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A Remarkable Argument for Sincerity

"As God is faithful our word toward you is not yea and nay." - 2 Cor. 1:18, A.R.V.

THE PASSAGE from which our text is taken contains several valuable lessons, yet the one which appeals to us as outstanding is that of sincerity; hence the caption assigned to this article. The suitability of the caption may not appear at the outset, but we think our readers will agree before the conclusion of our meditation. Let us then consider the circumstances under which the passage came to be written.

About fifty years after the birth of Christ, less than twenty years after His death, resurrection, and ascension to God's right hand, the Gospel was introduced into Corinth by the Apostle Paul. Some five years later he wrote his first letter to the church there. During those five intervening years, local influences, both doctrinal and moral, had developed themselves within the bosom of the church, corrupting both its doctrine and its conduct. A variety of separate questions had arisen; some relating to doctrine, as for example, the resurrection. Others related to morals, as concerning the man who was a fornicator. Others, again, related to the eating of meats offered to idols; still others had to do with church order and discipline, while yet others had to do with the relative value of spiritual gifts. Greek philosophies, Oriental mysticisms and asceticisms, Hebrew traditions and bigotries, Corinthian vices were striving confusedly together, and making a common assault on the truth and grace of Christ.

On this strife of passion and prejudice St. Paul tried the effect of argument and expostulation. In his first letter he restated the main truths of the Gospel he had preached among them, and indicated the spiritual unity which might underlie the freest exercise of thought and the widest differences of opinion, if only love were allowed full scope. In the very first chapter he exhorts them not to permit divisions, asking them pointedly: "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you?" On the question of morality his words are clear and unmistakable when, in the fifth chapter, he insists that they "put away from among themselves that wicked person," and in the sixth chapter, where he inquires: "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?" and that far from practicing such immorality they were to glorify God in their bodies. Their departure from and denial of the resurrection brought forth his wonderful reaffirmation of that foundation truth as it is set forth in the celebrated fifteenth chapter of his letter, in which he first summarized the evidence as to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Himself, and then showed that Christ's resurrection is a pledge of our own. "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-

fruits of them that slept. . . . O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" When he took up the question of gifts with which the church at Corinth had been so well endowed, while he gave to each its due weight and value-while he, indeed, taught them to earnestly desire the best gifts-there could be no mistaking his doctrine when, in the thirteenth chapter, he proceeded to show them that still more excellent way, the way of love; love without which, though one were to speak with tongues of men and of angels, he would be as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal; love without which, though one understood all secrets and possessed all knowledge; though one had all faith, so as to remove mountains; though one were to bestow all his goods to feed the poor; yea, though one were to give his body to be burned -- he would be nothing.

His letter was necessarily as severe as it was tender, for he had to deal with one of those cases in which truth is severity, in which tenderness can heal, or alleviate, only the wounds which truth is compelled to make. The result of his intervention was doubtful, as in such cases it always is. One cannot touch the hearts and lives of men, one cannot criticize the doctrine and code which they have framed for themselves, and still less can one censure the prejudices and bigotries which corrupt their doctrine without: running grave risk of exciting the venomous passions which lurk in an irritated self-love. No man better understood the rights of free thought or the irritability of self-love than the apostle. Hence, he waited with tremulous anxiety, with many misgivings and fears for tidings of the reception his letter had met. At last Titus brings him the news for which he had waited. On the whole, it was of a nature to allay his solicitude. The larger and better part of the chuck had been moved to shame and godly contrition. They had renounced the heresies and the immoralities which had given him so much concern. His anxiety before the good news came and his relief when it arrived are pathetically expressed in this second epistle to the Corinthians. "Our flesh had no rest," he writes. "We were troubled on every side; without were fightings; within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; and not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me. . . . For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent; for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance; for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.... for behold, this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea; what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter. . . . Therefore, we were comforted." - 2 Cor. 7:5-16.

As we read these words, we can feel St. Paul's heart throbbing under them, and are constrained to sympathize with the tumult of passionate emotion which was sweeping through his heart when he wrote them.

Opposition Leaders

The apostle's joy and comfort, however, were not unmixed. Those who had fostered dissension and strife in the church, the leaders of its several factions, were not humbled but embittered by his rebuke. The godly sorrow, the humble submission of their brethren galled these prating lovers of preeminence. Their importance was gone-the letter of the absent apostle outweighing their living presence and word. Cut to the quick, they set themselves to arrest this new movement towards trust and unity. And as the most likely means to that end, they set themselves to undermine the apostle's authority -- the authority which he derived, not by any arbitrary assumption, but simply from an ampler knowledge of the truth and a more perfect devotion to the service of Christ. With him out of the way, their course would be clear, and they would come to be of some importance

again. And so they began to wrest his words, to disparage his character, and to sow suspicions of his honesty, his veracity, his disinterestedness, his courage. "No doubt," they said, "Paul can write very strong and eloquent letters; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech is contemptible-- as he himself knows very well. Because he knows it, he is afraid to trust himself among you-- afraid to meet us face to face, who can at least talk as well as he. He is always promising or threatening to come, but he never comes. He is afraid to come. He is cowardly, irresolute, and insincere. And since this is the case with regard to his visits to Corinth, it may well be the case also with his preaching and teaching. How can we trust the word of one who does not know his own mind? who is forever vacillating between yea and nay? who, when he says 'yes,' doesn't mean 'yes,' and when he says 'no,' doesn't mean 'no'? He is a man who can teach plausibly enough, but half the time he means something different from what he says. He is a man who will make a promise for a momentary purpose and then break it for his own private ends."

The Alleged Proof of St. Paul's Insincerity

The alleged proof on which the charge was founded was that he had promised to come to Corinth and he had not come. This charge the apostle proceeds to meet, first with peremptory denial, and then with reasoned argument. First, he says, or rather swears, "As God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay." (2 Cor. 1:18.) And then he gives the true reason for his apparent vacillation: "Moreover, I call God for a witness upon my soul that it was to spare you I came not as yet to Corinth, for I determined that I would not come again to bring you grief, and for that cause I did. not come, but wrote you out of much affliction, and anguish of heart, with many tears." (2 Cor. 1:23-2:4, paraphrased.) It will be noted that in his reply St. Paul admits the fact he had intended to go to Corinth, and he had not fulfilled his intention. But he denies the inference of trifling with his word, or that it was with him "yea, yea," and then, with a juggler's dexterity, "nay, nay."

Even his peremptory denial of this false and damaging charge, however, is something more than a mere denial, clenched with a solemn oath. St. Paul was one of those rare men whose reason penetrates and controls their passions as the sun and moon rule the waves and tides of the sea. "God is true, true to His word," he argues, "and therefore I am true." "The Son of God," he continues in the next verse, "is true; **His** word is not Yea and Nay; and therefore I am true, **my** word to you cannot be first Yea and then Nay. The words of the heavenly Father and those of His dear Son do not show a fluctuating and irresolute will; nor do mine. When I said I would come and see you, it was my love for you which prompted me to come, and the hope that I might bring you joy. If I did not come, or did not come as soon as I intended and you expected, that was not because of any change in **me**, but because **you** had changed. My love for you continued in spite of your change, and it was that which held me back; I deferred my coming that I might not bring you grief instead of joy."

Here, however, at this point many who read or listen to the apostle's words with attention will be likely to raise an objection. Such may say: "That looks like logic, indeed, but surely it is a very strange kind of logic. St. Paul's words sound very strong, but do they signify much? Taken simply as an argument -- unless, indeed, there be some suppressed premise, some implied and connecting truth which the apostle has failed to express -- they prove nothing. One man is not true simply because another man is true. Much less is any man true simply because the perfect God is true. Put the 'apostle's argument into an apostate's mouth, and where is the logic then? Is an apostate true because God is true? If St. Paul is true because God is true, it is not simply as a man, or as a Jew, or as a Christian, or even as an apostle, for some in each of these categories have been notoriously untrue."

The Unexpressed Truth

What, then, is the truth which the apostle has failed to express? the implied truth which gives soundness and force to his argument? Because God is true, and because of something else, therefore Paul is true. What is that something else?

That implied, but unexpressed, truth we take to be this: God's spirit dwells within Paul, and manifests itself in Paul as it did in God's Son, though in lesser measure.

Because God is true and because His spirit dwells within Paul, therefore Paul is true. Otherwise, the faithfulness of God is no more a guarantee of St. Paul's truthfulness than it is of his traducers'. But if it be true of St. Paul that he has been begotten of the Father to a new nature, even the divine nature, and if, in the narrow conditions of humanity, that new life retains the same qualities which it possesses in the infinite being of Almighty God, then, indeed, the inference will hold good: that as God is true, Paul must be true.

This, we suppose, was the truth which the apostle assumed here: that he was now of one mind, one heart, one will with God and with the Son of God. The thought was so familiar to him, as we may see in all his writings, that he does not always stop to express it. He assumes his readers to know that by the grace of God he has become a son of God, that for him to live is for Christ to live in him, by the power of His spirit.

And yet, what a wonderful, what a well-nigh incredible truth it is which he so calmly assumes! Will the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity in very truth dwell with man on earth, and not only with but dwell **in** him? Is it true that not Paul alone but every man who believes in Christ may become a temple, a sanctuary, for the holy spirit of God, of Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity? Between heaven and earth, between the human and the divine, between the Creator and His creatures there is a distance, an interval, so vast that we cannot easily accept the fact which to St. Paul's mind was so familiar as to need no formal expression. His argument—unless this wonderful truth of the indwelling spirit of God were assumed, unless this connecting link were instinctively supplied by the Corinthian brethren to whom his letter was sent—would have been a mere absurdity. Yet he gives it no formal utterance, sure that it needs none.

"Christ: Liveth in Me"

Nor does it! For is it not exactly the same thought which our Master expressed in His last discourse: "If a man love Me, he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him." (John 14:23.) Nor was this promise for the apostles alone, but for all who would meet the conditions. If **we** sincerely believe on Jesus, if we, too, have whole-heartedly abandoned ourselves to Him, St. Paul's words are as true on **our** lips as they were on his: "Henceforth I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

To be able to speak these words with truth and strong conviction, is the noblest ambition to which we can aspire, the greatest honor of which we are capable. But great blessings entail grave responsibilities. If God, by the power of His spirit, dwells within us, indeed, we must try ourselves by new and higher standards than before. We shall be both able, and in duty and honor (to say nothing of, privilege) bound, to adopt St. Paul's argument, and say "God is true; the Son of God is true; therefore I am true." And, extending this line of argument, further say: "God is pure; the Son of God is pure; therefore I am pure." And again "God is love; the Son of God is love; and therefore for me, too, love is lord of all and shall be the controlling influence in my every thought, word, and deed." We shall be able, and we shall be bound, to run this argument through

all the imitable perfections of God. For we cannot have His spirit within us and not manifest the graces of that spirit.

No doubt there are limitations and imperfections in our nature, and hence, there must, and will be, flaws in our obedience -- in the unity and correspondence of our will with the divine will. We have not yet grown up into the full stature of Christ, whatever the advances we have made. Nor had St. Paul. Even he did not count himself "already perfect," or assume that he had already "attained to the measure of the stature of Christ." Yet he could say: "God is true; Christ is true; and therefore I am true. Even he might now and then use "lightness of speech" or "purpose according to, the flesh" (although we have so far failed to note any such incident in his life). But this was not his custom. That which was habitual with him was veracity, truthfulness, whether he was preaching, or writing, or making a promise. He was not wont to utter deedless words, nor were his purposes and resolves at the mercy of every shifting breath of influence and caprice. The indwelling spirit of God made him sincere and steadfast. He measured his speech and conduct by, and adjusted them to, divine standards rather than human. He could not but do it, since both God and the Son of God had come to him and had taken up Their abode with him.

Thy Word Have I Hid in My Heart

"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." - Psa. 119:105.

IN THE tabernacle erected in the wilderness the Holy of Holies represented the place of God's dwelling among His people. Within that sacred place there was the ark of the covenant, and enshrined in that ark, covered by the mercy-seat, overshadowed by the cherubim, and illuminated by the glory of the shekinah light, there rested the two tables of the law-holy words graven by the hand of God, these words representing His righteousness and man's consistent attitude thereto. Thus in the heart of that sacred enclosure, curtained off by the surrounding white linen wall, God placed in this inmost shrine a sacred and profoundly significant revelation of a holy God to sinful but not forsaken men.

In the age of law there was necessarily this fixed location for that which would represent God's presence with Israel, and toward which center the worshiper's mind would habitually turn. Thus it was that the beloved Daniel opened his window toward Jerusalem as three times a day he made supplication to his God. But in this our favored day, since "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," the approach to God is through "a new and living way." No longer is it necessary to think that alone in Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim may worship be offered to God, but access to the sacred place of worship and intimate communion is now open to all who in any place offer Him worship in spirit and in truth.

Once God spoke to His people "at sundry times and in divers manners," but now He "hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." (Heb. 1:1, 2.) Once it was in the words of the law spoken from clouds of "blackness and darkness and trumpet," but now His voice is heard in the tender tones of grace, speaking peace through One of whom He has said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." - Matt. 17:5.

Still, however, at the center of our worship, and as the inmost shrine of our devotion, there the Word of God must be. If we would worship in truth, surely the instructions of the Word are of greatest importance lest "strange fire" mingle with our approach to Him. In true prayer we speak to God, and our prayers are purified of dross only when they are offered as directed by the Word.

In that same Word God speaks to us, but "the word spoken" will profit us nothing if the heart is out of tune with the infinite One who speaks through that medium of communication with us. This is made important because for us the New Testament contains a message peculiarly intended for the ears of the heart, and thus the apostle prays, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him, the eyes of your heart having been enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His invitation, what the glorious wealth of His inheritance among the saints." - Eph. 1:17, 18, "Diaglott."

In this New Testament message there is a revelation, perfect, grand in its simplicity, and purifying in its influences, which ought to lie deeply fixed in our heart of hearts. This message should pervade all our worship, give clearness to our reason, ennoble our affections, and cause our daily walk to bear witness to its elevating power. Therefore, says the same apostle, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Antecedent to Paul's day, having the Word deep in the heart was recognized as important. The Psalmist found it so and thus gave testimony thereto: "Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee." (Col. 3:16; Psa. 119:11.) Certain it is, if our minds are well stored with the Word, our songs will be of His grace, and because that Word enlightens our pathway, the pitfalls of sin will be discerned and avoided.

How Much of the Word is Hidden in our Heart?

Church history tells of a time when the Bible was forbidden to the people. It was buried in dead languages, and at most there were only a few copies, and these chained to pulpits in places of worship. Today we have it printed in many languages and dialects, and over its pages the devout searcher for truth, in most countries, may meditate and pray with perfect freedom. But notwithstanding the more favorable conditions of this time, are there as many as might be whose devotion to this, divine revelation is such as we have expressed in the familiar lines:

"O! may these heavenly pages be
My ever dear delight;
And still new beauties may I see,
And still increasing light!"

If all copies of our Bible and all Biblical literature with which we are familiar were somehow destroyed, what portions of that professedly treasured Word could we contribute toward its restoration? Remembering the inspired warning, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip," is it not made important that we too may say with the Psalmist, "Thy Word have I hid in my heart"? Many are the reasons why the Word of God should be stored up in the memory. Blindness can come, various physical afflictions can remove from us the joy of reading its pages for ourselves, but if the memory be filled with its promises, prophecies, and precepts, there can be unbroken contact therewith. Then, too, what weapon is so effective as "the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God," when Satan comes with his subtle temptations? No better weapon has been given us whereby we may "quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one." Fortified with that Word, our faith will never be found standing "in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God," for a "thus saith the Lord" will be required for every item of our faith.

Such a book as the Bible is needed by the human heart. "Whoever made that book made me," was the remark of a Chinese teacher who, himself a Confucianist, was reading the New Testament in Chinese in order to teach the English missionary the language of China. And will this testimony

not be corroborated by every openhearted reader of that same book? It reveals, as no other literature in the world does, the heart of God in relation to the sons of men, whose joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, sins and doubts, and longings and failures remain ever the same. Only in the light of that revelation can these varied experiences find a satisfactory interpretation. It has been well said by some one, "As long as the heart has passions, and as long as life has woes" the comfort of the Holy Scriptures will be the boon of the inquiring or troubled heart. And what a telescope it is by which the eye of faith may look far beyond the horizons of physical sight, seeing the King in His beauty, and catching visions of future glories and perfect knowledge framed in the large dimension of eternity.

The whole earth seems to be explored for figures with which to convey to our minds the completeness of the Bible, of which the words of Paul are beautifully corroborative when he says, "All Scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:16, 17.) It is a lamp and light to guide individual steps along life's devious paths, a sun above showing whither the path as a whole trends and leads-even to heaven itself. (Psa. 119:105.) God's Word comes as the rain in showers of refreshing, and it distils as the dew when the heart is stilled into meditative quietness, and sweet as honey to the taste. (Deut. 32:2; Psa. 19:10; 119:103.) There is milk for babes and strong meat for the mature. Freedom is its promise. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." He who follows it walks at large in liberty, is the word of the Old Testament writer, and Paul in prison declares, "The Word of God is not bound." (2 Tim. 2:9.) Great treasure indeed to the individual believer, and also to the Church of Christ collectively. Its Author-One, though speaking by many voices-is the Author and ruler of life, who in His Word describes, directs, rebukes, consoles, elevates the soul which none but He Himself can thoroughly know, and none but He can abidingly satisfy, none but Himself can finally save.

"Speak, Lord, for Thy Servant Heareth"

No "private interpretation" of individual or church can ever be allowed to petrify or fossilize the Word, which holy men spake because "moved" to do so by the Holy Spirit, and which that same spirit will move humble searchers to study and understand. Nothing is made clearer in the Bible than the fact that the Holy Spirit will ever be making fresh applications of that Word to our present need. To be what God wants it to be to us, it must be taken as a personal message, a message calculated to wash and sanctify us. Possible it is to treat the Bible as an idol, to make it a book valued mainly because it is understood to support a line of interpretations dear to us, the product of our own imaginations. The remedy for this is a rich possession of the spirit, the spirit of teachableness and obedience, which prays, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." Then the Word will be made a living message, with new power, new aspirations, and "the man of God may be thoroughly furnished" at all times and have his feet directed according to that Word.

"The Light of the world is Jesus." In Scripture all leads up to Him or on from Him. Therefore, to make Him the Master-light of our life is to follow a sound and wise law of interpretation based on the facts of the case. In this we have His own example, when He would clear away misunderstandings and fill hearts with burning joy, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." (Luke 24:27.) Thus we look unto Jesus our Light and Life, and He is also "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession." This looks into the future associations promised those who shall reign with Him. All this, therefore, involves an eventual attainment of perfect training and a fixity of character in the principles of righteousness. And for this same training and character, this mature power to judge of all things in the light of perfect truth, and estimating all issues with proper insight, the Word of

God is the chosen instrument Jesus taught us the spirit would use. Thus, indeed, it was written long ago: "I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Thy testimonies are my meditation." - Psa. 119:99.

Many passages of Scripture set forth the close relationship between the pure Word and our sanctification through its assimilation. In John 17:17 our Lord prayed, as given in the Authorized Version, "Sanctify them through Thy truth," and this may well be taken to prove the Word the most effective medium of our sanctification. The Revised Version reads, "Sanctify them in the truth." At first sight this may not seem so easy to understand. But this version implies rather strongly that there is need for a devotion to the whole sphere of purifying truth, all of truth brought within our reach as we endeavor to "comprehend with all saints" the immeasurable lengths and depths of divine revelation. Thus, only as we seek to be sanctified in the truth can we be preserved from blending its pure gold with the alloy of human invention, or altogether debasing its lofty inspiring significance and standards.

Can we affirm to God, "Thy Word have I hid in my heart"? Can we affirm it so truthfully that under test we will be found fortified, sanctified, and matured by it? Then, remembering that He who is the Living Word has made us know that He too must be enthroned in the heart, can we affirm in confidence that He has an undisputed rulership there? Truly, if the written Word and the Living Word are both in possession of our hearts, sin can never gain the mastery over us.

This being so, how deep a truth lies in the words of another apostle: "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1:7.) Here love is the test of our light and cleansing. The proof that we are in the light of God's Word is found in our universal fellowship with all who have Jesus as their light and the cleansing of His blood. He who walks in this love is in the light. He who walks not in this love walks in darkness, and in that darkness there can be no vision of the face of Jesus Christ. If no vision of His face, "the light of the glory of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ" is obscured; therefore, no sanctification, no transformation into His image. Like the foolish virgins of the parable, whose lamps were no doubt as well trimmed as those carried by the wise, but alas! no oil in their vessels with the lamps-so it can be with us. A well known Bible is no substitute for a Christ-filled heart. It is only when the beauty of His perfection is brought into our hearts and lives that we see light in His light and gloriously receive and reflect the light of the glory of God. Shall we not prize still more highly the Word of God, knowing that it really is a "boon most sacred from the Lord." Shall our prayer not be:

"O! may these heavenly pages be
My ever dear delight;
And still new beauties may I see,
And still increasing light!

"Divine Instructor, gracious Lord,
Be Thou forever near;
Teach me to love Thy sacred Word,
And view my Savior here."

- Contributed.

"God Holds the Key"

"God holds the key of all unknown.
And I am glad.
If other hands should hold the key.
Or if He trusted it to Me,
I might be sad.

"I cannot read His future plan,
But this I know;
I have the smiling of His face
And all the refuge of His grace,
As on I go.

"Enough; this covers all my want,
And so I rest; ,
For what I cannot, *He can see*,
And in His care I sure shall be
Forever blest."

The Friendship of Jesus

"Ye are My friends if we do whatsoever I command you." - John 15:14.

THERE IS nothing in this world so beautiful as true and unselfish friendship. All are familiar with the scriptural record of the wonderful friendship which existed between David and Jonathan, and all hearts have been touched by those glorious words: "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." - 1 Sam. 18:1.

Here is the very essence of true friendship. It is the miracle which blends two lives, each separate and distinct, each with different possibilities, talents, and outlook, until they become knit in one. There can be no true love like this without sacrifice, and yet those who are bound together with friendship's cords are not conscious of sacrifice

"Love is not blind, but looks through other eyes;
It asks not *must I* give, but *may I* sacrifice."

The welding of two lives until they become one, one in mutual esteem, one in purpose, one in interest, a union which is so close that if you have seen one of the partnership, you have seen both; when you hear the expression of one on any matter you know it is equally the opinion of the other an affinity of this description is a truly beautiful and wonderful thing.

Such friendships are rare, but they do exist. We have already referred to Jonathan's love for David as one Biblical instance of this rare kind of friendship. Jonathan regarded the future exaltation of David as his own, and rejoiced accordingly, where as from a material point of view, it meant the loss of what he had a right to expect.

Friendship like this, wherever found, is a glorious jewel, infinitely rare and precious. Is it not, therefore, marvelous to realize that Jesus has called us to such a friendship with Himself, called us to one with Him to share His innermost thoughts and affections?

In order that we might the better appreciate the meaning of this friendship with the Lord, we propose to consider it under the four following headings:

- (1) The privilege of this friendship.
- (2) The influence of this friendship.
- (3) The responsibility of this friendship.
- (4) The conditions of this friendship.

The Privilege of This Friendship

Our Lord reveals to us the privilege of friendship in the very connection from which the text is selected. He says *I* (verse 15): "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you."

Friendship with Jesus, therefore, means the confidence of Jesus and the confidence of His Father. We appreciate the privilege of friendship by considering the pleasing contrast which our Lord brings to our attention: viz., "servants" and "friends." A servant is expected to obey blindly; the master does not feel it incumbent upon him to explain why he adopts a certain course, or why he has given certain orders; he merely gives the instructions and expects them to be carried out.

Friends, however, are treated on a different standing altogether. Trusted friends are taken into confidence and given an intelligent appreciation of the business and the circumstances which warrant the line of action so puzzling to the servant. A friend is treated on terms of equality. Very little is withheld from a true and trusted friend.

Abraham was the friend of God, as James tells us (James 2:23), and in Genesis 18:17 we read "And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" Do we realize this privilege of friendship? If Christ has chosen us to be His friends, He has chosen us to receive His confidence and to share the secrets which the Father has revealed to Him. But do we value this privilege? Is this our blessed experience? Do we find that God through our Lord has told us of His plans and purposes, of each new development in the Christian way and the meaning of the happenings in the world in the days in which we live?

As we progress on our Christian journey, do we find fresh knowledge of our Father's will and a clearer unfolding of His purpose? If so, this is a clear evidence that we are the friends of Jesus; if not, then it means either that Christ has never chosen us as His friends, or, and really of the two this seems the more terrible, Christ has chosen us as His friends and we are spurning His confidences.

How it would pain the heart of an earthly friend if after taking us into his confidence and revealing some inner secret, some treasured scheme, some hidden ambition we were to say, "I do

not want to hear anything about that; I am quite content to be made happy by your regard for me, but I do not wish to be worried about these matters of which you speak." We would say that one adopting such an attitude had very little appreciation of the meaning of friendship.

Such a disposition is altogether selfish, unfriendly, and hurtful to the one who would treat us as a friend; and yet, is not this the attitude of thousands who choose to regard themselves as the friends of Jesus?' Jesus our Friend manifests His love for us by revealing to us the secrets of the divine purposes.

The Plan of God represents the desires of God's heart. So dear is it to Him that He gave His Son to die in order that it might be accomplished; so highly did our Lord esteem it that He willingly endured the humiliation. God through the ages has been working out that Plan; step by step, slowly and majestically, it is moving forward to a grand completion. Each new happening and development brings increased joy to the Father and the Son, for They are one in purpose. If we do not share Their delight, Their interests, if we do not realize the revelation of such a wonderful purpose as the greatest evidence of God's condescending love, then, we are spurning the confidences of God, we are proving ourselves altogether unworthy of the friendship of Christ.

Indeed, if we persist in this indifferent attitude, we shall eventually lose the friendship of Christ, for, says the Apostle John: "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." We cannot enjoy this fellowship or friendship unless we: share the same interest.

As the Prophet Amos asks: "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3.) How can we walk with God, how can we have fellowship with Christ, unless we be agreed? Unless in harmony with the Divine Plan, unless we experience that oneness for which Jesus prayed when He said, "That they may be one, even as We are one." - John 17:22.

There are some in the world whose friendship is sought by all and sundry because they have power, influence, wealth; and such a friendship is of great value to one struggling for power or the fame of this world. True, those who seek a friendship of this description are actuated by selfish motives, which really are not worthy of consideration under the sacred name of friendship; nevertheless, we mention this to emphasize the privilege of Christ's friendship. He is the Heir of all things. All power has been given to Him in heaven and in earth. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords, and He offers us His friendship!

He offers us His friendship. We sometimes sing, "I've found a friend." I remember choosing that hymn for a testimony on one occasion, and a brother whispered, "Did you find Him, or did He find you?" Ah! that is the wonderful part; Christ seeks our friendship, as He told His disciples in this very connection (verse 16): "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you."

The Heir of all things, the One whose name is above every name, has sought His friends among the weak, poor, and despised of God's lowest intelligent creation. He seeks those friends from among those who were His enemies: "When we were yet enemies, we were reconciled to God: by the death of His Son." (Rom. 5:10.) He offers us His friendship with all that such a friendship implies. How strange it seems that any should spurn it, the greatest condescension, the most marvelous favor that could possibly be conceived. Let us value very highly the privilege of Christ's friendship.

Now let us consider

The Influence of This Friendship

It is a well known fact that our companions, our environment, the books we read all have influences upon our lives. This emphasizes the need for great care in the selection of friends, that their influence should be uplifting and helpful. If we make friends with the world, then we shall very quickly find that the worldly interest and the worldly outlook will be impressed upon our minds, and we eventually will find ourselves at enmity with God, for "the friendship of this world is enmity with God." - James 4:4.

On the other hand, deep love for a noble and pure-hearted friend can have a wonderfully uplifting effect upon even a degraded heart; and such will refrain from ignoble actions because of esteem for the other. If this is true in earthly friendships, who can measure the influence of Christ's friendship upon the heart and mind of the believer?

We see how the friendship with Christ has altered and fashioned the lives of frail men. Think of Peter, when we are introduced to him in the early days of Christ's ministry; he is very impulsive, self-confident, boastful, and consequently weak and wavering. I wonder if we would have chosen him as a friend? Jesus did, and this friendship resulted eventually in producing the rock-like character which Christ saw possible when He first met Peter, and which has had such an important place in the Church of Christ.

Think too of John. When we first read of John, we find he was young, fiery, hot-headed, and very much inclined to be resentful of injury. But the friendship of Jesus which began on earth and continued after His resurrection had a transforming influence upon John, all the angry resentful disposition disappeared, and the Apostle of Love, as he has been rightly called, beautifully reflected the Master's glorious disposition.

The influence of Christ's friendship must result in the transformation of our characters. It is impossible to live with Christ without the life being affected. If we cannot trace the mark of Christ's companionship in our lives, we have every reason to doubt whether He is pleased to acknowledge us as His friends.

Children love to imitate. In early childhood they read or hear of some character who fires their imagination by some brave act or noble work. They love to pretend at being the hero upon whom they have set their childish affections, and frequently in later life have taken up a similar career as their hero's. Is Jesus our ideal? Has His loving character fired our imaginations and awakened the zeal within us? If so, we shall naturally seek to become like Him, to walk as He walked, to speak as He spoke, and to reveal in our lives the same glorious disposition.

Paul says, "Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children." (Eph. 5:1.) The "Diaglott" renders the word "followers" as "imitators," showing he has this thought in mind, that as children love to imitate, so the spiritual children likewise seek to imitate the beauties of their Father's character, and that of their Elder Brother and Friend.

How has Christ's friendship influenced our lives? What has Christ's friendship meant to you and me? It has meant peace in the time of storm, security in time of danger, comfort in sorrow, instruction when perplexed, companionship when lonely. Those who have Jesus as their Friend can say:

"We wander in a 'solitary way,'
No matter what or where our way may be,
Each heart, mysterious even to itself,
Must live its inner life of solitude.
And would you know the reason why this is?
It is because the Lord desires our love.
In every heart He wishes to be first.
He therefore keeps the secret-key Himself,
To open all its chambers, and to bless --

"With perfect sympathy and holy peace
Each solitary soul which comes to Him.
So when we feel this loneliness, it is
The voice of Jesus saying, 'Come to Me,'
And every time we are 'not understood,'
It is a call to us to come again;
For Christ alone can satisfy the soul,
And those who walk with Him from day to day --
Can never have a 'solitary way.'"

The Responsibility of This Friendship

True friendship is not one-sided. We must not only treasure Christ's friendship for what it means to us; we must recognize that Jesus expects our love and consideration towards Him. There are responsibilities in friendship with Jesus. True friends endeavor to avoid anything that would cause grief to each other. If we value the friendship of Jesus, therefore, we too will try to refrain from everything that would pain His loving heart.

It has been said that a child's tears have more than once arrested a parent contemplating an evil course. Shall not the fact that we pain the heart of our best Friend, Jesus, when we act contrary to God's Word, be the best means of helping us to conquer our waywardness?

Another responsibility of this friendship is that we must trust our Lord implicitly. Does it seem strange to suggest that trust is a responsibility? If so, think of the friendships broken, partnerships dissolved because of mistrust. Think of your closest earthly friend, and then imagine how you would feel if you found out that he was in great trouble and had told nearly every one about it with the exception of yourself. You would feel hurt.

You would think quite rightly that you had more right to his confidence than others; and yet-how frequently we thus treat our Lord.

We are apt to tell every one about our woes before we take them to the Lord. Moreover, many friendships have been broken because of jealousy, evil surmising, the imputation of wrong motives to a course of conduct not understood. We must trust our heavenly Father and our heavenly Friend because He doeth all things well, though sometimes the clouds of trouble obscure His 'holy purposes concerning us.

To doubt His love and faithfulness in such circumstances is to prove ourselves altogether unworthy of His friendship. The attitude of true friendship at such times is well expressed by the words of Job 13:15: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." To those who trust Him like this, the Lord will say, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

Yet another responsibility of friendship is the defense of our friend's name and character. The words of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 10:32, 33 emphasize our responsibility in this direction "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven; but whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven." A poet has well expressed this thought

"Who slights an absent friend's good name,
Nor takes his part when others blame,
That man is black at heart I wot:
Beware his treachery, trust him not!"

We can have nothing but contempt for those who run down their friends, or even remain quiet while others are talking ill about them. Our Lord tells us plainly that if we deny Him, either actually or by failing to stand in defense of the name of Christ, and all that it stands for—His truth and His people—then we are not discharging our responsibilities and are proving ourselves totally unworthy of friendship with Christ, and our Lord tells us quite plainly that He will not acknowledge such as His friends "Him will I also deny before 'My Father which is in heaven."

Another responsibility of friendship is that we should live so as to bring honor to the name of our friend. If you want to know what a man is like, look at his friends. Has it ever occurred to us that some may be forming their opinion of Christ from those who claim to be His friends? If so, surely this emphasizes our responsibility. How careful we should be to do nothing which would be disapproved by our Lord, to avoid being found in any place or with any company He could not commend, for when we act in this way, we are misrepresenting Christ's character to those about us.

If the friends of Jesus are found living worldly lives, indulging in the things of this earth, the world is apt to think that Jesus approves; thus we bring dishonor upon His name, and our Lord is misjudged on account of the actions of His friends. The friends and apostles of Jesus wrote the record of His life while here on earth. We speak of the Gospel according to John, according to Matthew; but there are more than four Gospels; every friend of Jesus is writing one

"We are writing a Gospel,
A chapter a day,
By the way which we act,
And the things which we say;
Others are watching to see what we do;
Pray what is the Gospel according to you?"

The Conditions of This Friendship

"Ye are My friends, **if . . .**" How much that little word indicates! Friendship with Christ is in the balance; it all depends on you "if ye do whatsoever I command you." It would of course be improper for an earthly friend to insist on such a condition for his friendship, for however dear such a friend may be, he is imperfect, and therefore such a condition would be impossible, indeed, would only indicate selfishness on his part. Human friendship, no matter how beautiful, is only a very inadequate picture of the friendship with Christ.

Jesus is the perfect Friend, and therefore He has the right to insist as a condition of His friendship that we should do His bidding, for, as John tells us, "His commandments are not grievous." (1 John 5:3.) Indeed, they are all for our highest good. The Lord therefore expects us to be obedient to His behests.

Moreover, Christ has shown that we prove our love to Him by the way we keep His commandments. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." (John 14:15.) Here again we see the difference between friendship and servitude. What master would say to a servant, "If ye love me, obey my instructions"? Of course not; he would more likely say, "If you fear me, do what I tell you or bear the consequence." But Jesus shows that He treats us as friends by forbearing to threaten: "If ye **love** Me, keep My commandments."

Seeing, then, that our friendship with Jesus is dependent upon this important condition of carrying out His commandments, we must inquire "What are His commandments?" Our Lord's requirements are given in the Scriptures. The Holy Scriptures are a record of God's will. The commandments of God are all contained therein, and the commands of God are likewise the requirements of Jesus, as our Lord said in prayer to His Father concerning His disciples: "For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them."-John 17:8.

If we reveal our love for the Lord by the way we keep His commandments, then we must constantly search the Word to ascertain what these are, for it is manifest we must understand these commands before we obey them. The condition of friendship is that we earnestly endeavor to know the will of the Lord; and if this is the real desire of our hearts, inspired by love for Him, we need fear no failure in this direction, for Jesus encourages all such earnest seekers by saying: "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak for Myself." - John 7:17, A.R.V.

The Apostle John in his epistle says: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." (1 John 4:20.) In view of the Scripture we have just considered we might say similarly, "If any man claims to be a friend of Christ and yet despises the Lord's commandments and depreciates the doctrine of Jesus, he is proving his claim to be false," for such an attitude is entirely contradictory. Jesus said: "If ye **love Me, keep My commandments.**" And again: "**Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.**"

One of our Lord's commandments which we must observe if we would retain His friendship, is recorded in John 12:35. "Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk **while ye have** the light, **lest darkness come upon** you." To walk means to make progress along a certain path. To walk in the light is to walk with Jesus, for Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." To walk while we have the light is to walk while we have Jesus and the illumination which comes as a result of His friendship.

But this command of our Lord contains a warning: the possibility of losing the light and being overtaken with darkness. It is only "if we walk in the light as He is in the light," that "we have fellowship one with another." - 1 John 1:7.

It is as if we are taking a journey together, my Lord and I; the lamp of truth is held in His hand and illuminates the pathway step by step; but if we cease to make progress, if we stop and linger by the way, our Lord will not tarry but continues on, and the light of truth moves on with Him, and those who have ceased to progress are enveloped in the surrounding darkness. "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you."

The truth represents God's will; indeed, it is the means by which God reveals His will; but does God's will change? Is it necessary for us to constantly walk in the light? Yes and no. The purpose of God, even before creation, was to have a perfect earth with perfect creatures, or beings,

praising Him. From this viewpoint God's will has never changed; nevertheless, God has been accomplishing this purpose in stages. Each stage has a specific objective which is diverse from the others, although all are necessary to the final outcome.

Just so, one who desires to build a house has to go through various operations. The laying of the foundations is quite different from building the walls; the fixing of the doors and windows is yet another operation quite diverse from the previous two; and different skilled workmen must be employed for each stage of the work. The will of the architect for each group of workmen varies accordingly, yet all their labors combine to accomplish one purpose. So with God's will. Each age has its specific purpose for the accomplishing of one end; and God's requirements of the people living in each age have been different, yet all with its one ultimate object in view. As the Father's Plan proceeds towards fulfillment, new developments are introduced, and old operations, having accomplished their purpose, cease to be; and that is why a friend of Jesus must "walk in the light." It is not enough to know the purpose of God in the Jewish Age; we must know what God has been accomplishing in this Gospel Age; we must be aware of the latest news, the latest developments of that Plan in our day if we would have fellowship with Him and walk in the light.

Another of our Lord's commandments which must be observed by His friends is the one He designates as the "new commandment." He had told His disciples that they could prove their love for Him by keeping His commandments, and the commandment which our Lord especially had in mind is evidently the one recorded in John 13:34: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." How did Jesus love His disciples? He loved them continuously, as stated in John 13:1. "When Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end [i.e., to the utmost]."

He loved them so much that He completely overlooked their earthly failings and in His report to His Father could use such expressions as "They have kept Thy Word," and: "I am glorified in them." He loved them enough to die for them: "The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it." We are to love one another as Christ has loved us. Jesus emphasized this in the connection from which our text is selected (John 15:12-14): "This is My commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love **hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for** his friends. Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

Our love for each other must be seen in the way we are used up in the service of the brethren; our love, like Christ's, must be a sacrificial love; our love for each other must be as unchanging as Christ's love is for us. Enduring friendship is infrequent. We see many so-called friendships in the world. Similar interests cause friendships to commence, but soon the parties tire of each other; some trivial incident: or misunderstanding occurs, and the friendship is broken.

But Christ's love is an unchanging love, and if we are to love one another as Christ has loved us, it means that our love for one another will be an enduring love, as was the love of Christ. Have we ever done anything which has displeased the Lord, have we ever proved faithless, ever doubted His wisdom? Did the disciples' weakness, stupidity, selfishness, lack of thought, denials, faithlessness make any difference to Christ's love? No! "Having loved His own, He loved them to the end." 'Have our weaknesses and failings made any difference to His love? No, we can witness to His praise, His love is still the same. We should remember this when inclined to take exception at some unkindness from the hand of a brother or sister, when we find ourselves misunderstood and misrepresented; remember the love of Christ and forgive others their trespasses as Christ also has forgiven us, for by so doing we are loving one another as Christ has loved us.

While this should be our attitude towards any who injure us wittingly or unwittingly, it is necessary also to emphasize the other point of view in order that no man should deceive himself. Any who whisper scandal and gossip about their brethren, any who stoop to listen, are potential murderers in God's sight. The moral standards of the world, regard one who misrepresents another's character as an assassin; God's viewpoint is not less drastic: "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer bath eternal life abiding in him." - 1 John 3:15.

The closer we are living to the Lord, the more we are the subjects of the Adversary's venom. False doctrines, powerful weapons of the Adversary though they may be, are not more forceful than the poison of faultfinding and evil surmising. Christian soldiers, clad in all the armor of God, who have withstood nobly the arrows of false doctrine, when they drink of the stream of evil surmising, imbibe a poison against which their armor does not protect them.

No faultfinder is a friend of Christ, whatever claims he may make in that direction, for the friends of Christ obey His commandments; and this is His commandment: "That ye love one another." The nearer we live to Christ, the more we shall be attacked by the Adversary. He has various methods. The one who proclaims false doctrine may be his dupe; the one who imputes wrong motives to the brethren is a tool of the Adversary. "It must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh!" - Matt. 18:7.

"O be not the first to discover
A blot on the name of a friend
O be not of discord the mover
For hearts may prove true in the end."

Not only must our love cover the imperfections of our brethren; it must be demonstrated by the way we lay down our lives for them. This means that we shall be always seeking out ways of serving and helping them, that we shall always be willing to sacrifice our personal preferences, interests, and comforts in order to cheer them with our presence and minister to their needs.

One who receives all and gives nothing is not a true friend. There is little we can do for Christ, but our Lord tells us we reveal our love for Him by the way we keep His commandments; that is, by the way we love one another. Indeed, Jesus has told us that any service done for His friends, "the least of these My brethren," is counted as done unto Him. Could any desire a more marvelous incentive? Every labor of love, every effort we make or put forth together with the saints -- the brother who hands out a hymn-book, the sister who washes up at the convention-are both doing it as unto the Lord. And such a thought glorifies the lowliest task.

What about those who make little or no effort to be with the Lord's people on every occasion? Such are showing how cheaply they regard the friendship of Jesus; for consecration is not a theory, it is practical. God wants us not merely to talk of consecration, but to live consecrated lives. There is all the difference in the world between talking and living consecration.

Moreover, if we love our friends, we should desire to see them on every possible occasion. We meet our Lord at the throne of grace, but there is another place where most of us can meet Jesus. Our Lord said, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18:20.) When we associate with the assembled saints, we have fellowship not only with the friends of Jesus but with our Lord Himself, who is present with us as we meet; and when we fail to make use of this God-given means of grace, we lose the blessings which flow from Christ's presence.

This thought is brought very forcefully to our attention in John's Gospel. In the twentieth chapter we have the record of how the disciples assembled together on the first day of the week, and the Lord stood in their midst and said, "Peace be unto you." Consequently we read in verse twenty that their hearts were made glad by Christ's presence: "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."

Thomas, however, was not present on this occasion (verse 24): "But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, **was not with them when Jesus came.**" Although the disciples told Thomas of the blessing they had received, he could not believe that Jesus came, and therefore he could not recapture the blessing. The Lord gave to Thomas, when with the other disciples on a subsequent occasion, the sign which he required to strengthen his faith; without which it is very evident that Thomas would have lost a great blessing, a loss which might have resulted in complete spiritual disaster, through failing to be with the disciples on the occasion "when Jesus came."

If we stay away from the meetings convened by the brethren in accordance with our Lord's instructions, for their mutual help-and edification, we shall definitely miss the blessing which God has to bestow. We may think or say God can bless us even though we ignore His command to assemble together; but such will not be the case. God certainly can and does take care of those who, through no fault of their own, are quite unable to make use of this means of grace; but He will not bless those who have, or could have, the opportunity of fellowship and decline to use such occasions for meeting with Christ. Of such it will be recorded in God's book of remembrance that they were not there when Jesus came to bless.

Our friendship with Jesus, then, depends on our obedience to His commandment "that ye love one another." It is the only practical way we have at the present time of showing our love for the Master. If we fail to obey His behests, we are proving ourselves unworthy of His love; and "if we deny Him, He also will deny us."

If we allow any earthly interest to come between us and our service for Christ, we are showing that such considerations are more important to us than the friendship of Jesus; and our Lord tells us in Matthew 10:37, 38: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me." Jesus is a friend who desires and expects first place in our hearts.

In conclusion we would refer to our Lord's parable of the sheep and goats. Here Jesus reveals to us how He recognizes His friends. True, the parable refers to the Millennial reign, but the principle enunciated is equally applicable to the present time. The Lord measures our friendship by the love, or lack of love, we display towards His brethren.

"Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered and ye gave Me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me; I was sick, and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me. Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we

Thee an hungered, and fed Thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? or naked, and clothed Thee? Or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye

have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.

"Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungered, and ye gave Me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in; naked, and ye clothed Me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited Me not. Then shall they also answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto *you*, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, **ye did it not to Me.**" - Matt. 25:34-45.

"What the hand is to the lute;
What the breath is to the flute;
What the fragrance to the smell;
What the spring is to the well;
What the flower is to the bee
That is Jesus Christ to me!

"What's the mother to the child;
What's the guide in pathless wild;
What is oil to troubled wave;
What is ransom to the slave;
What is water to the sea
That is Jesus Christ to me!"

"Faithful the saying: -- For

If we have died together, we shall also live together,
If we endure, we shall also reign together,
If we shall deny, He also will deny us,
If we are faithless, He faithful abideth
For deny Himself He cannot." - 2 Tim. 2:11-13, Rotherham.

- *Contributed.*

God's Inheritance in His Saints

(Continued from last issue)

Tests Among the Brethren

WE ARE instructed that the Lord's messengers are "lights." Shall we then listen to and admit all who come as lights? The Lord said, "Satan himself will come as a messenger of light." So we have to examine the purity of the light. Those of the Lord's inheritance are called "sheep," and yet we are warned that wolves will come with sheepskins over them, and we must prove that the skin is genuine. Then there are some with proper "light" and "sheep" credentials but who in pride of position alter the message slightly; and we remember that for a steersman to have his compass half a point wrong may mean being out of sight of the right course in a day. This close examination brings an accusation of being unloving, for we are informed that "love believeth all and thinketh no evil." And yet none should be admitted into God's temple unless he is found to be of God. In 1 Kings 13 we are told the story of a man of God who was sent on a mission, one of his instructions being that he was not to stop at any house going or returning, even for food or drink. The chief of a body of religious teachers felt slighted, and went after the man of God with a false message that such chief teachers were excepted, and deceived the messenger into listening to something contrary to what God had said. But the Lord said to him, "I gave you your instructions, so why did you listen to any one who told you otherwise?"

Then there are the loving brethren who flatter by speaking of "our" doings, and help to bring the old self to life in pride, and may cause us to act in our own wisdom, with the result that we may cease to be the Lord's inheritance. The joy of communion with the Lord can imperceptibly merge into the joy of fellowship with brethren, and yet this fellowship is a fine thing, provided that it does not put the Lord in the second place. It is indeed possible for the Adversary to lull some into a false sense of security. In Ahab's time there were four hundred prophets who always said pleasing things, but there was only one prophet of the Lord. This prophet was kept in prison because he told the people the truth about themselves. To this day Jeremiah's name is used in ridicule by some persons, but Jeremiah was right. In fact, the isolation of Jeremiah, Isaiah, and others of that ancient time, seems to depict the isolation of members of the little flock today.

There is not one of God's inheritance from first to last who has put God's words first-warnings as well as promises-but has experienced being opposed and treated as an enemy by his brethren. It is one way in which we must follow in the Master's footsteps. Real love for the brethren demands efforts to save and keep, as well as to comfort. The stewardship of our little portion of God's antitypical inheritance gradually brings us - into joint-stewardship with the other faithful ones. Each of us then becomes a kind of watchman for the others, with definite instructions to use God's sword, His Word, as He directs. Moreover, the Lord says that He will hold us personally responsible if we fail to do this. It is because of their relationship to God that we love the brethren, and we should be faithful, though loving, in dealing with them. Jesus spared no necessary words with either Jews or Church. John, James, Peter, and Paul all followed His example. It is well in these perilous times to keep reminding the brethren of the deceptions for which we must be on the lookout. Paul said, "I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God. . . . Grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves men shall arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember that I ceased not to warn every one of you night and day, with tears." - Acts 20:27-31.

Blessed Are the Merciful

As our Lord experienced many trials and sorrows that He might be a merciful High Priest, so we ought to pity and not blame any fellow members of God's inheritance who have been overcome through insufficient watching, praying, etc. Each one of us has weak spots in his body-machine, with special enemies trying to get in through such weak points; and no two of us are exactly alike. To "build each other up" means to endeavor to strengthen these weak spots, and to eliminate the cause of the weakness. When we see a weakness in a brother or a sister, let us reflect that it is a weakness in the same prospective body of Christ -- the same inheritance of God, the same medium of blessings for the sick world. If we continue to look upon God's great purpose as a whole, it will keep us from looking even slightly on another recipient of His love, but will cause us to always love, pray, and help. Paul's exhortation to the Corinthian church to consider the oneness of the body members, reveals the clearness of his vision. The human body affords a fine illustration of the Christ body. If the foot has trouble that hinders free walking, does the hand feel superior and stand aloof? Or do head and hand unite without delay in efforts to assist the foot by removing the cause of the weakness? The truth of the matter is quite apparent, and a similar sympathy and cooperation should obtain among the members of Christ's body.

Think of the ineffable life that is held out for us in the great beyond. Think of the vast ranges of thought and action in which to live with our Father and our Lord. Think of the lengths and breadths of divine love that have been revealed to our sight. Can we ever be entrusted with the great position of the future unless we joyfully allow the Lord to perfect His inheritance? Shall we give the Lord cause to ask, "Lovest thou thine own ease more than Me?" No, but rather shall we say as was said of yore, "I will not give sleep to mine eyes nor slumber to mine eyelids till I have built this house of rest for God." When this work is completed, His inheritance will become His Zion, of which He said, "I have chosen Zion; I have desired it for My habitation. This is My rest forever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it." Our ceaseless watch, therefore, is to make us like God. In watching over Israel He "neither slumbers nor sleeps." How patiently and longingly He is watching to see if we shall fully respond to His love. How He is watching the process of our metamorphosis, with the beautiful image, the "image" of Himself forming in us. And how He is bringing to a completion the wonderful work which He formerly began.

Some day the true Christian, as a new creature, will leave this earth and the old body behind, and will ascend to the inheritance prepared for him, clothed with "glory, honor, and immortality." And oh, what an inheritance that will be!

"Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." - Jude 24, 25.-*Contributed by J. L. Lewis*

Encouraging Message

Dear Friends in Truth:

I have received the "Herald" for the past three months, and it is God's blessing in each one. I have been worrying about the time when it would not come. I am a veteran of the last war and have been crippled ever since, so I get \$36 a month for myself and family. We have been trying to save up so as to be able to get the "Herald" for a year, but have not been able to do so just at present. But we wish that you would continue to send it until we can scrape up enough for a year's payment. We may be able to send money some time the first of the year.

And we would also like to know what the cost would be on some of the books which we will need to attend some of the study classes. We have been able to get to, some so far through friends: 6-The Book, "The New Creation"; 2-"The Time Is at Hand"; 5-"The Atonement between God and Man"; 3-"Thy Kingdom Come"; 4-"The Battle of Armageddon."

We have "The Divine Plan of the Ages," which was given to us by a friend in Milwaukee, but we want all the books when we can afford to get them, if it is one at a time, because we have found that they are totally on the Scriptures and not about things which we know and see from day to day. And some of the friends we were with in another class have now come to the light and see where these books give us the Truth, whereas we were only in the dark before, under the dictatorship of some one higher up. And we all thank the Lord for our light, and I hope we can only show it forth so some poor soul as unfortunate as we were can find the food he needs.

Please let us know about the "Herald" and these books. And when we need more literature to hand out, will write for more a little later on.

Yours in Him we love,

A. M. - Wis.