the epistles he addressed to, the scattered groups of Christians except in that to the Galatians. The statement has variations, of course, sometimes being accompanied by an assurance of prayers, sometimes by a list of the virtues which call for his praise; but the central fact remains the same. Paul thanked God for his Christian associates. Even this he did in a marked way. He did not speak his word of gratitude in privacy; he spoke his word so that the people about whom he spoke could hear. He told them in just so many words that he thanked God **for them**. He seemed to be addressing men and God at the same time. His thanksgiving had two goals. When he began to thank the brethren, he felt that he had to thank God; and when he began to thank God, he felt that he had to thank the brethren. In the case of the Philippians he unites the two moods as if they belonged together; and he says quite simply: "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you."

Surely it would be strange to omit from the reasons for thanksgiving the mention of Christian friendships, friends of Jesus and friends of ours. The cynic may say that our true friends can be numbered by the fingers of one hand, or he may express doubt as to the reality of any friendship. But those who have had the outgo and the income of true Christian friendship will not join in this skepticism. The proof of friendship in Christ Jesus is the experience of the same. If we know that there are those whom we would serve in all gladness and with no selfish motive, the evidence lives within us. If we know, too, that there are those who pursue us with a loving interest, who are struck with sorrow when we are sorrowful, who are happier by reason of our happiness, the evidence reaches us from their hearts. When we think of such our minds are brought to the place of Paul's thanksgiving: "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you."

But while these thoughts show us how appropriate it is that we should thank God for our Christian friendships, we should not fail to realize how proper and fitting it is to express the gratitude and appreciation we feel to our friends themselves. Paul as we have observed, felt no sense of contradiction between the two goals of thanksgiving. He put God and men into one sentence of praise. The charge that we do not thank God often enough and fervently enough is doubtless true. It is likewise true that we do not thank men often enough and fervently enough. As the poet has well expressed

"What silence we keep year after year,
With those who are most near to us and dear!
We live beside each other day by day,
And speak of myriad things, but seldom say
The full sweet word that lies just in our reach
Beneath the commonplace of common speech."

This thanksgiving season would accomplish much for us if it could be used to correct any carelessness or thoughtlessness along this line, of which we may have been guilty.

The Scriptures make it abundantly clear that God desires, that He craves, our expressions of gratitude offered out of sincere hearts. Speaking of Him, the Psalmist says: "Thou art great, and greatly to be praised." (Psa. 96:4.) God Himself is represented as saying: "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me." (Psa. 50:23.) Our Lord spoke of the Father as "seeking" true worshipers. (John 4:23.) It may be difficult for us to understand how the Almighty God could take any real pleasure in expressions of appreciation from feeble creatures, such as we know ourselves to be. Yet the fact remains true, both of Him and of His dear Son, our Lord. This is because They are not frozen abstractions, invented by heathen, but living beings, who, even though dwelling on the highest spirit plane of life, are nevertheless possessed of natures not only capable of emotion, but infinitely so. Are our hearts crushed, and torn, and bruised; and Theirs unmoved, untouched? Nay! All the pure, holy, emotions of love, joy, sorrow, righteous indignation, etc., which we know and experience, are Theirs in infinite degree. But-and here is the point we wish to make as to the fitness of expressing our appreciation of our brethren in the Lord to them, themselves-are not our brethren made in God's image? Are they not like God in this respect, that they appreciate commendation and gratitude? The desire of Christians for the appreciation of their fellows is not a human weakness. It is a part of their divine likeness. If one should truly say that he did not wish that others should appreciate his character and work, that one would show that in that respect he was unlike God. In the case of the one perfect Man, when here on earth-our Lord Jesus -- how well we remember the disappointment He expressed when, on healing the ten lepers, only one returned to express his thanks. "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?" - Luke 17:17.

The meaning of this thanksgiving season comes down to earth, enters into our homes, our ecclesias, and does not fulfill its purpose until we have all joined with the Apostle in saying to our brethren, as well as to our God, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you."

There is a poem in which is represented the death of a man who had had beautiful dreams and high thoughts which no actual life could match. But he had postponed his good deeds, and now the end of his life had come. He recounted the things that he had not done, but that he would do, if only he could have another chance:

"I'll say the loyal, helpful things
That make life sweet and fair,
I'll pay the gratitude I owe
For human love and care.
Perhaps I've been at fault sometimes,
I'll ask to be forgiven,
And make this very room of mine
Seem like a little heaven.

"For one by one I'll call my friends
To stand beside my bed;
I'll speak the true and tender words
That I have left unsaid;
And every heart shall throb and glow,
All coldness melt away,
Around my altar-fire of love
Ah! give me but one day."

This thanksgiving season reminds us afresh that just such an opportunity is still ours. God will be pleased if we take its true meaning and apply it to His children, our brethren in the Lord, to those

who are so much like Himself that life has more joy when they receive appreciation. Their joy will be richer if, in all sincerity, we can tell them that they are the Lord's gifts to us, and if we can repeat to them this apostolic word: "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you."

Thanks for Inner Strength

Let us now turn to another text, a text in which the word "thankful" does not, indeed, appear, but in which the sentiment of thankfulness, thanksgiving for inner strength, is conspicuously present. In 2 Cor. 12:7-9 we read: "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh. . . . For this thing I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee."

What Paul's thorn in the flesh was, no one knows. Some have said that it was a deformity of personal appearance. Others have held that it was a case of weak eyes, aggravated and made chronic by the blinding light that shone above the Damascus road. Others, again, have supposed it was an impediment in his speech which greatly hindered his public work. Yet others have held that it was a tendency to epilepsy which kept the busy Apostle in constant fear. And still others have held that the energetic missionary was subject to nervous prostration-in which case he would surely have many modern sympathizers.

This list by no means exhausts the suppositions that have been brought forward. Any one of them may be true; or they may all be false. This much, and only this much, do we know. Paul was compelled to endure a grievous and bitter trial. It weighed heavily upon his heart and impeded his work. He prayed with earnestness that this "thorn in the flesh" which kept pricking and tormenting him might be removed. A second and a third time he offered the same petition. But the wearing pain did not cease. The thorn did not depart; nor did it lose its sharpness and its sting; Yet it would be farthest from the truth to say that Paul's prayers were disregarded. Paul's prayers were heard; Paul's prayers were answered. But instead of paying heed to the plea by removing the thing, God paid heed to it by renewing the man. Instead of removing Paul's thorn God strengthened Paul's spirit. Paul had said, "O Lord, let this buffeting thorn in my flesh depart. It worries me. It interferes with my happiness. It hinders my work. I beseech Thee, remove it." But the divine answer was: "No! the thorn shall remain, but you yourself shall be strengthened. I will pour My help in upon your life, and I will make you strong enough to endure your hardships." This was the answer; and the time came when the Apostle thanked God for the deeper gift of grace and for his power of spiritual resistance. "Most gladly, therefore," he assured us, "will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

The divine method adopted in Paul's case is still used. More, doubtless, than we are in the habit of thinking. God is answering our prayers and so calling for our thanks, our praise, our gratitude, not by removing our difficulties, but -by making us equal to them. This truth must many times be forced upon us all. It must often come to us in connection with -those of our friends of whose trials and afflictions we are informed. Yet notwithstanding our knowledge that this is God's usual way, and our assurance that His way is best, when we ourselves experience severe trial in a new form, we are apt to forget all we may have learned and to desire the thorn removed. The method of removal seems so much the simpler, and the solution so much easier. Why not have the thorn out and be done with it? Why endure the fret and torment through the months or years? The answer, in general terms, is that while we are prone to put emphasis on happiness, God puts the emphasis on character. Undoubtedly the ideal of many men is a world from which all difficulty will be banished. But the ideal of God is a world in which men will be able to surmount difficulty, to conquer it. And if this is to be true of those who shall receive the reward of everlasting life -on the human plane, how much more must it be true of those who aspire to joint-heirship with our Lord? These must all be overcomers, conquerors indeed, and more than conquerors ere they be crowned with so high a reward.

This general principle, of strengthening men to meet difficulties rather than delivering them from difficulties, is one which operates throughout every department of human affairs. We must not expect, therefore, to find that in the moral and spiritual spheres, God will forsake this method. Professor Huxley, the great naturalist and agnostic, once said: "I protest that, if some great Power would agree to make me always think what is true and do what is right, on condition of being turned into a sort of clock and wound up every morning, I should instantly close with the offer." Perhaps our first thought would be to join with Mr. Huxley in his position. But further reflection would compel us to abandon it, for while his words may show a great moral desire, they do not show any great moral heroism. Consider a moment: Here are two men. One of them is slow, phlegmatic, quiet, passionless. By very nature he takes things easy. You may admire him and speak well of his constancy, of his easy, sound morality. But here is another man, who is quick, active, full of passion. He often wishes it were not so. It may be that he has sometimes prayed that these moral thorns might depart. He has looked upon the life of his quiet brother, and has almost envied his apparently natural goodness. If it be that we find this second man true, holding a controlling hand over his quick, passionate nature, he is more worthy of admiration-yea, and more representative of God's helpfulness-than is the first man. We protest, therefore, that if some great Power were to offer an immediate and clock-like goodness, we would instantly reject the offer. Much as we long to be perfect, we do not desire that sort of perfection. On the contrary, we thank God for the privilege of earnest cooperation with Him, by the grace of Christ and by the influence of His Spirit, in working out our characters until at last, thanks be to God, they shall be conformed to His image.

One other thought in this connection. When we thank God for the inner strengthening He is accomplishing **in** us, we are apt to have in mind only our successes -- only those points of positive development-of which we may be cognizant. There is a deeper and a, truer thankfulness than this, which has been put into two heart-searching verses:

"Lord, for the erring thought
Not into evil wrought;
Lord, for the wicked will
Betrayed and baffled still;
For the heart from itself kept
Our thanksgiving accept.

"For ignorant hopes that were
Broken to our blind prayer;
For pain, death, sorrow, sent
Unto our chastisement;
For all loss of seeming good
Quicken our gratitude."

Thanks for the Privilege of Service

The third cause for thankfulness we wish to notice briefly is the privilege of ministering to others. Turning to 1 Tim. 1:12 and reading from the American Revised Version, we find these words "I thank Him that enabled me, even Christ Jesus our Lord, for that He counted me faithful, appointing me to His service."

What are the special characteristics of the thanksgiving he renders in this text? There is, first, gratitude for personal power: "I thank Him that enabled me." There is also gratitude for personal character: "I thank Him that enabled me, even Christ Jesus our Lord, for that He counted me faithful." There is especially gratitude for personal opportunity of laboring with God in the gospel ministry: "I thank Him that enabled me, even Christ Jesus our Lord, for that He counted me faithful, appointing me to His service." All these are terms of the Spirit. Elsewhere in his writings Paul thanks God for food, clothing, shelter, and other temporal blessings. He was too real a man with too real human needs to receive without thanksgiving, or to make light of any of God's good gifts. But in this passage there are material things mentioned. The phrases are all spiritual. Moreover, instead of mentioning only what one has received, it recalls what one has been enabled to be and to do. It is thus a thanksgiving that grows tip out of benevolence rather than out of selfishness.

We should seek to follow the Apostle in the spirit of thankfulness to which he here gives expression. We should be grateful for personal power. We may not have all the power we could wish; but we have enough to make us responsible, enough also to make us grateful. There is **some** strength in us, in our mind, in our heart; we have **some** influence with others for good, even though we might wish for more. And there is joy in its possession; a joy for which we surely have rich cause for thanksgiving. God has enabled each one of us in some degree. There is, therefore, no one of us who cannot take the first part of this text on his or her lips and repeat: "I thank Him that enabled me."

Further than this, however, we must go. Personal power alone is not enough. Personal power, personal influence, may be even disastrous unless it be guarded by personal character. We should thank God if in any degree He counts us faithful. It may be that in the development of faithfulness our first thought is that we have not much for which we can be grateful. We have stumbled so many times since thanksgiving season a year ago. Defeat rather than victory has been ours in many of our spiritual encounters with the world, the flesh, and the Adversary. But then we have had victories too. And at such times it has seemed almost as though we could hear the Master saying, as one day He will say to us each if we hold fast our confidence firm unto the end: "Well done." And if we **have** had victories -- if we are a little more just than a year ago, a little kinder, a little more like Christ -- we have cause to thank Him. Are we more disposed to be generous? Is conscience keener and quicker? Do we feel that God has helped us in the general movement and spirit of our lives to be more faithful? In short, have we grown somewhat in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? Then we have real cause for gratitude, for well we know, as the poet has said:

"Every virtue we possess
And every conquest won,
And every thought of holiness
Are His alone."

Then, too, while lifting our hearts in praise now for what the Lord has done for us in this respect, we may register a firm resolve that when thanksgiving season returns next year, should we still be here, we may have still more cause for joyfully adding the second element of our text: "I thank Him that enabled me, even Christ Jesus our Lord, for that He counted me faithful."

Finally this text teaches us that we should thank God for any privileges we may enjoy of ministering to others. Have we, in the year that is past, been allowed to help some one? Have we lifted a load from some weary heart? Have we made a sick-chamber brighter? Have we been "instant, in season and out of season" to ourselves to pass on the life-giving message that has

meant so much to us? Have we been privileged to share with others the blessings, both temporal and spiritual, which God has bestowed on us? Some one has put this thought in helpful lines, under the caption of:

"The Better Prayer"

"I thank Thee, Lord, for strength of arm,
To win my bread,
And that beyond my need is meat
For friend unfed.
I thank Thee much for bread to live,
I thank Thee more for bread to give.

"I thank Thee, Lord, for snug-thatched roof
In cold and storm;
And that beyond my need is room
For friend forlorn.
I thank Thee much for place to rest,
But more for shelter for my guest.

"I thank Thee, Lord, for lavish love
On me bestowed,
Enough to share with loveless folk
To ease their load.
Thy love to me I ill could spare,
Yet dearer is Thy love I share."

These, dear brethren in Christ, are some of the causes for thankfulness on our part. Shall we set apart a special day in which to render praise and thanks to God for such large favors to us? Or, rather, shall we not set apart every day, as a day for the expression, in deeds as well as in words, of our hearty thanksgiving to God for all His multiplied favors to us? Thanks be to God for preparing our way before us in a land where we have such inestimable privileges and advantages for growing in knowledge and in grace, and for advancing the cause of truth and Christian liberty. Thanks be to Him for delivering us out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of light and peace, and calling us to be the Bride of Christ, and joint-heirs of all things with His dear Son. , Let thanks rise from our hearts and find utterance on our lips with every remembrance we may have of each other in the bonds of Christian love and fellowship; let us thank Him not alone for the joys but also for the sorrows and trials of life, knowing that these, too, are working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; and let us rejoice and give thanks as He continues to enable us, counting us faithful and confirming us in the ministry of love of which the Gospel of Christ Jesus is the hub and center.

"We thank Thee, O Father,
For days yet to be,
For hopes that our future
Will call us to Thee;
That all our eternity
Form, through Thy love,
One Thanksgiving Day
In the mansions above." - P. L. Read

Our Fellowship

"Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son." - 1 John 1:3

(Continued from last issue)

HAVING considered our fellowship with the Father and with the Son from the ordinary standpoint of our "class" fellowship, let us now carry our inquiry to a further and deeper sphere of association. In the wonderful words quoted above, John was not 'thereby exhorting his brethren, of bygone and present times, to be diligent in their attendance at "meetings," even though the same necessity existed in John's day as in Paul's. (Heb. 10:25.) It was not on this matter merely that John placed on record for his brethren this last feature of his life long ministry. The fellowship of which he spoke could exist and produce its good fruitage entirely separate and apart from meetings of any kind, so far as visible association with brethren is concerned. It is very helpful to brethren whose opportunities permit of their assembling and worshiping with their fellows, and where it is possible all brethren ought so to do; but let no brother or sister be in despair, or feel in any way deprived if circumstances make brotherly contact **impossible**. As we have previously shown, brethren *may* have contact with brethren, and tinder the deplorable conditions when doctrinal strife proceeds unchecked, there may not even have been fellowship with each other, nor with the Lord. There are times and circumstances when isolation can be a blessing in disguise, providing always that the lonely one knows his or her way to the throne of grace, and sets apart definite days and hours for that deeper and unspoken fellowship with the Lord and Master. Better far to dwell in uncompanionable isolation than be forced into anguished isolation because of doctrinal strife; though either condition, if it be driving us "in to the Lord," should be accepted as a providence which, along with other things, can "work together for good to them that love God."

The fellowship of which John speaks is only for the fully consecrated child of God, and he or she can (and does) experience and enjoy its benefits, whether his lot is cast amidst arctic snows or torrid deserts or on the ocean's breast. It is a fellowship of union-union as branches with the "Vine," as John expressed it in his companion gospel. (John 15.) This fellowship in the Vine (in Christ), is the primary and most important phase of all fellowship-class fellowship is no more than a consequence of this primary fellowship.

It is an organizational fellowship-the only form of fellowship where organization is imperatively essential; yet they who are organized thereinto may live as far apart as the ends of the earth and not even know of each other's existence. "The Lord knoweth them that are His," and if they are known and accepted by the Lord, they are, by His Spirit, made members of His fellowship.

The Aged Apostle

Before we proceed further with our inquiry regarding this fellowship, let us think for a moment of the aged seer and Apostle whose words we are considering. In this way we may be able to arrive at some understanding of what the words meant to him.

By all the documentary evidence available, internal and external to the text, it is accepted by all expositors and writers that this letter was written between the years A.D. 90 and 100. At this time

John was an old man—a venerable patriarch, well nigh, if not fully, one hundred years old. He was the last living member of that little apostolic band which had walked and talked with Jesus of Nazareth, and from whom he and his brethren had received their apostolic commission to feed and edify the Church.

There may have been a few others still living who had seen Jesus in the flesh, but they could not have been many. "I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning": John addresses this little group. In the main, it was a second and a third generation among whom John dwelt—who had neither seen nor heard the Holy One of Israel, and to whom John sought to minister the Word of life.

What changes he had seen in his checkered life; and what memories he had stored up in heart and mind about that worthy Son of God! Through the most momentous years since time began he had been the companion and servant of the most important and illustrious Man the world has ever seen or known, and in this companionship he had grown mature and ripe and heaven-like. He had lived through seasons when prophecy was being fulfilled with every rising sun. He had witnessed the coming of Messiah, followed by His rejection and "cutting off." He alone, of all living men, could recall that ineffable thrill when his crucified Lord first appeared and gave them "the infallible proofs" that He was risen from the dead.

Other aged "fathers" may have memories of Pentecost, yet not quite like his own, for he had been of the inner circle of the apostleship. Others may have seen and heard Jesus, but there was none else who had leaned on His bosom and had "seen" and "heard" and "handled" the blessed One as he. No other tongue than his could tell of that last night in the upper room, of those sorrow-fraught words, of that matchless prayer, and of that deep longing for "oneness" in the Savior's heart. His position was unique and unparalleled—the sole survivor of the select company of God's appointed "Lamb."

Again, he had seen the fulfillment of those terrible words of doom uttered by Jesus as they had been executed upon Jerusalem and her wayward children. He had witnessed the hardening of heart which befell his kinsmen after the Lord's favors were withdrawn, and the "house" left desolate, until the cup of their iniquity was filled to the brim. And then, as they drank of that cup, the city was laid in the dust and the foeman's feet began to tread the ground where lay her polluted streets. Her children were scattered to the four winds, and Jerusalem was now no more "the city of the great King." The whole system of ceremonial and priestly government was past and gone, and that world-order instituted by Moses and perpetuated by the fathers was at an end, as Jeremiah had foretold, like a bottle broken beyond recovery. (Jer. 19:15.) The whole post-exilic nation had been shattered and scattered. Thus, not only had John seen the "daily" and atonement sacrifices superseded by the inception of the "better sacrifices" of Jesus and His followers, but he had lived to look back on the absolute cessation of all those long established offerings, when, at long last, there was no more High Priest, no Holy Place, no temple, and no Jerusalem! What eventful consequences were here of the depravity of man, and of the faithful seventies of God

Our aged Apostle could look back over the checkered career of the Church of Jesus—her varied persecutions and persecutors; the Sanhedrin in the earlier days when Saul was their inquisitor—general; and then Nero, and later Domitian, under whose wicked rule he himself had been banished to inhospitable Patmos.

He had seen the Jews, flocking in their thousands into the Church, attempting to localize and settle it as another respectable sect within the borders of Jewish orthodoxy. (Acts 21:20.) He had

seen them fall away again, likewise in their thousands, their object unaccomplished, but leaving the real believers dispirited and unstable, requiring that matchless letter to the Hebrews to recall them to their fidelity and constancy.

He could recall the outstanding teachers and their special teachings as the Church grew and the dangers threatened. There was his special companion in so many wonderful episodes, Peter, whose service to the Church had been so singular, and whose last permanent witness, recorded by hand in his epistles, called particularly upon the "no people" section of the Church to look to Christ, and to suffer with Him.

There was the James the just, that noble and intrepid leader of the church in Jerusalem, whose scorching words required the Jewish believer to supplement his professed faith by suitable works, done in righteousness. And there was Paul, that brand plucked from the burning; that giant, intellectually, whose understanding of things "hard to be understood" had been so profound, and who, in his own inimitable manner, had explained the way of redemption so fully in harmony with divine law and justice.

Under the mellowing influences of grace and benefiting by the longer perspective of time, John could look back over the checkered way and pick up here a thought from James, and there an idea from Peter, and yonder a conception from Paul, and blend and re-weave them into a fuller, deeper theme, along with his own memories of Jesus' own words and doings; shaping them all anew in the mold of his own intensely spiritual conception, until one feels that the aged seer speaks almost with the authority and depth of meaning of his beloved and absent Lord.

All the insistence of James regarding "works of righteousness" comes out in his forceful phrase, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, **and do** not the truth." (1 John 1:6.) Note also how 1 John 3:17 corresponds with James 2:15, 16 in showing practical compassion with the needy brother.

Believing is of no virtue except the hand and heart keep step with the head. And yet the loving Apostle is strong in his insistence upon belief also. "These things are written that ye may believe" -- so he says in the concluding stages in both gospel and epistle. "We know" is the constant reiteration of his pen (as it had previously been with his tongue), and while some of this knowledge may have been of the contemplative kind, yet it was all the outgrowth of words and scenes and doctrines laid up in memory's chambers in the long past days.

So he agrees with Paul about the necessity for faith, though in place of Paul's favorite word-justification-John substitutes his own word, "life." "He that believeth hath eternal life." The two terms are practically synonymous-only the writer (and consequently the individuality) is different.

Looking back from his vantage ground at the end of his long day, he gathers up much that had comforted or corrected the earlier Church, and which had helped in days of suffering and danger, and passes it through the mill of his own mystic mind, and brings it forth, new-phrased and fitly set to meet the needs of those last peculiar days. New dangers were arising, wherein the subtleties of gnosticism were beginning to entrap and wreck the minds of the unstable, but it was to the old truths and the old facts that he turned for his evidences to challenge and rebut them.

Hence his gospel, and the choice of just those episodes from his Master's life and ministry which showed Him possessed of those wonderful powers which turned water into wine, which from small supplies fed thousands, which healed the sick, opened birth-blind eyes, and even raised the dead four days deceased. Thus linking the new with the old, the present with "the beginning," he

showed them that there existed a "fellowship," a "oneness," between the first and most intimate followers of Jesus and these later-day believers who had believed through their word. "Fellowship" -- another priceless gem of thought, the changes upon which had been rung by both Peter and Paul as they told of "suffering **with Him**" in order to "reign **with Him**."

That their sufferings had been "with Christ" as well as "for Christ" they verily believed, and because of this they could speak of being "crucified with Him," of being "buried with Him," of being "planted together with Him"-and conversely of being "risen with Him," joined with Him in experience as well as in hope-a bond of "oneness" as close and intimate as the various and several members of the human body-a "common-union" as sweet and familiar as the wifely right to a husband's love-a participation so acute that the sufferings they felt were accounted a "fellowship of His sufferings." It had been a wonderful thought in the days when persecution was rife; it gripped -it held-it comforted-it energized,- and gave purpose and objective to life and service. And this was the precious gem which the aged Apostle culled from apostolic days and set forth, in that strange, dark day that followed Jerusalem's overthrow, before his tried and tested band of converts and brethren. Not that it had had its origin merely in apostolic days. It went back to "the beginning" to Him who was "the beginning" of the New Creation of God. We trace it back to that tragic night, that night of sorrow unapproachable, when the Man of Sorrows began to feel the harrowing weight of the whole world's sin rolling in upon His sensitive soul, and when ere going out into that hour of darkness, He committed His flock into the hands of God, beseeching God to keep them while the shadows of approaching death should circle Him around.

"Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are." "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: . . . I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; . . . and Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me." - John 17:11, 20, 21, 23.

It is here this precious gem is first found, and from these words spoken by the Son of God that their warranty is taken. And as the years went by, first one and then another of the heralds of the Gospel set it this way and then that, in framework of choicest thought and word as "apples of gold in baskets of silver." Our beloved Lord gave it its first wonderful setting in the picture of the Vine and of the Husbandman's care and attention.

Then Paul takes up the heavenly craftsmanship and works it into several forms -- a temple -- a body --a husband and wife -- a Captain and His followers -- always with the same idea. And now, his hair grown white as snow and his limbs feeble, so that his brethren must needs carry him into the assembly, the aged saint, last living remnant of those whom the Master called by Gallilee's sea, picks up the precious gem again, and showing it to his attentive friends, says to them, "Come into this fellowship and share with us the honor of this 'koinonia' with the Father and the Son! To this end I am telling you over again about Him -- the Word of life -- the Lord and Master of my early days, that you also may have fellowship with us."

How wonderful, then, is this message from its beginning; till now it is again repeated in the gathering shadows of John's twilight hours, and stands for all Christian time as one of the outstanding themes of that fervent tongue which could epitomize the whole story of redemption in the three short words, "God is love," and the story of triumphant righteousness in just three more, "God is light."

This, then, is the position of this venerable patriarch, who in his closing days reset for his day and for the whole Christian Church this most precious gem of truth. "Truly," says he, "our fellowship

is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ." Whatever else may become dim, as old age settled down upon him, this glorious fact was not effaced from memory's tablets!

We "saw," we "heard," we "handled," he says, not merely the flesh of the human Master, but also the form of Him raised up to be "the Word of life." The Word (or Logos) of life was He whom Peter declared to be "the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead." - Acts 3:15.

Remember, then, beloved in the Lord, when you take in hand the Holy Book of God and read for your profit and comfort from the words of this aged saint, be it gospel or letter, remember what his purpose was in writing out those hallowed memories of his youthful days. For to us today he addresses the same appeal--"that ye also may have fellowship with us," and to us are thereby applied the all embracing words of Jesus, "them that shall believe on Me through their words."

The purposes of this fellowship are manifold, but among the many things definitely outlined are:

- (1) The destruction of all evil things, the devil and all his works. - 1 John 3:8.
- (2) The reconciliation (by a propitiatory work) of the saints now and the world later. - 1 John 2:2.
- (3) The substitution of "life" for "death," and of "light" for "darkness" - a condition of eternal purity everywhere.

Dearly beloved, God has invited us into His fellowship; into an association with Him and with Jesus in the outworking of His loving, gracious purposes, but He has reserved to Himself the directorate of this vast, far-reaching plan; hence, a primary requirement of our acceptance is our submission to His will.

We must learn to be "all-out" for His purposes, sparing neither hand nor heart to that end. It is no seat on the "board" which God offers to us; but that notwithstanding, it is the greatest honor of all time to be called to be coworkers together with Him. But it means a full surrender-a full "setting apart" to His will and way.

Our Father Himself is wholly devoted to this purpose; our dear Lord Jesus is also wholly devoted to it; and we also must be "true-hearted, whole-hearted, faithful, and loyal" to His divine control and oversight. If, then, your daily lot is cast in some remote place, or some exacting situation which prevents your attendance with those of like precious faith, think not that the privileges of this fellowship are thereby withdrawn from you. Amid arctic wastes, in lonely glens, in far backwoods, under burning skies, in the loneliest outposts of all the five continents or all the seven seas there, if your heart is right with God, you may enter and participate in this fellowship with the Father and with His Son.

But, if in the kindly providence of God your lot is cast where you can meet with those of like precious faith, then, as you join heart and voice with them in holy worship, let that worship and communion be enjoyed subject to the requirements of this larger, loftier, universal fellowship; looking, at all times, more! to the larger things that unite than to the small, petty things which divide. Then, and then only, can our fellowship be "like to that above," because only thus it will always be linked to that *above*.

- *Contributed.*

"Put Away All Filthiness"

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.." - 2 Cor. 7:1

ALTHOUGH THE words of our text were not addressed by St. Paul to the worldly, they would, nevertheless, be excellent advice and very profitable to all. In a general way all civilized people recognize that "cleanliness is next to godliness." In a general way the pure, the clean, are recognized as the beautiful; and impurity and filthiness are detested even by the impure and the filthy. Outwardly at least we are in a time when water is plentiful, when soap is cheap, and when filthiness of the flesh is almost inexcusable as respects the outward man. But filthiness of the spirit cannot be cleansed with ordinary soap and water; and this is undoubtedly the reason why the Lord and the Apostles have not addressed these words to the world. - Psa. 119:9.

"Having these Promises"

Our text tells the difference between the well intentioned worldly person and the thoroughly consecrated Christian. The latter has heard through the Word of God certain "exceeding great and precious promises," which the well-meaning worldly class have not yet heard in the true sense of hearing-in the sense of appreciating, understanding. The whole civilized world, in one sense, has the same Bible, the same Word of God, the same precious promises; but it has not appreciated these. It has not understood them, accepted them, and made them its own by a surrender to the Lord. The Church, on the contrary, is composed of those who have heard the Lord's promises intelligently and accepted those promises upon God's conditions. Those promises of God constitute the power of God, which works in the heart of each of the Church, first to will aright and, secondly, to do to the extent of ability the Lord's good pleasure. - Phil. 2:13.

This is the class addressed in our text-the followers of Jesus. These have heard of the grace of God-that it is the divine purpose to bless Adam and his race through the great Mediator -- the Messiah, the Christ. They have heard that Jesus left the glory which He had with the Father and humbled Himself to human nature, in order that He might redeem the human race. They have heard that the application of the merit of His sacrifice, when made in due time, will be sufficient for the sins of the whole world; and that then the heavenly Father will turn over the world to the Redeemer. They have learned that the Redeemer, backed by divine authority, will put all things into subjection under His feet, will institute a heavenly Kingdom in the earth, and for a thousand years reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. They have heard that when He shall thus reign, His Kingdom shall be "under the whole heavens, although the King Himself will be the King of Glory on the spirit plane, "far above angels, principalities, and powers and every name that is named." - Eph. 1:21; Dan. 7:27.

They have heard that His Kingdom will prevail from sea to sea and unto the ends of the earth, and that eventually unto Him every knee shall bow and every tongue confess allegiance and obedience, and that all refusing thus to submit to that reign of righteousness will be destroyed from amongst the people in the second death. (Acts 3:22, 23.) They have heard that this great Kingdom will not only lift up, raise up, resurrect humanity from its fallen condition, from sin and death, but that it will also bring the whole earth to the condition foreshown in the Garden of Eden, making God's footstool glorious and every way fit to be the eternal habitation of such of the

human race as will be saved by that glorious Kingdom for which we pray, "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

"Beloved, Let us Cleanse Ourselves"

But these have heard something more-something that belongs to the present time. They have heard that it is the divine purpose to select from amongst mankind a Royal Priesthood, to be associated with the great Redeemer in His Mediatorial Kingdom. They have heard that a call went forth to this effect eighteen centuries ago, inviting, first of all, the Jews who were ready and willing to accept this very highest favor of God-joint-heirship with His Son in the spiritual Kingdom which is to bless mankind in general by and by. They have heard that to attain membership in this Royal Priesthood means the attainment of the character likeness of Jesus, to become copies of God's dear Son. (Rom. 8:29.) This implies, as its cost, the sacrifice of earthly interests. They have heard the Lord's Message, not only inviting to the glories of the Kingdom, but also informing them that the way to that crown of glory is a narrow and difficult one. They have heard the voice of the Master, saying, "Sit down first and count the cost," before you undertake such a consecration of your life, such a sacrifice of your earthly interests. "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, would be fit for the Kingdom" -- fit for a place on the throne as a joint-heir with Christ. (Luke 9:62.) They heard the further expression of St. Paul to all who would become joint-heirs with Christ in His Kingdom assuring them that if they suffer with Christ, they shall reign with Him. - Rom. 8:17.

We doubt not that as the heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus so loved the world as to provide the great Sacrifice for sin, so St. Paul loved the world -and all others of God's people must have a sympathetic love for the world. But when we think of those who are dearly beloved by the Father, by the Son, by the Apostles, and by each other, we think of the special class of consecrated saints who Scripturally are described as of no earthly sect or party, but as "the Church of the First-borns, whose names are written in heaven."

These are "dearly beloved" because they have the mind of Christ, which is also the mind of the Father. According to the flesh they are not all lovely or beautiful. St. Paul elsewhere admonishes us that amongst these "dearly beloved" are not many great, not many wise, not many noble, not many rich, but chiefly the ignoble and the poor of this world. Their riches and their nobility are not of the flesh, but of the spirit, of the heart, of the new will, to which they have been begotten of God by the Holy Spirit. This is surely the Apostle's thought, for in the preceding verse he speaks of these "dearly beloved" ones as "sons and daughters" of the Lord, children of the Almighty-hence begotten again of the Holy Spirit-"new creatures in Christ Jesus." (2 Cor. 5:17.) Ah, how wonderful it seems that there should be such a class as this in the world, yet not separated from the world, except by their new spirit! These are **in** the world but not **of** the world, as the Master declared. These have died to worldly aims and objects, and have become alive toward God through the Holy Spirit and through the quickening influences of God's exceeding great and precious promises given unto them. God's purpose respecting them is that they may be transformed from human nature to spirit nature-from participation with the world in the blessings coming to it to receive instead the divine nature, with the glory, honor, and immortality attaching thereto, as new creatures, sons of the Highest.

Christian "Filthiness of the Flesh"

Having located definitely the class addressed by the Apostle, "the saints" (2 Cor. 1:1), let us note why it is necessary that saints should receive such an exhortation. Why should the Apostle write to saints respecting the cleansing of their flesh from filthiness? Could one be a saint and yet have filthiness of the flesh?

We reply that these saints, begotten of the Holy Spirit, will not be perfected as new creatures until they experience the "change" of the "first resurrection." Meantime they have the treasure of the divine nature, the Holy Spirit, the first-fruits of their inheritance, in imperfect human bodies. It is not the flesh that is begotten again by the Holy Spirit, but a new mind, a new will. The will of the flesh they sacrifice. They give up all earthly rights and ambitions and accept instead the will of God, the will of Christ, the holy Spirit, that they may walk in newness of life. However, from the very beginning of their Christian experience all of these members of the Royal Priesthood, in the present life, pass through difficulties which arise from three different sources:

(1) The Adversary is in opposition to them, and will do them all the harm the Lord will permit. Their protection is the divine promise that they shall not be tempted above what they will be able to bear-that the Lord will so supervise their interests that with every temptation there will be provided a way of escape. - 1 Cor. 10:13.

(2) They are in a world that is dark with sin and selfishness, superstition and ignorance of God, and out of harmony with His righteousness. The world and its spirit surge about them every day, from morning until night. Its tides and currents seek to sweep them away from their resolutions of self-sacrifice and loyalty to God and righteousness. In various ways it holds out to them enchanting prospects, pleasures and riches, ease and affluence. These have their weight, even though it be known that comparatively few who follow the world's beckoning and allurements ever receive the fulfillment of the promises held out to them. - 1 Cor. 2:12-14.

(3) Then w creature's closest and most persistent adversary is his own flesh. The longings of his depraved nature cry out against restraints, and insist that he is taking an unreasonable course in that he undertakes to follow the Lord Jesus, and thus to go in an opposite direction from the course of the world and at the cost of the crucifixion, the mortification, of his own flesh and his natural preferences. - Rom. 8:13.

Thus viewed, every spirit-begotten Christian is an object of sympathy from the divine standpoint, and this should be their standpoint toward each other. But the world has no sympathy. The world sees not, neither does it understand nor appreciate the exceeding great and precious promises which lie behind the consecration of the "saints," "the Church of the First-borns." So much the more each of these brethren, "dearly beloved," should have sympathy for each other, should encourage one another, strengthen one another, build one another up in the most holy faith, and, by all means, do nothing to stumble each other in the narrow way. - John 13:34, 35.

The "saints" cannot fight Satan. They can merely by their wills **resist** him and rely upon the promises of grace to help and to protect. The "saints" cannot conquer the world and convert it to God-that is too herculean a task. God, as we have seen, has provided the thousand years of **Mes-**siah's reign for that purpose-to conquer the world, to overthrow sin, and to uplift the willing and obedient of humanity. But the "saints" must all overcome the world in the sense of resisting its spirit and keeping their hearts loyal to God, loyal to their covenant of consecration which they

have made to Him. The heavenly promises with the still greater rewards of glories, far above anything that the world has to offer, are the greatest aids in this resistance of the worldly spirit.

The great work for the Church is the good fight of faith manifested in the putting away of the filth of their own flesh and spirit. Some by nature have more filth of the flesh and spirit, more meanness, more selfishness, more natural depravity, etc., than have others. Nevertheless, the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; for God's arrangement is that each member of the Royal Priesthood shall be judged according to the spirit or intention, and not according to the flesh. From the time of the Christian's consecration to the Lord he is reckoned dead as a human being and alive as a spirit being. His test or trial is not with a view to seeing whether or not he can do the impossible thing of living an absolutely perfect life in an imperfect body. His trial or test, on the contrary, is to see to what extent his mind, his will, fights a good fight against his natural weakness and frailties. "There is none righteous, no, not one." All the trying in the world could not prove this divine statement an incorrect one. Righteousness of the will, holiness of heart, purity of heart, are the possibilities. For these God seeks; and these He will reward in the "first resurrection" by granting perfect spirit bodies, in full harmony with their pure hearts, their loyal intentions and purposes. - Rom. 3:10; 1 Tim. 6:12

How to Put Away Filth of the Flesh

If it is impossible for the new creature to perfect the flesh, what does the Apostle mean by urging the saints to cleanse themselves from the filth of the flesh? He means that we should not, as new creatures, be discouraged and say that, because we cannot hope to attain perfection in the flesh, therefore we will make no endeavors in that direction. He wishes us to understand that it is the Lord's will that we fight against the weaknesses of the flesh with a twofold purpose

(1) That we may gradually cleanse ourselves -- gradually become more and more what the Lord would have us be and what we should like to be ourselves.

(2) Additionally, this fight against sin in the flesh will make us stronger and stronger as new creatures, in the spirit of our minds. It is this firmness, this determination, this positiveness of the new creature **against sin** and **for righteousness** that God desires. Those who develop it are called "overcomers"; and all of their experiences in these trials and battlings against the world, the flesh, and the Adversary, are designed to make them "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." Their experiences are so ordered and directed as to lead them to more and more of faith in God and obedience to Him. In order to be acceptable, they must reach the place where they love righteousness and hate iniquity-in-equity-injustice. - Psa. 45:7; Luke 16:13.

The word spirit in the Bible and in ordinary language is used in a variety of senses. In our text it does not signify that the saints, as spirit beings, are filthy and need cleansing. Quite to the contrary, the new creature, begotten of the Holy Spirit, is pure. "But as the new creature must use the body of flesh until it receives the new body, so it must use the brain or mind of the flesh wherewith to do its thinking and reasoning, until that which is perfect shall be attained in the "first resurrection." The Apostle's meaning, therefore, is not only that the saints should put away filthiness of words and actions, and all sympathy with, impurity of every kind, but that their minds (their thoughts) also should be pure, should be cleansed of everything not fully in sympathy and accord with the mind of Christ. Nor are we to suppose that this work is purely God's work in us. It is His to forgive the sins of the past. It is His to cleanse us from all condemnation of the past. It is His to cover through Christ all of our unintentional blemishes. It is His to encourage by His promises. But it is ours to show our loyalty to the principles of His Word and character by putting away, to the extent of our ability, all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. - Phil. 2:12, 13; 2 Peter 1:10.

- Pastor Russell's Sermons

Encouraging Message;

Dear Brethren:

We are writing about a matter to which some of us have given much prayerful consideration lately. A few years ago a public witness for the Truth of God's Word seemed to get little results. The public was not deeply interested, and those who had been enlightened on the teachings of God's Word were mostly meeting together in such groups as the various divisions had created. They seemed to be satisfied. But now conditions seem to be different. The public is perhaps no more interested than before, which we believe is due to our nearness to the end of the period for the selection of the Bride of Christ. However, within the last year we have known of a number of the Lord's consecrated who are not "assembling themselves together." These were not just in one place but in several different places. Some did not know of any group not dominated by a leader with "isms," so they preferred to be alone. Then there are some who are beginning to realize that they have been led farther and farther from the Word of God. They have not accepted these errors but do not know what to do.

Of course, all of those who love the Lord and their brethren and are walking daily under the influence of God's Word want to do what they can to assist these brethren. There may be some who have moved and do not know that there is a Class with whom they could meet. It has been suggested that where possible, lectures be given on subjects which are familiar to those who have known the Truth and still love the Lord. It has also been suggested that the regular Class meetings be advertised, giving the subject in such a way as to attract these friends.

We would like to know what you think about this matter and what is being done in other sections.

Yours in the Master's service,
F. W. K. -- Kans.

Dear Brethren:

I greatly appreciate your kindness in continuing my subscription in your mailing list, and hereby send for renewal.

I have taken the "Herald" almost continually since it was first published, and love it, and have found much comfort and help in its message of love and encouragement in the narrow way. I am a "shut in" and have been a believer in present truth since 1896.

I Would I could write all that is in my heart. There would be no blame, only praise and thanksgiving for faithful brethren and a journal so nearly like what the dear old, Watch Tower used to be.

With Christian love,
Mrs. A. M. H.: Ohio
Please send me one-half dozen of the new tract, "The World of Tomorrow."