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To Live Christ -- the Happiest of New Years

Our Year Text for 1940

"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." - Phil. 1:21,

IT WAS not just because uncertainty shrouded his future, not because he might be brought any day from his dungeon cell to face sentence to death that the great Apostle uttered these words which have exerted a transforming power in the lives of all Christians to this day. It was not merely "now" that Christ was being "magnified" in his body, but "always." (Ver. 20.) That word "always" covers every thought, word, and deed from the day of the vision on the road to Damascus, which, laying hold on Saul of Tarsus, changed his breathing out of threatenings and slaughter into the dispensing of the greatest possible of present blessings. It was not only "all the Pretorian camp" (where he at that moment wore the manacles of Christ) that was his field of endeavor; but "all other places," the whole known world. The fragrance of such a life as his could not be confined to the narrow quarters of a soldiers' camp. In fact, the seeds of his planting had already spread until, scattered throughout that vast expanse, there were other lives sending up the same sweet incense; or, under a similar figure, the fragrance of the same anointing oil. "Now, thanks be to that God, who always leads us forth to triumph with the Anointed One, and who diffuses by us the fragrance of the knowledge of Him **in every place**. Because we are a sweet odor of Christ to God." - 2 Cor. 2:14, 15, Diaglott.

From the day of his anointing, the purpose that pervaded the life of the Apostle was the glorifying of Christ, the principle that ruled his life was the favor of Christ, and the Word that governed the life of Christ in every word and act (John 3:11; 5:19, 30; 7:16; 8:28; 14:10, 24) was the sole rule of his own life. He desired no more, whether living or dying, than to win Christ and to be found in Him. He truthfully could say not only, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" (surely a glorious past), -- but, bringing his consecration down to the present, he could say just as truthfully, and with even more fervor,

"Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but vile refuse, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That

I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." (Phil. 3:7-10.) In this passage the Apostle has touched on some of the details of the life that is "gain"- "old things passed away"; a mind that looks back upon them not with longing, but, rather, with abhorrence; self confidence gone; justification by faith depended on; an intimate personal knowledge of Christ his objective. His was a consuming desire that there might be as a reality in his own life the fulness of the power that reached into the depths of the grave and lifted to the very courts of heaven Him who became sin for us; his was even an eagerness to "fill up to the brim those things that are left over of the sufferings of Christ" (literal translation). Pervading all this was a calm and solemn purpose -that' this life of gain might culminate as did the life he emulated, a willing sacrifice, holy, acceptable-death, gain. This is to "know Christ"; this "is Christ" -- "the hope of glory" so transcending that the Apostle could conceive of no adversary so powerful, no conditions so distressing, no pathway so demon infested but that all would be a mere trifle "if by any **means**" he "might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

Humility might seem to be lacking in a claim so lofty as "for me to live is Christ." In this, however, Paul is not counting that he has already "attained,' either were already perfect." On the contrary, true modesty is the key-note of this statement, as it is of the yet more clear one, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." His would not have been the life of Christ if it had not been the life of pressing on; "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before." "For all those of our number who are mature, this must be the point of view." (Moffatt.) "Let us mind the **same** thing."

The world's calendar gives us with the New Year a convenient season to reexamine our spiritual standing, a time to renew our spiritual resolves. No question more searching could be asked of ourselves than "Is it true that for me 'to live is Christ'? Have I in every particular, present and future, determined that 'to die is gain'?" No higher resolve can be ours than that these phrases shall be as true of us from this moment to the end of our course' as of the faithful one who wrote them -- a weak one like ourselves. But when he was weak (in self), then was he strong (in the Lord).

In the first phrase the Apostle doubtless would include: (1) separation for Christ, (2) dedication to Christ, (3) use by Christ, (4) likeness to Christ, and (5) concealment in Christ. Briefly let us examine ourselves in the light of each of these points.

Separation for Christ

To live Christ can never mean less than the complete life of separation which was His. "In the world, but not of it," every phase of life was contacted by Him, but by that contact He was no more contaminated than is the pure ray of sunshine by the foulest corner it enlightens.

Jesus' contacts with the evil elements of the world were neither specially sought nor shunned, though when opportunity offered or need required He found great joy in serving the meanest sinner or in a literal leaving behind of all worldly minds and in seeking isolated communion with His Father in nature's most inspiring surroundings. The self-righteous one can neither fully appreciate that fellowship nor avoid the fear of contamination if he were to linger in the presence of the sinner brought directly to him from the discovery of her guilt. Rather than exercise charity, self-righteousness, falling under the temptation to pride and self-laudation, would have brought

up all the sins of long ago that a black background might be furnished in which his supposed righteousness might shine.

How often we find that earth's follies have "touched" us, for they intrude into our most sacred moments. Even when we are on our knees before the very throne of God, the trivial things of life and often even the polluting influences of the daily contacts will intrude. Physical separation there may have been, but the "unclean thing" has touched us to our damage because we have touched it in spirit. The natural mind would be content with a physical separation; but as in our separation from Babylon, so in leaving the world, the purpose is that we "be not partakers of her sins." To continue in any of the sins of Babylon or the world, either actively or mentally, may result in a smug though condemned contentment. Separation **for** Christ inevitably results in a life of blessing for self and for all we contact who partake of His Spirit.

Dedication to Christ

Vastly the blessings increase when to the separation is added dedication-consecration. In the separation the loss for Paul, as for Jesus, was home, friends, reputation, prospects; even life itself daily was laid down. As one of the results of his life of consecration hundreds of homes, however, became his, true and eternal friendships were made, and he won favor with the One whose standards are perfect. In dedicating himself to God and His service, he entered upon the course that leads to all that life can offer, the way to the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" reserved for those who "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

The New Year could bring us nothing of greater worth than that old things should pass away, be shut out of our minds, so that we may fix our mental gaze unwaveringly upon the "things that are eternal in the heavens." The completeness of the dedication can be clearly discerned by the individual himself by the reality of the separation. Cunningly the flesh argues the necessity of "things" that the life may be "abundant"; with unbelievable persistence the heart supposedly dedicated to Him who is love, clings to the ways of the flesh, even relying on evil-speaking, envy, sarcasm, malice in its boasted "contending earnestly for the faith." Perhaps it is well that practically all Christians can look back with shame to such practices in their own lives that they may have charity with the brother who, while bearing the sacred vessels of the Lord, brings disgrace upon the vessels and the One whose they are. Dedicated? Yes. A priest? Surely, or at least a Levite; but before he was dedicated to the Lord, he was dedicated to self, the world, and the Adversary. The habits formed in those days must be outgrown. In consecration he has said, "I am not my own. Take me. Use me. Transform me until no more 'For me to live is I, the selfish I, the self-seeking I, the envious I, the boastful I.'" "Not I, but Christ." What a shout of victory there is in these words! The arches of eternity will ring with them. "For me to live is Christ," now, and for eternity.

"Naught of self to mar His glory,
Naught of sin to make it dim,
Just a glorious, glorious shining
That the friends around see Him.
Resurrection joys abounding;
Every morning mercies new;
Every day His conscious presence;
All our life one interview."

Use by Christ

In the little loom where is being woven daily the intricate pattern of our lives, strange materials are used. In the vaster loom where the eternal purposes of our God for a universe are being worked out, the Master Weaver uses even such as we; and the result will be a tapestry eternally glorifying Him. The most insignificant thread in that loom is necessary to the perfection of the pattern. True dedication, therefore, accepts joyfully so trifling a service as the giving of "a cup of cold water, in the name of a disciple"; nor hesitates at any God given service -- no service is too large or too small.

Dedication does not wait for commands; but a mere "this is the will of God concerning you" is enough. Before He entered upon the life of sacrifice, our "File-leader" could say, "Thy law is within My heart." No urging was necessary. He needed only to know that "the will of God" for Him was sanctification, setting apart as a holy sacrifice. One who could without reservation say, "For me to live is Christ," one who knew all the joys and all the cost of dedication, one who knew and emulated the tender mercies of the heavenly courts so that he, too, could "rejoice," as Jesus did, in sufferings for the Church--this one beseeches, "by the tender compassions of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice," in dedication that places no restrictions on Him who sends the fire that consumes the sacrifice. Paul was speaking from the darkest depths of experiences that had resulted from a dedication to the God of "tender compassion." Not fleshly comforts, honors, and prospects had been showered upon him; but, rather, the Father assured him: "I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake" bearing "reproaches, . . . greater riches than the treasures of Egypt"; being "defamed"; made the "filth of the world, the off scouring of all things"; scourged; beaten with many stripes; stoned; thrown into prison--these were the lot of one fully dedicated to the God of all compassion for him to live was Christ. His Christ was the Christ of the Cross.

Though such experiences are not often today the lot of those who are used by Christ, even in our milder sufferings with Christ the half-hearted will find abundant reason for discouragement and idleness. There was probably some one in Philippi saying, "There are no opportunities for service today"; while others were packing that box to be sent the thousand miles to cheer Paul's prison cell. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." It is easy to interpret this to mean: "Do good **only** to the household of faith, or at least only to those who show some interest in our message"; thus utterly failing of use for Christ in giving to the neighbor next door the cup of cold water he is ready to accept.

Likeness to Christ

Without the dedication that made Paul ready for the most insignificant service, there could have been no likeness to Christ. Also, to attain that likeness, the power working in him must be the "surpassing greatness" of power, even that which raised Jesus from the grave. A lesser power could produce some one or even a few points of likeness to Christ, but for the completing of the likeness, for filling "with all the fulness of God" as, Jesus was filled, this miracle that must be worked for every individual of the 144,000, the "**exceeding** greatness of His power" was required.

The intimate, personal, daily, hourly, moment by moment walk with Jesus is truly an essential if we would know Him so well as ever to become "like Jesus," so well that "for me to **live** is Christ." Living, is not a spasmodic thing indulged in a few moments each day-"For me to live is Christ [uninterruptedly; eternity has begun for me]." God had graciously given Saul a vision of himself and a vision of Jesus, neither vision to fade until he should be changed, utterly changed, and "old things had passed away, **all** things had become new." Each one of us, too, may "see Jesus," "a living, bright reality," throughout 1940 -- if for us also "old things **are** passed away."

Briefly the beloved disciple sums up the beauties of the One we emulate as "full of grace and truth" -every grace was His in fulness, and all truth that was due was **lived** by Him. To desire less is to fail of attaining His image. To attain it is to "be satisfied when I awake in His likeness."

Concealment in Christ

"To me to live is Christ" and **not** myself. From the moment one is "in Christ" he is more or less concealed in Christ: the concealing work is begun. Outside of Christ we are nothing, but in front of that cipher place the One who "is able," and we live "according to the power that worketh in us. All power in heaven and earth is His. In Him we rest the blissful, peaceful, joyful rest of the full assurance faith alone can give. It is a "little flock only that have enjoyed it, for it is only a little flock who have lost faith in self that they might have concealment in Him. To enjoy it, self interests must be abandoned, even the old body itself presented a "living sacrifice." Concealed in Him, the very will of self is trampled under foot that He may "work in us to **will** and to **do**." His will alone must reign in us.

For concealment in Him, the willing of His will is first, and of paramount importance. Without that, in everything we **do** there is a shameful revealing of self, instead of a blessed concealing. Unless the consuming desire is self-effacement in Christ, shame and confusion await, even though there are truly "great and mighty works" of which to boast -- **powerful discourses**, that glorify the preacher; hundreds of converts, **our** converts instead of God's; bounties outpoured, "to be seen of men"; bodies given to be burned, for personal vindication: all this without Christ, and "I am nothing" again, for I have lost the One that made the cipher something.

To Die is Gain

Make these, and the many other things that are comprised in the phrase "For me to live is Christ," ours and we need no one to instruct us that "to die is gain," a gain that words cannot express, but "God hath revealed it unto us by His-Spirit." (1 Cor. 2:10.) As Jesus alone received the Spirit "without measure," He alone could fully know the joys of that gain. If self still lives, it will think of the **losses** rather than the gains, and those things gained it will plan to use for self first and then for others. If Christ live in us, our transcendent joy will be the use to which our new powers may be put now in laying down our lives for the members of His body, and in the future, as the seed of Abraham, in blessing "all the families of the earth." Self may dream of the honors it is to enjoy; "dead with Him," His honor alone will employ us. If for me to live is Christ, then to the ages of the ages I will with Him be able to say, "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works." Before the veil is passed, every thought, word, and deed will have been brought under His control. "Casting down reasonings, and every high thin;; that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity **every**

thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5; see Diaglott), what a glorious year 1940 will be; perhaps the very gateway of heaven! Who can compute the gain!

But can we attain a standard so high? "Not I, but Christ." "He is able to do **exceedingly ABUNDANTLY ABOVE ALL that we ask or think**, according to the power that worketh in us." Oh that He may freely work in us this year to "will and to do of His good pleasure," so that each one of us can truly say, "Christ liveth in me."

"To me to live is Christ," *on* Him
The precious Corner-stone,
I build my house in faith, and lean
Upon His strength alone.

"To me to live is Christ," *in* Him,
Firm and secure I stand,
And know that no opposing power
Can pluck me from His hand.

"To me to live is Christ," *to* Him
I fly in all my need,
And pray Him with the Bread of Life
My fainting soul to feed.

"To me to live is Christ," *from* Him
I draw a full supply
Of grace, enabling me to fight
And win the victory.

"To me to live is Christ," *for* Him
I daily strive to live,
My wish-more fully still to Him
My life's best days to give.

"To me to live is Christ," *with* Him
I hold communion blest,
Foretaste of that more glorious day
Of never-broken rest.

And thus enriched, what can I need
Yet more to fill my heart?
Nought, nought but this, dear Lord, one day
To see Thee as Thou art!

To me to live will then be Christ
Indeed, for in its train
My very death will bring to me
The Everlasting Gain!

Thy Kingdom Come

"And after this manner pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." - Matt. 6:9, 10.

MEASURING TIME, as we do, by our calendar year, we have arrived another step nearer to Christ's final gathering of the Church to Himself. The very thought of it is exhilarating to the spirits of those who are Christ's; whose hope of this gathering is a living reality. We have the glorious prospect immediately before us of being not only with Him, but like Him and of sharing with Him His Kingdom-that Kingdom whose existence for the next thousand years will be for the purpose of bringing the whole human family, living and dead, to (1) a correct knowledge of God, and (2) the restoring of whosoever will to pristine beauty and perfection, the God-likeness of Eden.

Another year stretches before us; a year destined, we believe, to witness rapid steps in the fulfilling of God's purposes for this age. The heavens, or ruling powers, already show signs of dissolution; they even now wrestle with mutual mistrust, and chaos in international affairs is becoming apparent. As we witness the passing away of the kingdoms of this world, it is well that we reassure ourselves of the nature of the Kingdom that is Christ's, and just how we are to become joint heirs in that Kingdom for which we have been taught to pray.

Kingdom Defined

It is well, at the outset, that we define what we mean by "a kingdom," for the term carries with it two distinct thoughts; or, we might say, a kingdom has two phases: a kingdom consists of (1) those having royal power and authority, those who exercise dominion; and (2) those subjects and territories governed or ruled by the reigning house. For instance, when we speak of the Kingdom of God, we refer to that which is ruled- over by God, or is under His sway; including, thus, the Ruler and the ruled.

Man, in the beginning, was in subjection to God, his Creator, made "in the likeness of God." This was a dominion of life; for the covenant with the first pair was that of a continuance of life, dependent only on their obedience. But man is not now in such a blessed condition; rather, since the fall in Eden, the race is spoken of in Scripture as being subjects of the prince of darkness. True it is that "the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whosoever He will" (Dan. 4:17); yet this domain is not in the hearts and lives of men, for in this sense man is truly under the dominion of Satan, whose power in man works death. (Heb. 2:14.) All of the race are born subject to the prince of darkness, "born in sin and shapen in iniquity." (Psa. 51:5.) Even those who will be of the very elect "were dead in trespasses and sins; and in times past walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom we all had our conversation in times past in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature children of wrath even as others." (Eph. 2:1-3.) Satan's sway, his dominion over the race, is continued and made tenacious by the power of darkness, darkening the mind to the light of truth. (2 Cor. 4:4.) And how we are daily made conscious, both in our contact with fellow man and by the world conditions, that "darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people." (Isa. 60:2.) Wherever man is found on the face of the whole earth, there, too, is found ignorance of the true

God, superstitious religions, vanities, false philosophies, injustices, fears, cruelties, etc. always sin and death. What a dominion!

A Righteous Kingdom Promised

But it is the unvarying testimony of Scripture that this condition is to be done away;, to be superseded by "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," "times of restitution of all things spoken by the mouth of all His holy Prophets" (Acts 3:19-21), for "the God of heaven will set up a Kingdom which shall never be destroyed; it shall break in pieces and consume all other kingdoms"; it shall be "the desire of all nations," wherein "righteousness shall be laid to the line and justice to the plummet."

Continually we read in the Old Testament Scriptures of a Kingdom which God has promised to establish' in the earth to take away the reign of sin and death. It was that which Enoch saw by faith and prophesied of; it was that "city" for which Abraham looked. Its coming and wonders were sung by Prophet and bard, when "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth" (Isa. 25:6-9); when "the righteous shall flourish; and there shall be abundance of peace so long as the moon endures"; when the cries of the needy shall be heard; when souls will be delivered from deceit and violence (Psa. 72); when wars should cease, and implements of war be no more; but rather be recreated into implements of domesticity (Isa. 2:2-4); when God shall put His law in the inward parts of man, and write it in their hearts; and He shall be their God, and they shall be His people (Jer. 31:33) when even the very earth itself shall blossom as a rose in its hitherto barren spaces.

However much we study the Word of God, we are continually reminded that what God purposed for the human race, before He ever permitted the reign of sin and death, is the provision of a Kingdom of heavenly origin that should "bless all the families of the earth" (Gen. 22:18); even those who are now in their graves. (John 5:25-29.) This occupied the mind of Jesus; and He taught that it should be the object of our prayers: "After this manner pray ye: Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is done in heaven" (Matt. 6:10)-as though saying, Let this be continually in your prayers, the object of your desires, that man be again brought under the sway and dominion of God. And Jesus urged, stressing the point, that His hearers seek the Kingdom of God and its righteousness, even now, for it is to such who succeed in this, a little flock, that His Father is to give the Kingdom. "Fear not, little flock, for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." (Luke 12:32.) When we consider what that Kingdom is to accomplish-writing the law of God in the hearts of all the willing and obedient, until all such have been recreated in the image and likeness of God, making the knowledge of the glory of God fill the earth as the waters cover the sea -- we easily perceive that only a spirit power of heavenly origin is sufficient for it.

Our Share in It

As in the Old Testament, so in the New; the Kingdom is ever before the minds of the inspired writers; but, instead of the "all families of the earth" who are to be blessed, it is rather the preparation of the "Seed," who are to exercise the royal power and authority, that is almost wholly in view. ("Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world? . . . Know ye not that we shall judge angels?") This is that viewpoint, or phase of the Kingdom, that we as Christians are

particularly interested in. The requirements and qualifications for joint-heirship in that Kingdom are exact and undeviating. Let us ever bear this in mind: "Whom God foreknew, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." - Rom. 8:29.

Humility Necessary

As Jesus opened His discourse in the Sermon on the Mount, He stressed the prime characteristic for membership in that Kingdom, saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven." Not that all who are humble spirited will be of that Kingdom. Oh, no! but it is an essential characteristic, for it is clearly stated as being the prime characteristic of Jesus, "who made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." "Let this mind be in you." - Phil. 2:5-8.

How we as human beings do want to be somebody! We are ever on the alert to exalt self; and even when in a wrong course, swift to justify ourselves in word and conduct. Difficult it surely is to become dead to self, absolutely; it is a strait gate, a hard way to enter into life, and only a few, a "little flock," will find it; yet it is a necessity to discipleship, a prerequisite to joint-heirship with Christ. "If we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him." It is only as we are converted and become as little children that we shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 18:1-4.) God is not choosing many of the mighty of this world, not many wise or great; and such of these that He does call must put off those characteristics which pertain to the flesh, the "old man," and "be renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him [a new man]." (Col. 3:10.) Furthermore, all our boasting of our many works for the Lord will go for naught; for in the day when the Kingdom is made up, there will be found left out all those who base their hopes and prospects of inheritance on having made claim to being the Lord's very own, and of having prophesied and done many wonderful works in His name; while included will be those who, as true 'disciples, gloried only in Christ, and sought with singleness of purpose and a simple sincerity of heart to know and to do the will of their Father.

But it is clearly stated in 1 Corinthians 6:9 that "the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God"; and as "we were by nature children of wrath even as others," it necessitates that a mighty deliverance and change take place to fashion us as coheirs in the Kingdom of light. And this is just what God has accomplished in us, as the Apostle states it: "The Father hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light He hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son." - Col. 1:12, 13.

Lesser and Greater Hopes

We fear, generally speaking, that among those who have been enlightened with the present truth, the uppermost thoughts concerning the Millennium! Kingdom have been of a time when there shall be better economic conditions; when "every man shall sit under his own vine and fig-tree"; when "the desert shall blossom as a rose"; when "all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God and come forth"; when wars shall cease for all times; when "the lame man shall leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing"; when "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, not crying, neither shall there be any more pain." All this is true, and will surely come to pass, for God has spoken it, and His word never returns to Him void, but accomplishes that which He pleases and prospers in the thing whereunto He sends it. (Isa. 55:11.) Yet these things are but

incidental to the true import of that Kingdom; for "this shall be the covenant: . . . I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people." "To the Jew first, after that the Gentile." The true import of that Kingdom will be to deliver all, living and dead, from the power of sin and death, "the bondage of corruption," and bring all, whosoever will, into subjection to God, under God's sway and dominion, restoring the God-likeness that was in the original creation. - Jer. 31:33; Rom. 1:16.

What a stupendous undertaking! Who dare undertake it? To whom can God entrust such a task with the absolute certainty of its accomplishment? And the Scriptures answer - To His sons: first, to Christ, for "the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." But He is to have joint-heirs; so we read: "Indeed, the earnest expectation of creation longs for the revelation of the sons [plural] of God. For the creation was made subject to frailty, . . . in hope that even the creation itself will be emancipated from the slavery of corruption, into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans together and travails in pain together till the present time. And not only it, but ourselves also, possessing the first-fruit of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for sonship, - even the redemption of our body [the body of sons]." - Rom. 8:19-23, Diaglott.

A footnote from the Diaglott will serve to clarify this word rendered "creation" by the translator. Quoting: "'Ktisis,' creation, has the signification here as in Mark 16:15: 'Proclaim the glad tidings to the whole creation,' that is, all mankind; and also in Col. 1:23, where a similar phrase occurs. That the brute and inanimate creation is not here spoken of, but mankind, is evident from the hope of emancipation from the 'slavery of corruption' held out in the 21st verse, and the contrast introduced in the 23rd verse, between the 'ktisis' and those 'possessing the first-fruits of the Spirit.'

The First-Fruit

This first-fruit of the Spirit here spoken of is our begetting to sonship, as elsewhere we read: "Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures" (James 1:18); "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Cor. 5:17); "unto us are given exceeding great and precious promises that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature [the nature of God], having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Pet. 1:4); "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." - 1 John 3:1.

It is not only possible to be delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son. (Col. 1:13), but God has accomplished it on behalf of His elect. This has meant a new begetting, to be finally brought forth in a new birth. It is only to those who have thus been begotten again, who have received the firstfruits of the Spirit, that the real meaning of the Kingdom of God can be discerned. (John 3:3-5.) And this deliverance from the power of darkness has been made possible by means of the enlightenment which has come to us through the knowledge of the truth.

"The Kingdom of Righteousness"

One who has been born blind and has never experienced the sensation of light cannot even surmise what it means to see the form and shape of objects, the beauties of the world of color, etc.; but once light has penetrated to the optic nerves, and these have registered images on the brain, the great contrast between light and darkness is startlingly manifest. The one thus enlightened is delivered from the necessity of groping in blindness, and is enabled to follow along a chosen path, so long as there is light.

How well this illustrates what God has done for us. By means of the light of truth He has delivered us from the power of darkness of mind imposed upon us by the thralldom of the god of this world, delivered us from the necessity of walking according to the spirit that now rules in the children of disobedience. This same Word of truth that has enlightened us has also been the begettal seed to a new life, so that it is equally true that we have been translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son, have come under the sway of the law and Spirit of Christ, as His disciples-as well as having been delivered from the kingdom of darkness.

But the fact that we have been enlightened does not necessarily carry with it the assurance of a place in Christ's Kingdom as His joint-heirs. We must bear in mind that "many are called, but few are chosen." We recall, in this connection, one of the parables of the Kingdom: the net cast into the sea that gathered of every kind, which when it was full, they drew ashore and sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. (Matt. 13:47, 48.) Rather, since being enlightened, and no longer ignorantly servants of Satan, we are warned that we have arrayed against us all the forces of evil, "the world, the flesh, and the devil," which all have to be overcome by every one who is to be included in the final choice for the Kingdom.

And how logically necessary this is, for how could the Kingdom powers of the Millennium ever expect to write the law of God in the hearts of a sinful and disobedient race unless they first have mastered that law in themselves? How teach all men to love and worship God, to be meek and merciful and righteous, unless the teachers have first learned? How restore fallen humanity to the image of God, unless the restorers are themselves pure in heart? It is only "to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I overcame and am set down with My Father in His throne." - Rev. 3:21.

"The Day is at Hand"

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand." It cannot be long, now, ere "the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, shall be heard saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready." There is still sacrificing and toil to be done on behalf of fellow members of the body; each of us has some labor of love allotted him of the Lord in fashioning the antitypical temple stones. The Kingdom of God, "the Holy City," cannot come down for its beneficent reign until first the "wife hath made herself ready." - Rev. 19:6, 7; 21:1-6.

The time nears when "the saints of the Most High shall take the Kingdom, and possess it." (Dan. 7:18.) So in this year before us let us keep in mind that phase of the Kingdom, which is ours to be kings and priests unto God, ruling with power and authority to dispense all the long-promised

blessings; considering, too, what are the qualifications of those who are to be joint-heirs with Christ in that Kingdom, even to be so devoted to the Father's will that it will be true of us as it was of Jesus, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God: Thy law is written in my heart"; so that like Christ we will manifest the Father, because of His indwelling Word and Spirit. Ever pray, "Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, even as it is in heaven."

Another Year

One more year behind us,
Year of the hill and vale,
Finger of Time to point us
Over a mountain trail.

Songs that break up the silence
And tell of the Spirit's light,
Clouds that muffle the ridges,
Diamonds that gem the night.

Just one more year now vanished,
Brief days with their blush at dawn,
Harvest of gold thoughts garnered
When the sun's last kiss was on.

Pain-throbs, some wounds, and blood-drops,
But notes of peace that fell,
And over the grim great vastness
The voice of the Alpine bell.

And another span before us
Smiles with a hope that's clear,
And we know that He who has led us
Will do so this coming year.

Still lies the way before us,
The summit is yet above,
But our Guide is true and will lead us through
To the heights of eternal love.

-- Contributed

The True Mark of Christian Maturity

Part I

"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." - Rom. 13:14.

THE ending of the narrow way leading to life immortal is pictured to us in the Scriptures by a variety of helpful illustrations. It is represented as the ending of a successful race, and also as the end of a victorious warfare. Again, it is beautifully pictured as a long period of betrothal, culminating in the marriage of the espoused Church to her heavenly Bridegroom. Each illustration has its own special truth and lesson to unfold. But the ending is frequently brought to our attention in a manner calculated to remind us of some things of the present hour, the recognition of which will have everything to do with finishing our course with success and joy. The conditions on which we may hope to have a happy and abundant entrance into the presence of God, we are told again and again in the Word, need our very special attention now. The Apostle Paul would have us remember that possessing the mind of Christ, the likeness of Christ, and having "Christ formed in us," is the only condition on which we shall reach a place in the glorified Church. He informs us that "no man is crowned except he strive lawfully," clearly implying that there are inflexible rules governing the race we run, any oversight of which will mean our forfeiting the "Well done" from the lips of the Master. A zealously run race will avail nothing if these rules be ignored, just as a well-built structure of wood, hay, and stubble will result in disapproval and destruction, though its builder rear it on the right foundation. (2 Tim. 2:5; 1 Cor. 3:12.) In the matters of both race and building, the spirit of careful study of the mind of the Lord and obedience thereto is made a thing of supreme importance.

As Paul is the Apostle who has given us the most complete picture of what constitutes Christian maturity, we may with profit review some of his admonitions concerning it, as well as note his fervent desire to attain it in fullest measure for himself. We are impressed with his own determination to always keep pressing onward and upward until he has laid hold of all that for which Christ has laid hold on him. He keeps that final end in view; and to "be found in Him," then, is to Paul the thing most fervently to be sought. Remembering all that Paul had attained of knowledge and of relationship to the Lord, and still finding him "pressing on" toward greater attainments in both, are we not rebuked thereby if so be we have in any degree settled down in contentment with our present state of knowledge and grace? This being Paul's conception of going on to perfection, it is easy to understand the depth of his desire on behalf of his Galatian brethren, to whom he writes, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." (Gal. 4:19.) These brethren had begun with a true vision of the new life in Christ, but had backslidden from that proper view, and once again Paul experiences as it were birth pangs on their behalf. It is evident that to the Apostle the matter of having a **correct conception** of the **work of** Christ on our behalf was of tremendous importance. Then we will remember and carefully note the height of attainment he visualized for all the saints to whom he ministered. His prayers reveal his understanding of the ultimate purpose underneath God's present dealings with us. For the Ephesian brethren the Apostle sees the possibility of their being "filled with all the fulness of God," and asks for it on their behalf. For those of the Philippian assembly he sees it possible for them to be "filled with the fruits **of righteousness**, which are by Jesus Christ." He believes it wholly consistent with practical expectations to yearn that the Colossian brethren may be "strengthened with all might, according **to His glorious power**," for so he prays for them. For his beloved brethren in Thessalonica he asks in similar strain, "The Lord make you to **increase and** abound in love one toward another, . . . to the end He may **stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness** before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints." - Eph. 3:19; Phil. 1:11; Col. 1:11; 1 Thess. 3:12, 13.

What is Christian Maturity?

Neglecting the clear teaching of the Scriptures on what really is the maturity Paul urges upon all true believers, many false standards and many misconceptions have been promulgated, such as conformity to man-made tests of endless variety, creeds composed of a mixture of works and organizational ratings, and again, it is often exhibited in a form of boastings, such as being without sin. But the fact that false conceptions exist will never prevent the true-hearted from seeking all that Paul advocates in his admonitions and his prayers. Satan's counterfeits are always the best of evidence that the real and genuine are things of great importance. Whatever he distorts we may be sure is something worth knowing the truth about. His false- and lower standards are well calculated to attract the greater numbers, but will never satisfy the soul hungering for "all the fulness of God."

These lower conceptions in Paul's day were a source of deep sorrow to his heart. So great was his concern over such hindrances to the growth he advocated that he was once led to express himself "I would that they were cut off who trouble you." When, after presenting the free and full Gospel of saving grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, he saw the message gladly accepted in the spirit, how it grieved his soul to see Judaizing teachers drawing them backward into an attempt at salvation by works. After he had faithfully presented the possibilities of growth into maturity in knowledge and grace through Christ, how keen was his sorrow in seeing brethren attempting to perfect themselves in the flesh. How very great his disappointment when he saw brethren who, for the time they had been believers in Christ, ought to have progressed into maturity and become competent teachers of other seekers after like maturity, but instead were as yet in their spiritual perceptions and in their heart developments babes in Christ. Only those who see with Paul the failure of the Christian life if maturity be not attained, can possibly understand how his heart was saddened by this exhibition of dwarfed spiritual vision and growth.

Thus it is that everywhere in the epistles of Paul we find that he believed most assuredly in a constant growth in both grace and knowledge. The desire to attain these for himself characterized his whole attitude from the day he began following the Lord Jesus until he reached the end of his active life. Teaching, as he never ceased to do, that such as receive Christ in justifying faith, and let Christ live in them by His Word dwelling in them richly, he would have them believe that they too could say, even as he, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by 'the faith of the Son of God.'" (Gal. 2:20.) Far from this being a mere expression of a mystical or beautiful inner conception of things relative to one's life in Christ, to Paul it was **a fact** of personal experience. It was to him as "the power that raised Christ from the dead" working in him, and by that **working** he knew its reality. He is, therefore, no visionary exponent of that which in practical life may never be expected. It was his own experience as a branch in Christ the Vine that made him intensely in earnest to bring others into a similar knowledge and experience of Christ. Such was his great objective in that day far past, and his disappointments we know. Would he find it any different now if here among us? How many would he find even now with Christ formed in them, Christ put on, and the life of Christ manifested through them? Let us each examine himself.

Christ, our Foundation and Chief Corner-Stone

Paul, as "a wise master builder," so styled by himself, looked well to his Foundation Stone. Well he knew that the only substantial foundation on which the superstructure of gold, silver, and precious stones could be built, was none other than Jesus Christ. He affirms positively that "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 3:11.) To the Apostle nothing was more clearly apparent than the profound truth set forth in our Lord's great lesson clothed in the illustration of the vine and its branches. Imposing buildings may indeed be erected, and such have always been numerous enough, but sooner or later not one stone is left upon another. Wherever there is absent the true union with Christ, growth is only seeming and deceptive; the fruitage, though apparently abundant, is inferior to that which will assure an abundant entrance into the inheritance of those approved of God. Thus it is that with a steadfast purpose and consistency Paul never overlooked the fact, nor allowed his converts to forget it, that only by a proper faith in Christ, and by a correct appropriation of the life-renewing power that is in Him, can any attain to Christian maturity. This relationship, he wanted it understood, is practical, yea, imperative. He was under no delusion, such as many seem to entertain, namely, that such a conception of maturity is too high, therefore a dangerous teaching, calculated to dishearten and stumble weak saints. Paul was too consistent to think of lowering God's perfect standards **down to the level** of human weakness; therefore he ever sought to raise that confessed weakness up to the robust strength of being "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."

The Apostle's admirable impatience with substitutions and subversions is plainly evident. He had no patience with substituting tenets of belief for the practical outward evidences of the power of Christ in the life. He could never agree to sanction any teaching which would make a philosophical ramification about Christ's redemptive work more important than the personal possession of Christ in the loving heart affections. He did not rebuke the "foolish Galatians" because they had deliberately let go of the tenet of justification by faith, but because they had accepted a perverted concept, and by doing so had let go of Christ to the degree of making Him something of a half Savior. They had turned from the power of a Christ crucified for their offenses and raised again for their full justification, to the acceptance of the specious argument by which they had been so easily bewitched, and by which many are still as greatly confused. In dealing with this situation Paul is allowing no middle ground, but frankly tells them, "Christ will be of **no benefit to you.**" (Gal. 5:2, Diaglott.) He would sweep away **all** false views of the work of Christ and the conditions of true relationship to Him. To Paul, anything added to Christ was a false teaching. And it matters not what **we** add to Christ, the wrong is in adding anything at all. Let the fact be once seen in its true Scriptural aspects, and it must be admitted that if any perverted view such as Paul is dealing with can make Christ **of no effect**, then every phase of our spiritual development is retarded thereby. It follows that our growth up into Christ, our putting on Christ, and having Christ formed in us, is seriously hindered; therefore Christian maturity will not be attained.

Believers Chosen in Christ

All that pertains to the Church begins and ends in Christ. The high calling of the Church is no afterthought with God. We were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Is it any wonder angels desire to peer into the favor arranged for us? Do we ourselves come anywhere near a real appreciation or understanding of it? What a profound revelation is given us in the words of Jesus Himself, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him," and, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me." (John 6:44, 37.) A similar insight into the

eternal purposes of God in respect to the Church is furnished us by Paul in Eph. 1:3-6: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." By grace He called us in Christ, accepted us in Christ, made us secure in Christ, and we are His "workmanship created in Christ Jesus." Christ is the Door by which we enter the fold of God. He is always the Way to God, and the Truth of God manifested to us. He is the Life of God imparted to all who come to God by Him. And being thus identified with Christ, what then? Let the Scriptures answer. "**Of His fulness** have all we received, and grace for grace." "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it **more abundantly.**" He, is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, **according to the, power** that worketh in us." (John 1:16; 10:10; Eph. 3:20.) Thus seen, Christian maturity is a progressive and a, blessedly possible attainment, and certainly they who seek it shall not fail to find it.

Limiting the Holy One of Israel

In Moffatt's translation of Psalm 78 there is an interesting rendering of verses 41 and 42. Remembering the too frequent tendency to hold back from launching out into the deep and letting down our nets for a larger draught, we will find it worth our while to ponder over these words to natural Israel. "With **doubts, of God** again and again, that pained the Majestic One of Israel. **They remembered** not His power." The entire Psalm contains much of this lament. Israel limited God by unbelief, according to Hebrews 3:19: "They could not enter in **because of unbelief.**" And was this not the very thing over which Jesus wept, and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how oft would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not!" God's arm was not shortened, nor His desire to open the windows of heaven and pour out overflowing blessings in any way diminished. Disobedience, broken covenants, multiplied human inventions substituted for true worship, all combined to shut away the things God delighted to give. These things connected with Israel's limited blessings, the Apostle tells us, are to be carefully considered by us, and taken to heart. "All these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the age are come. (1 Cor. 10:11.) How is it then with us? Can we say we have not been deficient in faith, or wanting in vision, therefore content to just go on resting on first principles of the plan of salvation? Or have we known the invigoration of an overpowering ambition such as Paul tells us was never absent from his spirit, and like him do we say, regardless of all present attainments, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." - Phil. 3:12-14.

From the various passages of Scripture we have thus far considered, how apparent it is that it is not our personal incapacities that prevent us from attaining the goal of Christian maturity. It is more often our deeply-rooted antipathy for fostering such expectations that stands in the way of putting on Christ as we should. We look at self and reduce the ideals to the level of our feebleness; whereas we should count on the promised outcome of God's power to begin and finish His own workmanship in us and for us. The proper viewpoint in this matter is that of remembering the certainty of the words of Jesus: "Without Me ye can do nothing." Let this be our humble

confession always. Notwithstanding this acknowledged fact concerning our own inability, let us never cultivate a lower objective than, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Spiritual life is no self generated accomplishment, but a life imparted from a source above us, as illustrated in the vine and its branches. Our possibilities are thus limited only by the measure of our willingness to act in appropriating faith. We **must** believe God when in reference to our recognized and confessed weakness, He says, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." No weakness need therefore discourage us or provide us with an argument against our being thus made "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." What is this but our being, as Paul has prayed, "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man"? Yes, what are these inspired words but the ground for our right to sing our confident song from the heart, and with the understanding also.

"Of victory now o'er Satan's power,
Let all the ransomed sing,
And triumph now in every hour,
Through Christ, the Lord, our King."

Such promises, Paul would assure us, are the measure of strength God will give, to the end that we may have what He wants us to receive. Are they impossible of being known experimentally? Listen yet once more to the Apostle's confident assurance "God is witness, that that word of ours which was toward you is not yes and no: for that Son of God, Jesus Christ, who .was proclaimed to you by us---was not yes and no, but was yes in Him. For **whatever be the promises of God**, they are in Him yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God." - 2 Cor. 1:18-20, Diaglott.

The great blessings God has for us do not lie on the surface as a rule, but need to be earnestly sought after as for hidden treasure. The matter of putting on Christ being the greatest of present attainments, it is therefore reserved for those who seek for it in faith and sincerity. God **will** fulfill His promises. Let us pursue our *search*. - *Contributed*.

(To be continued)

"Rend Your Heart and Not Your Garment"

Joel 2:13.

GARMENT-RENDING and other outward signs of religious emotion, are easily manifested and are frequently hypocritical; but to feel true repentance is far more difficult, and consequently far less common. Men will attend to the most multiplied and minute ceremonial regulations -- for such things are pleasing to the flesh -- but true religion is too humbling, too heart-searching, too thorough for the tastes of carnal men; they prefer something more ostentatious, flimsy, and worldly. Outward observations are temporarily comfortable; eye and ear are pleased; self-conceit is fed and self-righteousness is puffed up: but they are delusive, for at the approach of death, the soul needs something more substantial than ceremonies and rituals to lean upon. Apart from vital godliness all religion is utterly vain; offered without a sincere heart, every form of worship is a solemn sham and an impudent mockery of the majesty of heaven.

Heart-rending is divinely wrought and solemnly felt. It is a secret grief which is personally experienced, not in mere form, but as a deep, soul-moving work of the Holy Spirit upon the inmost heart of each believer. It is not a matter to be merely talked of and believed in, but keenly and sensitively felt in every child of the living God. It is powerfully humiliating, and completely sin-purging; but then it is sweetly preparative for those gracious consolations which proud, unhumiliated spirits are unable to receive; and it is distinctly discriminating, for it belongs to the elect of God, and to them alone.

The text commands us to rend our hearts, but they are naturally hard as marble; how, then, can this be done? We must take them to Calvary: a dying Savior's voice rent the rocks once, and it is as powerful now. O blessed Spirit, let us hear the death cries of Jesus, and our hearts shall be rent even as men rend their vestures in the day of lamentation.- *C. H. Spurgeon.*

Faith Can Firmly Trust Him

"I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." - Psa. 16:8.

IT IS through the crosses God sends in the every-day settings and relations, that our characters are built up and Christ's image appears within us. Would we reach higher heights of living, greater experiences in the overcoming life? We will attain to this only by obeying the call of the indwelling Christ to lay down our life bearing the cross He sends. It is our Lord who is calling us to follow Him, which always means, first of all, taking up our cross.

As we obey His call and walk out with Him, we will see everything and everybody in a different light than before; and we will behold ourselves as quite different from the admirable person we heretofore may have considered ourselves. And we will also begin to discern eternal glories, and understand earthly issues quite otherwise from what they appeared before.

There is a state that the truly spiritual Christian reaches where he is no longer taken up with the petty things of earth, where he is no longer moved by people and things to the losing of his eternal outlook. Why look at people who may have many faults, but are no faultier than we are, when we can behold Jesus Christ with unveiled face and heart, and be changed into His image from glory to glory by the operation of His Spirit within?

Why center upon the trials with which every human life is filled, when we may vision eternal glories? Why weary ourselves and others by enlarging upon our own trials and also upon the faults of others, when we may walk with our Lord instead of with people? Why not talk to others about His perfections, about His long-suffering and patience?

We may be sure that much we say to people about ourselves and about others would never be spoken when talking with Him. Only as we take the cross and lay down our own lives; only as we draw close to God in prayer and in humble obedience, can we discern eternal glories and issues.

By God's enabling we may reach the state where we are not looking at the things that are seen, but we are beholding the unseen things. Then we shall begin to see that "All things are of God," whatever these "all things" may be. God shows us that all that touches our lives must pass Him before it reaches us. He shows us that the instruments He would use upon us for our perfecting are hidden in the relations and settings that He permits, whether it be desirable or undesirable, painful or joyful. He calls us to yield to these instruments, and makes us know that if we are not victorious, it will be our own fault.

The faults of others, the collapse of plans, the seemingly impossible situation is a matter of small importance in itself, and is really not our affair. . . . All things in each life are from God or permitted by Him, and all are in His hands, so why wear ourselves out by fretting about them? why disturb our heart's rest by discussing them with others? The less we do this, the sooner we will rise above all earthly environings and take up our abode in the quietness of His presence.

As others watch our daily living, do they see Christ or us? As others listen to our words, do they hear Christ or us? As God looks deep into our hearts, beholding and weighing our motives, thoughts, desires, does He hear and see us or "the mind of Christ"? These are indeed searching questions, are they not?

Do we long to reach the blest state Paul was in when he declared that none of these things moved him? Do we long to be thus independent as he was, of everything and everybody? If so, instead of talking our trials over with others, which often hinders both us and them, talk them over with the Lord. We should take our stand on God's Word in the face of each testing, and believe that we can endure all that touches our life *because* God sent it. - *Selected.*

The Lord Was There

Themes such as are of the greatest importance to God's people today were given prominence in the several discourses. Those present were urged in varied ways to keep themselves in the love of God by faithfulness to His Word, and by possessing a rich measure of His spirit of holiness and love. The bond of blessed union whereby all the Church of God are united to Christ, and to one another, was given due consideration, and has surely been productive of much encouragement to those present.

Special mention may well be made of the hour devoted to praise and testimony on Sunday morning. The tenor of all was that urged by the Apostle, "By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." The testimonies were such wholesome expressions of praise, not concerning personal achievements, but for what the Lord had done for His own, and a particularly gratifying feature of this blessed hour was the testimonies of the younger members present. Truly there is something of an inexpressible inner joy in seeing a life dedicated to the Lord in its early formative years. Thank God, they too may share the privilege of saying, "All for Jesus, all my being's ransomed powers." By their few words of public testimony these dear ones were themselves blessed, and older runners in the race were made glad indeed.

Thus ended another of these little seasons apart. Life is taken up again in its routine way, and so on we go not knowing whether we shall meet again under the same conditions; but over all the possibilities of deeper shadows than we have yet known, there rises the vision of Home, sweet Home, and the eternal bliss of the redeemed Church of Christ; and so "until we meet again" here, or over there, we part, determined to hold fast the beginning of our confidence, and the hope of the rejoicing firm unto the end.

"My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Thus wrote an Apostle of the unfailing faithfulness of God. Be our needs, therefore, ever so great, all will be supplied according to His loving wisdom. And in the multitude of ways our heavenly Father brings this rich supply into our lives, He has chosen that "in the fellowship of kindred minds" there shall be a condition most favorable to an opening of the windows of heaven. There are blessings many and great for the one who goes alone into the chamber of prayer, but there is also a promise of other greatly to be desired results when "two of you agree as touching" vital interests connected with the will of God. There will be no lack of blessing for the one who reads and meditates upon the Word alone with God, but yet it must not be forgotten that "where two or three" are gathered in the name and spirit of Christ, there He will come in special grace. For strength to fight the good fight of faith, it is most essential for the individual goodsoldier of Jesus Christ to be much alone with God, a coming apart at times even from others of kindred mind, yet it has been ordained in divine wisdom that certain vitally important needs of the saints shall require that they forsake not the assembling of themselves together in His presence, "and so much the more" as the increasing force of the evil day is felt.

Therefore, since these things be so, it is in perfect agreement therewith that another of those happy gatherings of brethren at Atlantic City can be reported as a verification thereof. To a rather large circle of friends living within reach of this seashore city, these yearly gatherings have become an occasion of special interest. Certain associations and circumstances combine to make this a feature of these conventions, and among these outstanding factors may be mentioned the love of the members of the local class, and the place they hold in the love of those who have come to know them well.

"A Bundle of Myrrh is My Well Beloved Unto Me"

Canticles 1:13.

MYRRH MAY well be chosen as the type of Jesus on account of its preciousness, its perfume, its pleasantness, its healing, preserving, disinfecting qualities, and its connection with sacrifice. But why is He compared to "a bundle of myrrh"? First, for plenty. He is not a sprig or flower of it, but a whole bundle. There is enough for all my necessities; let me not be slow to avail myself of Him. Our Well-beloved is compared to a "bundle" again, for variety: for there is in Christ not only the one thing needful, but in "Him dwelleth all the fulness of the deity bodily," everything needful is in Him. Take Jesus in His different characters, and you will see a marvelous variety-Prophet, Priest, King, Husband, Friend, Shepherd. Consider Him in His life, death, resurrection, ascension, second advent; view Him in His virtues, gentleness, courage, self-denial, love, faithfulness, truth, righteousness-everywhere He is a bundle of preciousness. He is a "bundle of myrrh" for preservation-not loose myrrh to be dropped on the floor or trodden on, but myrrh tied up, myrrh to be stored in a casket. We must value Him as our best treasure; we must prize His words and His ordinances; and we must keep our thoughts of Him and knowledge of Him as under lock and key, lest the devil should steal anything from us. Moreover, Jesus is a "bundle of myrrh" for specialty; the emblem suggests the idea of distinguishing, discriminating grace. From before the foundation of the world, He was set apart for His people; and He gives forth His perfume only to those who understand how to enter into communion with Him, to have close dealings with Him. Oh! blessed people whom the Lord hath admitted into His secrets, and for whom He sets Himself apart. Oh! choice and happy who are thus made to say, "A bundle of myrrh is my Well-beloved unto me." - *C. H. Spurgeon.*

Encouraging Message

Dear Brethren:

Some time ago I received a bundle of tracts from you, and I would like to get another supply.

I operate a spare-time mail order business dealing mostly with small-town and rural people. I will be glad to put a tract or card or both in each letter I send out. In the fall and winter months I could distribute at least 200 monthly.

I am very thankful to have been able to contact your organization. A sister in the truth loaned me a volume sent out by you. I am very thankful for this book, as it opened my eyes to many things and enabled me to get on the right track. My mother, two aunts, a cousin, and myself have left our former association.

I am enclosing \$.... to help pay the expenses on the tracts you send me. I would that it could be fifty dollars.

Sincerely,
Yours for God's Kingdom,
J. D. T. -- Texas.

The Master of My Boat

I owned a little boat a while ago
And sailed a Morning Sea without a fear,
And whither any breeze might fairly blow
I'd steer the little craft afar or near.
Mine was the boat, and mine the air,
And mine the sea, not mine, a care.

My boat became my place of nightly toil.
I sailed at sunset to the fishing ground.
At morn the boat was freighted with the spoil
That my all-conquering work and skill had found.
Mine was the boat, and mine the net,
And mine the skill, and power to get.

One day there passed along the silent shore,
While I my net was casting in the sea,
A man who spoke as never man before;
I followed Him--new life began in me.
Mine was the boat, but His the voice,
And His the call, yet mine, the choice

Ah, 'twas a fearful night upon the lake,
And all my skill availed not at the helm,
Till Him asleep I awakened, crying, "Take,
Take Thou command, lest waters overwhelm!"
His was, the boat, and His the sea.
And His the Peace o'er all and me.

Once from His boat He taught the curious throng,
Then bade me let down nets out in the sea,
I murmured, but obeyed, nor was it long
Before the catch amazed and humbled me.
His was the boat, and His the skill,
And His the catch, and His, my will.
- *Joseph Addison Richards.*

Others

Lord help me live from day to day
In such a self-forgetful way,
That, even when I kneel to pray,
My prayers will be for *others*.

Help me in all the work I do
To ever be sincere and true,
And know that all I'd do for
You Must needs be done for *others*.

Let "self" be crucified and slain
And buried deep; and all in vain
May efforts be to rise again,
Unless to live for *others*.

And when my work on earth is done
And my new work in heaven's begun,
May I forget the crown I've won
While thinking still of *others*.

Others, Lord, yes, others,
Let this my motto be,
Help me to live for others,
That I may live like Thee.
- C. D. Meigs.

God's Gift

"One only night had I to spend
In Amalfi by the sea;
I prayed an earnest prayer to God
To let the evening be
A cloudless one,
To let the sun
Set clear and flawlessly.

"It seemed God had not heard,
Clouds arose
To hide the heaven's blue.
But, oh, the sunset I beheld!
The glory shining through
That clouded west
The loveliest Amalfi ever knew!

"No longer do I word my prayer,
'God give this certain thing--'
Nor fret about the good or ill
That life may chance to bring.
The gift God sends
Always transcends
My small imagining!"

Things That Remain

Friends may come, and friends may go,
But Love remains forever.
The lights along the harbor glow,
Love's lighthouse faileth never.
The day is ended, the night is here,
The leaves are withered, the world is sere,
But the lights of heaven are drawing near,
And God remains forever.

Years may come, and years may go,
But Truth remains endearing.
Its glories lie along faith's sky,
In love's full flow appearing.
The Harvest speaks, and its work goes on,
And tells the approach of a new-born sun,
And the race -- our race -- is almost run,

Recently Deceased

Mr. Geo. W. Harris, Philadelphia, Pa. - (Nov.)
Mr. J. B. Scurlock, Corpus Christi, Tex. - (Dec.)
Dr. H. W. Canada, Lynchburg, Va. - (Dec.)