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Peniel

"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." - Gen. 32:24.

SO REMARKABLE is this recorded incident which befell the patriarch Jacob on his journey home from his long servitude in Padanaram, that it has caused a diversity of opinion regarding its exact nature. Some have contended that we have here the account of a vision such as befell Jacob at Bethel; others, again, maintain that the entire narrative can be resolved into a myth, a poetic fable, enshrining in it some spiritual truth, portraying, as it were, a deep spiritual conflict in the soul of Jacob himself. Neither of these suggestions appeals to us as being the true explanation. A careful consideration leads to the conclusion that this was an actual happening, that a man was really there with the patriarch during that memorable night.

Regarding this mysterious personage, Jacob himself says, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved"; and the Prophet Hosea, alluding to the narrative before us, says, "Jacob had power over the angel; he wept and made supplication unto him." (Hosea 12:4.) But while this was a literal and historical occurrence, yet, as has well been said, "though the form of this wrestling here was corporeal, the essence and the object of it was spiritual." Without question Jacob was in deep distress when he crossed the Jabbok that night, and in the mysterious man who came to him, he recognized the Bethel angel, upon whom he threw himself for that help which no mere human power could render him, and to whom he cried with passionate earnestness for a blessing. The physical wrestling was but the agonizing of an earnest heart, which took this manner of expressing itself, from the recognition of a spirit-presence manifesting itself under a human form. Considered from this standpoint, four great lessons reveal themselves, replete with blessings for the spiritual Israelite who diligently considers them, and who in thus doing, will find himself pictured in the experience of Jacob.

Loneliness in Distress

First, we have here a striking illustration of the **loneliness** of all real distress. Who but has not experienced that terrible solitude when sorrow or struggle isolate us from our fellows. There is a certain solitariness about every man, though we are gregarious by nature. There is a secret closet

in every heart where the soul keeps its "skeleton," and to which, after sending wife and children across the brook, it retires in times of sadness and isolation. Another has well said, "There is something in every soul that is never told to mortal, but which, as if to make up for its being withheld from others, has a strange fascination for ourselves; and in every moment of silence it is heard sounding in our secret ear. Even those nearest and dearest to us know not of these things. They are kept for solitude; nay, such is sometimes their power over us that they draw us into retirement that they may speak to us awhile."

The character of the things thus hidden in the secret chamber of men's hearts, differs exceedingly, both in different individuals, and in the same individual at different times. Perhaps it is the the memory of guilt. One thinks of Cain, who in dreadful isolation wandered over the earth with the mark of Gods imprinting for all to see. Or perhaps it is the pangs of sorrow, as when David, leaving those by whom he was surrounded, went up to the solitude of the chamber over the gate of Mahanaim, and paced its floors in anguish, saying, "O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" In others, it may be moments of temptation, as when Jesus went forth from His baptism into the wilderness that He might confront and vanquish the prince of darkness. Again, they may be times of anguish, as when the same Jesus in Gethsemane withdrew **from His disciples** and throwing Himself upon the ground, wept and prayed, alone.

All these reveal the loneliness of grief. In the case of Jacob, guilt and suspense were the troublers of his soul. He is about to meet his brother once more, and knows not whether the interview is to be one of reconciliation or revenge. He cannot forget how, years before, he had cheated Esau out of his birthright, and though he has taken all proper precautions to preserve the members of his company from harm, and has used all likely means to soften his brother's heart, and has committed his case in simple, fervent prayer to God, yet the suspense of his heart is such that he can endure no society for the time. Having seen his encampment safely settled for the night, he recrosses the ford to be alone with his God, to unsluice his heart and let out the bitter waters of its deep anxiety.

And is it not so with us all? What of that act of thoughtlessness which we committed, and which drew in its train consequences of the saddest sort which we had not for a moment dreamed of; that terrible temptation which even now, as it comes s' urging on, seems as if it would sweep us from our foothold; that impending danger, which appears to be hanging over us like a cloud laden with ruin -- these are not themes which we can speak of at the meeting-place, or to the casual acquaintance, or even to our most intimate and confidential friend. We crave for human sympathy, but even at the very moment of our craving we feel how vain the longing is. The sympathy. and consolations of others, though kindly meant, are often far away from the mark. Every real sorrow or struggle isolates us from our fellows. The keener the suffering, the more thorough is the isolation. We are thus, so to say, islanded by spiritual distress, and like Jacob here, sleepless in our solitude, look out through the darkness for some Peniel angel to come to our relief. In the words of another "When we have gone through in imagination the whole circle of our resources and found them nothing and ourselves powerless, there comes a strange, a nameless dread, a horrible feeling of insecurity, which gives the consciousness of a want, and forces us to feel out for something that is mightier than flesh and blood to lean upon."

There are no more weird lines in literature' than these in "The Ancient Mariner"

"Alone! alone! all, all alone!
Alone on the wide sea! . . .
So lonely 'twas that, God Himself

Scarce seemed there to be!"

That is the very climax of distress, and only they who have themselves passed through it can fully understand the import of these words: "Jacob was left alone." Then may no one approach us thoroughly save Him who erst did walk over' the very billows of their trouble, to His suffering disciples' help.

"My Help Cometh from the Lord"

The second lesson we glean from this narrative is that in this dreary solitude, our only effectual resource is God. In His loneliness and perplexity, the patriarch is approached by a mysterious stranger, in whom God is in part concealed, and in part also revealed. Jacob saw a man whom he could freely approach as a fellow man; while there was that about him which made him feel that he was more than man, and that he had in him the very element of strength which at the moment he so sorely needed. The divine presence was not manifested in the terribleness of Sinai, else Jacob's heart would have been appalled; the fear of Esau would have been swallowed up in his terror of the Lord, and he would have fled from the awful presence. But now there is a man before him to whom he can speak with confidence; there is more than a man, even one to whom the chamber of his heart is no secret, and who is omnipotently able to help him. Here, therefore, is the very helper whom he needs; and so he casts himself upon him and cries out for succor.

How beautifully all this shows forth Jesus Christ, the helper sent from above in a form that can be understood by the needy one. As a man He came to earth and dwelt among us and revealed the matchless love of His Father, and taught us, when in agony and crisis to cling to Him. We might have feared to seek help from the Majesty above, did not that Majesty vouchsafe a revelation of His boundless love and mercy through the gift of His Son, who comes as a brother and yet mightier than any human brother.

Homer relates a story in connection with the parting of Hector and Andromache. The hero was going to his last battle, and his wife accompanied him as far as the gates of the city, followed by a nurse carrying in her arms their infant child. When he was about to depart, Hector held out his hands to receive the little one, but, terrified by the burnished helmet and the waving plume, the child turned away and clung crying to his nurse's neck. In a moment, divining the cause of the infant's alarm, the warrior took off his helmet and laid it on the ground and then, smiling through his tears, the little fellow leaped into his father's arms. Now, similarly, Jehovah of hosts, Jehovah with the helmet on, would frighten us weak, guilty ones away; but in the person of His Son Jesus, He has, as it were, laid that helmet off, and now the guiltiest and the neediest are encouraged to go to His fatherly embrace, and avail themselves of His support. For the blood of Jesus speaketh peace.

"What in the heart lies deepest ever,
Unbreathed by mortal lip abroad,
And heard by ear of mortal never,
Takes voice before the throne of God.
The silence of our spirit tells
Its tale aloud where Jesus dwells."

"To Him, therefore, O burdened soul, repair, and He will give relief. Is it sin that is aching at the conscience? He knows it and can give thee pardon through His sacrificial blood. Is it sorrow that is wringing thy heart? Then, though its cause may be unknown to them who sit beside thee, He is already familiar with it, and can give thee solace. Is it the fear of some impending calamity that is darkening thy spirit? He is acquainted with it, and can sustain thee through it. Is it temptation that is beleaguering thy soul? He has already seen it, and can garrison thy heart's fortress against every enemy. Is it the meeting of some offended brother, harder to be won than a city, that is weighing down thy life? He understands thy case and can give thee deliverance. Yea, brother, sister, whosoever thou art, and whatsoever be that suffering which has today sent thee across the brook in solitude, Jesus Christ is thy resource, and He will give thee perfect sympathy and effectual

help. To Him, therefore, betake thyself. Throw thyself on Him with the wailing cry of Hezekiah on thy lips, 'O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me,' and He will give thee strength."

Importunity Will Prevail

As a third lesson, the narrative teaches us further that our first application to this divine friend may be met with seeming repulse but that believing-importunity will ultimately prevail. One gathers from the record of this peculiar incident that when the patriarch cast himself upon the mysterious one, the stranger tried to shake him off; but the more he attempted to do this, the more Jacob clung to him, until at length, touching the hollow of the patriarch's thigh, he deprived him of all power to stand; But Jacob, though his limbs were paralyzed, would not be gainsaid, but throwing his whole weight upon the heavenly stranger, cried, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." And faith receives its reward. The moment of extreme helplessness becomes that of richest victory, but to have God's strength, Jacob must lose his own. He prevails, and the answer comes, "Thy name shall be no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God, and hast prevailed."

How well this lesson of importunity recalls the New Testament story of the Syrophenician woman. In deep anguish of soul she came to Jesus, saying, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." But there was no response. Those ears that never before were deaf to the cry of suffering seemed closed to her; those lips that never before refused to speak a word of comfort and of power seemed sealed to her: "He answered her not a word." But she would not be thus shaken off; she renewed her appeal so urgently that even the disciples seemed to be ashamed and said, "Send her away, for she crieth after us." To this He made reply, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." One would have thought that such a speech would have repelled her; but no, she came now nearer than ever, and fell at His feet and worshipped Him, saying, "Lord, help me." To this He makes response, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs." AM there He touched the hollow of the thigh, and seemed almost to cast her to the earth; but no, she clings more really than ever to Him, and from His very rebuff she draws a plea, as she meekly makes reply, "Truth, Lord, yet the dog's eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table. I did not ask the children's bread; what I seek is but to Thee as a crumb from off Thy table, which even a dog may eat." Then came the commendation of her faith, as of Jacob here: "O daughter! great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. - Matt. 15:22-28.

This beautiful lesson of importunity is shown also in the incident when, walking over the waters toward His worn-out disciples, He made as if to pass by them, in order that He might evoke their earnest request that He should come to them. And again, on the way to Emmaus, He made as if He would have gone further, just that He might draw out their earnest request, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent."

All this should teach us to guard against misunderstanding the Lord. When our earnest applications appear to be met with indifference, and our importunity seems only to call forth repeated repulse, when in the yearning earnestness of our entreaty our hearts feel as if they had lost all strength, even as Jacob's limb went from beneath him at the angel's touch; let us remember that He thus designs by the discipline of resistance to develop our faith into greater strength and make us cling to Him all the more, saying, "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." That is a wholesome weakness which throws our entire weight on Christ, for then we are in a fair way to realize Paul's paradox, "When I am weak, then am I strong."

And not alone for the strengthening of our faith, may the answer be deferred. Jesus may design thereby to open our eyes to our real need. We note in Jacob's case that though it was suspense concerning Esau that had at first oppressed him, there is no mention of that in this wrestling. He discovers that he needs something far more important than reconciliation to his elder brother. He wants to know God's name, that is, his relation to Him, and he desires a blessing from Him. Thus through the apparent denial of the minor request he is brought to feel his need of something greater than he had thought at first of asking.

And thus it is frequently with God's children still. When in some temporal trial we cross the Jabbok to cry over that, God seems only to push us away from Himself, and the trial becomes heavier, until at length driven in upon our deepest need, we are constrained to ask, "What is Thy name? O that Thou wouldst bless me indeed!" The earthly emergency is forgotten in our spiritual extremity; and the higher blessings of holiness engross all our earnestness. So it happens that the delay of God to answer our prayers in earthly distress has been itself the beginning of His gracious answer to that constant craving for the knowledge of Himself which is the deepest aspiration of every consecrated heart. Let us give God time, and very soon, as the result of our earnestness, we shall find that while the delay has permanently benefited our own souls, the offended Esau has also been appeased. But let us never forget that if we would secure these results, we must hold Him fast and refuse to let Him go.

Peniel-the Face of God

Our fourth and concluding lesson teaches that such an experience as we have been tracing always leaves its mark on the individual who has passed through it, and renders memorable the place where it was undergone. For Jacob there were several permanent memorials of that night of wrestling. First, "Jacob halted upon his thigh." As the earth bears marks of the tremendous upheavals and flames it has endured, so does the spiritual soul show rents and chasms like the steep mountains. The spirit of a man is marked by the fires of those trials through which he has been made to pass; and we may see in the character and disposition of an individual the indications or results of those inner struggles through which he has been brought.

Who can fail to see the difference between Israel and Jacob? The halting was but the corporeal indication of a spiritual result. All the years before, Jacob lay stranded on the sand-bank of deceit; but on this Peniel night there came such a spring-tide of devotional feeling and fervor as lifted him up and floated him off, and from this point on the Jacob -- or supplanter -- in him disappears, and the Israel comes into view. This difference is noticeable by carefully considering his history

up to this point, and from thence to his death. He now becomes more lovable, more meek, more holy, and whereas before we are not drawn particularly to him, now he attracts us as to a father, so that when his children stand around his death-bed to receive his dying blessing, we feel almost as one of them and are disposed to join in their lamentations. That night of wrestling, brief as it was, left an impression on the patriarch which time, instead of effacing, only chiseled into deeper relief, and brought out in deeper outline.

And thus it has been the case with ourselves. Does not some crisis in our own experience, set, as it were, our disposition so that its individuality is at once recognized by those around us? While the metal is heated, the die comes down upon it and stamps its image permanently there. It is the work of a brief space, but the impression lasts while the metal endures. So in the white heat of the soul during some time of inner agony, it becomes soft and impressible, and then comes God's minting spirit to enstamp Christ's image upon it, making an impression which neither time nor change can efface. This is well understood, and whenever we see a man of very marked Christian

individuality, whether for tenderness or ruggedness, we instinctively conclude that some Peniel nights have made him what he is.

Memorable indeed are these hallowed places. Like Jacob who "called the name of the place Peniel," but did not, as at Bethel, set up a pillar, so we also need no outward memorial, for the remembrance of our "seeing God face to face" is burned indelibly upon our hearts. These are the places that mark our progress heavenward. These are the places, the trials of our spiritual way, when in a very special manner God in Christ has come to us with strengthening and cheer. They are the battlefields where Christ enables us to overcome self and sin, each trial leading to that blessed state where our conflicts shall be over, when the final victory has been won. "In due season we shall, reap, if we faint not."

"Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies;
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me."

"Your Adversary, the Devil"

"Resist, steadfast in the faith" - "and he will flee from you." - 1 Pet. 5:9; James 4:7.

THE WHOLE world lies under the 'evil one'" (under the influence of the "evil one"). This is the testimony of the Apostle John found in his first epistle (1 John 5:19) as given in the "Diaglott" translation. There is only one who deserves the title of "the evil one" and that is the devil, Satan, who is the adversary of God. He gained this title by being the instigator of all the wickedness and evil that has befallen the world. As John points out: "He that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning." Jesus spoke of Satan in a similar way when he rebuked the Pharisees and Jews: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar, and the father of it." - John 8:44.

Thus, in the beginning, sin (all the evil and wickedness that is in the world) had its conception in Satan. We view the entrance of sin into the world as starting with Adam's disobedience, which is correct. But we must bear in mind that before Adam disobeyed, Lucifer, as Satan, seeing his opportunity in the newly created race, sinned and became "the evil one," adversary of God. The Prophet Isaiah (Isa. 14:12-14) speaks concerning him "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! . . . For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend. into heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. . . . I will be like the Most High."

God has used various illustrations to convey to our minds a conception of the one controlling the powers of evil. This is one of them. It uses as its base of comparison the king of Babylon. It likens the Adversary to a man whose ambition is fired by pride to such an extent that all reason is lost. As a result every principle opposed to God's righteous law is used to attain these ambitions.

But to think of Satan as a man, as he has been pictured: as Mephistopheles, or as adorned with horns, hoof, and tail, is misleading. Satan is a spirit, as the Apostle Paul has clearly indicated in Ephesians 6:12, addressing the church of the saints: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against the spiritual things of the Evil One in the heavenlies." (Portion of translation from "Diaglott.") The spiritual things of the Evil One, the intangible powers exerted by Satan, are great.

We should not minimize them because they are not seen. The fact that they are intangible should create within us an attitude of watchfulness and fear of failure to detect them. The Apostle Peter (or rather, God inspiring the Apostle Peter) did not pick a beast at random to represent Satan when he said: "Your adversary, the devil, goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Pet. 5:8.) In the lion is represented power. The power of a beast stimulated by an unsatisfied appetite is most ferocious and daring, stopping at nothing to satisfy its craving for food. Satan's hunger is never satisfied. Bear in mind that every one of us represents potential food for this beast.

If we doubt the tremendous power of evil exerted by Satan, we have merely to look about us in the world today. However, to really gain an insight into Satan's power at its height, we must look back into history to a period known as the "dark ages." This time in history stands forth as a monument to the Evil One. Truth was not only at a standstill but was being buried deep in ignorance and superstition. If a man uttered an opinion contrary to the superstitious beliefs prevailing, he sealed his death-warrant. So thoroughly did Satan hold the world of mankind in

bondage to ignorance and superstition that their seeking to escape this yoke by gaining a smattering of knowledge has enabled him to clamp on another, that of extreme skepticism hindering logical reasoning. The Apostle Paul wrote of this condition in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4: "But if, indeed, our glad tidings be veiled, they have been veiled to those who are perishing; to those unbelievers, whose minds the god of this age blinded, in order that they may not see clearly the effulgence of the glad tidings." - Diaglott.

But "you hath God quickened ["made alive," to paraphrase the apostle's remarks in Ephesians 2:1, 2] **you**, who were once dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye 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."

"We Are not Ignorant of His Devices"

Thus, although at one time we let ourselves be guided by the spiritual powers of the "evil one," so vividly pictured here in the expression, "the prince of the power of the air," we now have been (by the grace of God) quickened to walk in newness of life. This is when our opposition really begins. The difference in the effectiveness of Satan's opposition, then and now, consists partly in our being conscious of his devices, whereas previously we were not. As we "diligently seek God," we become more and more aware of the way Satan is attempting to oppose us. And only inasmuch as we diligently seek God, are we able to detect the various subtle and clever ways that Satan has of tricking us into developing a spirit contrary to God. When the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth a second time concerning the difficulties and troubles they were experiencing, attempting to establish them more firmly in the faith, he discussed (chapter 2) his attitude and theirs with respect to his visit and to certain matters in their midst. If this chapter is read very carefully, it will be noticed that Paul is concerned about a wrong spirit being developed among the members of the church at Corinth; including himself also in his warning in the 11th verse: "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices."

His Buffeting Profitable for a Season

We have seen Satan work through us and upon us. As we look back to the time when we were "children of wrath" and under Satan's influence, that time should serve as a valuable experience from which we can benefit to meet Satan's present attacks. It is Satan who makes the world and our flesh such a hindrance to us. He is the "master mind" who uses these to advantage over us, as a means by which to continually buffet us. In fact, so clever and subtle is Satan that we should not be quick to blame others for what appears to be a wrong spirit, remembering that very often one in all sincerity will support some of Satan's suggestions unknowingly, believing that he is standing up for a righteous principle. And it is little wonder when we know that "Satan transforms himself into an angel of light." (2 Cor. 11:14.) That is why the Apostle John tells us to "test the spirits to see whether or not they be of God."

The Apostle Peter, because of his impulsiveness and fixed ideas concerning the Messiah, was used as a tool by Satan to launch an attack at Jesus. Remember Peter's susceptibility to a suggestion by Satan: When Jesus was telling His disciples of the things He must suffer and of His death, Peter said, "Be it far from Thee, Lord, this shall not be unto Thee." Jesus said, "Get thee behind Me, Satan." In rebuking Peter, Jesus was not calling him Satan.. Jesus knew who was really trying to impede His progress.

Peter has been accused of cowardice for denying the Lord. Remember that Peter cut off the ear of a servant of the high priest in trying to prevent Jesus from being taken. Peter wanted to fight. His

master was the Messiah. It was only a matter of time until His rulership should extend over all nations. To have his Master taken meant the cause was lost. That is the way Peter felt when he denied Jesus. Jesus told Peter at the last supper, "Simon, Simon, behold, .Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." The Peter that wrote his two epistles was a different Peter than was used of Satan on the occasions mentioned.

Satan, a Persistent Foe

Do not think that was the last time Peter was approached by Satan. If it were, he wouldn't have written about Satan "as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." Therefore, he writes, "be sober, be vigilant." (1 Peter 5:8, 9.) This counsel is noteworthy; it doubtless was prompted by the apostle's own experience; "be sober, be vigilant," he says, that we may detect Satan's attempts to "devour us," and "resist steadfast in. the faith" in spite of the fact that he is rightly pictured as a "roaring lion."

The Apostle Paul advises that we "put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand the wiles w' the devil." We cannot expect to oppose Satan successfully with only part of the armor of God, for the very reason that he will select the unprotected spot as the place to direct his attack.. In that 6th chapter of Ephesians the apostle first admonishes that we "strengthen ourselves in the Lord, and in His mighty power." This strengthening is, of course, accomplished by an accumulation of God's holy spirit. The more of His spirit we acquire, and the more determined we are to do God's will, the more resistance is offered to the devil. If this resistance is continual. with no signs of weakening, Satan will seek elsewhere for his victims. That is why James tells us to "resist the devil, and he will flee from you." That is not possible unless we first do as he recommends and "submit ourselves to God." (James 4:7.) For "he that is [truly] begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." - 1 John 5:18.

Fortunately, Satan is not immortal. His destruction is foretold, as intimated in the promise that "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." To us is given a grand privilege. For if we are faithful, "the God of peace shall bruise Satan under our feet." That in itself is enough in which to rejoice, - but the added joy is that the apostle assures us it will be accomplished "shortly." - Rom. 16:20.- *Contributed by Leo Post*

Wells of Salvation

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall he ix him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." - John 4:14.

WELLS OR springs have been marked with special significance and symbolism ever since the beginning of human history; partly because of their value to man in the waters they yield, and partly because of the typical significance given them in the Scriptures.

About the only difference between a well and a spring is that one breaks through the surface of the ground, while the other taps veins of water below the surface which have to be dug for. A like difference is manifest in mankind. Some overflow the goodness of their lives is manifest above ground, so to speak, where all can see and benefit from it. With others, you must dig below the surface; their goodness may be just as real, but you have to break through the outer crust of their reserve and lack of spontaneity to find that .goodness.

A good spring or well is a valuable asset wherever found, but its qualities will depend largely upon the character of the rock and soil through which it filters. The same is more or less true of people; the character of our words and thoughts is determined largely by the contacts -- moral, mental and spiritual -- that we permit to influence our lives.

Need for the Cleansing Fountain

Some waters are neutral, conveying neither good nor bad elements; others are distinctly bad because of the impurities and germs of disease they convey through having come in contact with earthly defilements. When people manifest moral and mental defilements in their thoughts and deeds, it shows that either their source or contacts, perhaps both, are impure, and like waters that have to be filtered or boiled to make them safe, such people need to filter their lives through the discipline of God's law or else pass through experiences that will burn out the evil.

On the other hand, some waters are impregnated with elements that are curative and beneficial to man because of having come from a source that contained these elements, and having been filtered through rock free from impurities. Such waters become famous and are much sought after. People will seek them out from all over the world in the hope of having their bodies cleansed and renewed. When we come in contact with people whose words and acts minister to our moral and spiritual upbuilding, we do not need to be told the source of those characteristics, for we know that such an one has learned of the Lord, that he has come in contact with the Fountain of truth and righteousness.

Such draw others to them because of what they have to give. Our Lord Jesus was preeminent in this respect. It will be recalled that He said, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." The reason why He will draw all **men** unto Him is that He has the power to cleanse and to give life. The waters that flow from Him are impregnated with truth, life, health, and happiness; and it is from and because of Him that "the desire of all nations shall come."

This characteristic: of our Lord is very well illustrated in His experience with the woman of Samaria. The incident, it will be recalled, occurred early in the ministry of our Lord. Jesus had left Judea to go down into Galilee and on the way had to pass through Samaria, and so came to

the city called Sychar that was close by the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph, where the well that bears his name was located.

About noontime, Jesus, being weary and thirsty, sat down on the well to await the-coming of some one to draw water, for He had nothing with which to draw. The first person to come was a woman of Samaria, and Jesus asked her for a drink. She, evidently astonished, said unto Him, "How is it, that Thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?" For the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans.

Her answer shows that aside from being surprised she was somewhat resentful that one of a race that considered her people beneath their notice should presume to ask of her a favor; nevertheless, the account shows that she was interested.

The Gift of Living Water

Jesus said to her, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him and He would have given thee living water."

What did Jesus mean by this statement? In Romans 6:23 the Apostle answers the question. He says, "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee"-here she had the opportunity and the privilege of serving the One in whose power was the gift above all gifts, the gift of life; she did not of course realize it, and so was inclined to be resentful that one of a race that considered themselves too good to associate with her people should ask of her a favor. And furthermore, why should she ask a drink of Him? She could draw her own water; and He had nothing with which to draw; and what did He mean by living water?

"Sir," said she, "Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; from whence, then, bast Thou that living water? Art Thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children and his cattle?"

In other words, she felt He was presumptuous in intimating that He could supply better water than she was able to draw for herself from the well of Jacob; still she was impressed with this stranger's words and demeanor, and so was in an attitude of mind to hear Him further.

Then Jesus said to her, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." That the woman still did not understand that Jesus was referring to a very different kind of water, is manifest by her reply when she said, "Give me this water that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw."

We still cannot be sure but that this was said in derision, but when Jesus proceeded to reveal His knowledge of her private life, she realized that He must be a seer or prophet and that He was not just talking nonsense. Then later on, in response to her declaration of belief in the coming of the Messiah, Jesus told her that He Himself was that Messiah.

Jesus, the Fountain of Truth and Life

The words of Jesus to this woman of Samaria may well constitute the essence of these thoughts: "Whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

We note here that there is no compulsion in the matter: one may drink or not drink, just as he chooses, but the water will be proffered him. **What is this water that once partaken of becomes within a well of water springing up into eternal life?**

Water, in the Scriptures, is used to typify both people and truth. First and foremost, Jesus Himself is the fountain from which all blessings flow, or perhaps, more properly speaking, through whom all blessings flow. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." Then again He said, "The words I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."

Paul (Eph. 5:26) speaks of our being clean through the "washing of water by the Word." He also refers to Jesus as the rock from which living waters flow, and these waters are the truth, the Word of life. It is only the truth that can satisfy the craving of the heart that seeks to know God, for God's Word is truth; and if it is really absorbed, if we really drink it in, it becomes a refreshing, satisfying portion welling up within and springing up into life eternal.

Peter speaks of a certain class (2 Pet. 2:17) as being "wells without water." A well without water would be utterly useless, a danger-spot to man and beast. Evidently these of whom Peter speaks did know the truth at one time; the *lifegiving* waters of truth coming from God through Christ had drawn them, and they had become wells; but somehow the channels of truth and spirit had become clogged, and what water they had known had seeped away. Being leaky vessels, we, like wells of water, must be continually refilled from the great fountain of truth, else we become wells without water.

Jesus told the woman of Samaria that the water which He gave, if properly received, would become a well-spring of water in us, so that not only would we ourselves be benefited but in turn would be able to minister the life-giving waters that others might drink also. In other words, we are not given the waters of truth merely to satisfy our own thirsty souls, but that, like the great Fountain of truth and life, we may minister refreshment to others in need.

Wells from which Rivers Flow

Springs may be of such wonderful volume that they become rivers. Two very significant streams springing from such a source are brought to our attention in the Bible. The first one is found in the beginning of Genesis, where we read of paradise lost, and the other one is found in the last of Revelation where it tells of paradise restored. In both accounts there is the tree of life; both speak of a river as flowing from a fountainhead; and both are evidently figurative.

The account in Genesis tells of a river that went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted into four branches. This is not stated according to the way rivers are formed since the time of the flood, for since then, rivers are due to rainfall and are formed by many little rivulets and streams coming together into a main stem that flows into the sea. But the main stem of this river starts in Eden and then, after leaving the garden, is divided into four branches to water the lands into which it flows, much as an irrigation system would do today. There being no rainfall before the flood, this river must have come from a wonderful spring.

As a symbol, this river pictures the race of mankind starting in Eden and eventuating in four classes whose characteristics are shown by the lands into which this river is said to flow. The first branch (Gen. 2:10-14) reaches its destiny in the land of Havilah. Havilah is described as being the place of gold and fine jewels, and so would picture the divine class. The second class ends up in Ethiopia, a land associated with servitude from earliest time and so symbolic of the great company class. The third branch flows into Assyria, which in Scripture symbology evidently represents an earthly class. And the fourth branch was Euphrates. It will be noticed that this branch is not said to have watered any land and so would fitly represent the second-death class. It is also significant that it was the river Euphrates that Cyrus (The Sun) dried up when he overthrew Babylon.

The second river to which we refer comes from a still more wonderful fountain. John the Revelator says, "And He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it [the 'heavenly Jerusalem] and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing off the nations."

This river, it will be seen, has its source in God and in Christ, the source from which all blessings flow; but before it reaches the world of mankind it becomes a well-spring of living water in 144,000 other wells. And so we read in Revelation 7:17 that "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

A Digger of Wells

The Scriptures relate some very interesting and significant incidents centered about wells in the lives of the patriarchs of old. It is significant that Abraham is called a "digger of wells," and that Isaac is said to have "redug the wells of his father Abraham." Abraham in this respect pictures God, the fountainhead of all waters. He it is that has dug or provided all the well-springs of truth; but evil powers have usurped, blocked, and filled in many of these life-giving streams. And so, antitypical Isaac, the Son of God, must repossess and re-dig these wells that the sheep of His Father may drink and live.

The first spring or well of note, to be mentioned as such, is the one where the angel of the Lord found Hagar, who had fled and was in hiding from her mistress, Sarah. This fountain of water was in the wilderness on the way to Shur, and Hagar gave it the name of "Beer-lahai-roi"; the word "beer" meaning "well," and "lahai-roi" meaning "of him that liveth and seeth me." It was by this well that Isaac later on took up his place of abode. - Gen. 16:13, 14; 24:62.

Another well of note was the one called "Beersheba," signifying the "well of an oath." This was the well which, when Abraham had dug, he took oath of Abimelech, ruler over that territory, that he had dug it, because he had robbed him of several wells. It was close by this well that Hagar, not aware of its existence, gave up in her struggle to live; then the angel of the Lord opened her eyes to see the well that, as the account says, her son Ishmael might not die.

Significance of Wells

It would seem that these two wells and their names have a typical significance in connection with the events here cited. When Hagar conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes, and, not being the freewoman, she was forced to flee into the wilderness. At one time it looked as though the law would provide the promised seed and that God's promise through His original covenant was of no effect (despised), but soon it was seen ("Thou, God, seest me") that the law could not bring forth the promised seed, being weak because of slavery to sin, and so the law and its seed was forced to look to the original promise for life. Hagar was told to return and submit herself to Sarah.

The second incident occurs at the time of the birth of Isaac. Ishmael, a child of thirteen, is found mocking, and at the behest of Sarah, he and his mother are cast off. This pictures how the law covenant was not able to bring its seed to maturity before being cast off; and as it grieved Abraham to send Hagar and her child away, so the Scriptures tell us that it grieved God to have to cast off His people Israel. But the inheritance was promised to Isaac, and the eyes of Hagar (the law) and natural Israel are eventually opened, when about to die, to see the well (promise) of the oath-the well of "Beer-sheba."

Wells were places of meeting. It was by a well that the servant of Abraham, Eliezer, found Rebekah when he was seeking for a wife for Isaac. It was by this well that Rebekah first hears of Isaac. Also, it was by the well Lahai-roi that she first sees him. (Gen. 24:62.) Jacob also finds Rachel by a well, having come there to water her father's sheep. (Gen. 29:2-10.) Then too, Moses finds his Gentile bride by a well in the land of Midian.

Andrew Jukes, an English commentator on the "Types of Genesis" (1863) says: "By no chance are these wives found by wells of water. By no chance did Christ sit thus upon a well. (John 4:6.) Surely if we have been 'betrothed in righteousness,' (Hos. 2:19) it was by wells of water that the Lord's servant met us. For 'understanding is a well-spring of life to him that hath it.' (Prov, 16:22.) And what are means of grace but wells also. We may indeed sit by these wells in vain like mocking Ishmael, we may lie close beside them and yet see no water. But the soul which daily comes to draw, which comes empty, saying, 'My soul is athirst,' and is exercised to draw and carry home a full vessel, **and which** desires unasked to make others around who seem in need; partakers of this same water, and freely gives it them-such an one, like Rebekah, will find by the water a guide to lead her to purer and better lands."

This whole story of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Hagar, Ishmael, etc., is seemingly full of symbolism in its every detail. Eliezer, the eldest servant in Abraham's house, is, from Abraham's standpoint, a perfect servant; he can be trusted with the most particular and delicate things of his master's business and goes and does as directed. When sent to seek a bride for his master's son, he realizes the importance of his commission and tries to foresee every eventuality. Being wholeheartedly devoted to his master's interests, he does not delay; even when, later on, the bride's folks suggest that he tarry a bit, he insists upon immediate obedience to his master's will.

In all of this he very fitly represents the holy spirit, the eldest servant (so to speak) **in** the Father's house; and as Eliezer was told where to go to get a bride for Isaac, so the holy spirit presents God's invitation to His own people. Furthermore, He unerringly knows where to find the ones He wants, that is, by the well-spring of truth, where they bring their vessels empty to be filled and refreshed that in turn they may serve others with this same truth. And so the prospective bride of Isaac is found by the well. But there are other tests which must be put upon her before she can be recognized and acknowledged as the betrothed one. It is not just an angel or even an archangel for

whom she is intended, but the only-begotten Son of the Father, the heir of all that God hath, the heir of immortality; therefore, He must be particular.

Essential Characteristic for Bride

Eliezer is quite sure that Rebekah is the one he seeks, for she has come to the well, as in prayer he requested of God, to fill her pitcher and minister to her father's sheep. But will she minister to a stranger and his thirsty camels? Antotypically, will she have enough of the Christ-like spirit to be willing to spend and be spent for those from whom she expects no return?

Rebekah's promptness in meeting the test put upon her illustrates what we may look for in those whom God recognizes as being suitable ones to receive gifts leading to betrothal: for as soon as Rebekah demonstrated this essential characteristic, Eliezer gave her the golden earring and bracelets, symbols of divine (gold) approval and blessing upon her readiness to hear and to serve. But still there is a further test before she is actually betrothed: At the earnest invitation of Rebekah and her family, Eliezer repairs to their home and breaks bread with them; but before he consents to abide with them for the night, he tells them of his mission to seek a bride for Isaac, the son of his master Abraham, and how Rebekah has met all of the predetermined requirements; and in order that the proposition he is about to make may be as attractive as possible, he tells of the greatness and wealth of Abraham, and how Isaac is the heir to all that his father hath; then he asks their consent for Rebekah to accompany him to the realm of Abraham in order to become the wife of Isaac.

This pictures how the holy spirit came unto the family of God at the beginning of this Gospel Age to select a bride for Christ, and when it revealed its mission, it told of the predetermined requirements which must be met. Then before putting the final test, it reveals something of the wonders of God and tells 'how all the glory and riches of His realm will be the inheritance of His Son and, through the Son, of the bride that will be chosen. The prospect is made wholly entrancing to those who display the proper faith, for the thing that God is about to propose as the final test is the most momentous decision of life. Will Rebekah leave her home and kindred and journey under the care and guidance of this servant of Abraham to this unknown land to become the bride of Isaac?

It is worthy of notice here that though at that time and in that country it was customary for the daughter's parents to give such a decision, in this instance they would neither consent nor oppose but said that Rebekah must answer for herself.

The same thing is true of the antitypical Rebekah class. Membership therein requires that we make an individual or a personal decision. Furthermore, we must be old enough and have sufficient understanding for that decision to be an intelligent response to the invitation that is extended. This was shown in the type by the remark of Rebekah's folks, "She is of age," meaning that she was old enough to know her own mind. Rebekah's response was immediate and unhesitating: she would go. Then Eliezer lifted up his voice in praise to God and showered gifts upon Rebekah and her family, but chiefly upon Rebekah.

Holy Spirit not Independent of God's Will

As Eliezer did not seek a bride for Isaac on his own initiative but was sent by Abraham, so the holy spirit came in accordance with the will of the Father and the Son. And the gifts it brought were not its own, but as Jesus said, "He shall glorify Me, for he shall receive of Mine, and shall

show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine; therefore said I, that he shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you."

When the betrothal is made and the gifts of the holy spirit have been received, there still remains the journey under the care and guidance of the holy spirit. It might be thought that all decisions are now over with and nothing left but the journey, but not so; Rebekah has still to make another decision, and this time against the wishes of her people who think that she should take a little time to prepare for such a journey and for such an event; but Eliezer urges that there be no delay and that they start their journey forthwith; and when Rebekah's folks agree to let her decide the matter, she promptly acquiesces in the desire of Eliezer, and they start their journey at once.

Likewise, there are many things that seek to hinder and cause delay in the wilderness journey of prospective members of the Bride of Christ. Having once made the decision which, being accepted, brings the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we must promptly and whole-heartedly follow its guidance, otherwise we may not prove acceptable. Then too, those who put off starting, or feel that they have to be better prepared, show a lack of appreciation of the robe provided by their Lord and Master, the only garment that can render them acceptable to Him.

In some Scriptures the members of the Christ are pictured as wells, and then in others they are pictured as men, sheep, or trees watered by wells. An illustration of this latter thought is found in the prophecy of Jacob concerning his twelve sons. In that prophecy, Joseph is said to be "a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall." Joseph, when viewed in the light of all the circumstances of his birth and life, would seem to typify Jesus and in a sense His body also. Jesus certainly was a fruitful bough watered from a wonderful spring, and we, His body-members in order to be like Him, must be well watered by that same spring.

In Exodus 15:27 we have an instance which seemingly illustrates both thoughts of typical significance. When the children of Israel left the Red Sea, over which they had crossed to escape from Egypt, they passed into the wilderness of Shur, but went several days journey without finding water. When they did finally come to water at a place called Marah, the waters were bitter, and they could not drink. "And the Lord showed Moses a tree, which when he had cast into the water, the waters were made sweet."

Marah waters would seem to represent conditions under the law which, for the Jews, was a bitter drink, for though there were promises of life, it brought only bitterness and death because of their inability to comply with its requirements. But the antitypical Moses made the waters sweet with the tree of His cross; so the apostle says "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in **us**, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

Following Marah, the next point of their journey was Elim (trees or grove). It was named this because there were seventy palm-trees beside twelve wells of water. Natural Israel had twelve tribes and seventy elders, a continuation of the twelve sons of Jacob and the seventy souls that came with him into the land of Egypt. As a partial fulfilment of this type, our Lord sent out first twelve apostles and then seventy evangelists. The twelve wells here would seem to represent the twelve apostles, by whose waters the righteous ones of the Church (palm-trees) have been watered.

Another instance where wells seem to represent the Christ, head and body, is found in Isaiah 12:3. Verse one of the chapter says: "In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise Thee; though

Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me." The reference here is to natural Israel, who were cast off in God's displeasure; but the time is coming when, as we read in verse three, "with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." The glorified Christ will be the wells of salvation from which the Jews, and eventually the world of mankind, will be refreshed in the next age.

In Proverbs 16:22 we read: "Understanding is a well-spring of life unto him that hath it." Here understanding is likened to the kind of well that typifies life springing up within oneself. Understanding means much more than just knowledge; it is knowledge plus ripe experience or the proper use of the knowledge that one obtains from the Word of God.

"This is Life Eternal that They might Know Thee"

A student of singing may know all about the theory of tone production and be able to recognize the right tone in others, but until he himself can produce the right tone in his own voice, he does not have a proper understanding of the matter. In the Word we are told that knowledge puffeth up but that love buildeth up, because love is knowledge rightly applied. There is no question as to the desirability of knowledge, but unless knowledge is rightly applied, it does not benefit the individual.

The writer of Proverbs says, "With all thy getting, get understanding." Jesus calls our attention to this same understanding when He says (John 17:3): "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." The only way we can know God is to experience within ourselves the same excellence of character (love) that motivates all His thoughts and acts. Until we do have this love, we may know much about God theoretically but cannot know Him actually.

Elsewhere in the Word we read: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." But here in Proverbs 14:27 it says: "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life." In other words, a man who has the true wisdom has the fountain of life, for "understanding is a well-spring of life unto him that hath it."

In Proverbs 18:4 we read: "The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters, and the wellspring of wisdom as a flowing brook. There must be understanding in the **heart** before the words of a man's mouth can give forth such living qualities. James says (James 3:9-12): "With the tongue we bless the Lord and Father, and with the tongue we curse men who are made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth there proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, this ought not to be. In a fountain, are fresh water and bitter sent out from the same opening? Can a fig-tree, my brethren, yield olives, or a vine yield figs? No; and neither can a salt spring yield sweet water."

Here is a wonderful lesson for us: one that we should take well to heart as a guide to our way in the experiences so prevalent among the Lord's people. Everywhere there seem to be differences that cause trouble and division; but the vital question to each of us is, How are we meeting these tests? Are bitter waters flowing from lips that claim to love God? According to James, a sweet fountain does not send forth bitter waters. It is quite evident that this was the trouble in the early church, and that it has been more or less true all during the history of the church; but, as James says, such a state should not exist, and unless we get at the root of the matter-rectify our hearts if they are causing our mouths to give forth bitter waters-we will fail to have the Lord's approval, the one thing above everything else that we should value and strive for. Let us, then, dearly beloved, weed from our hearts every slightest tendency toward bitterness, or judging, or fault

finding. If we love our brethren, we will tend rather to excuse than to find fault; and we will want to cover up a brother's imperfections rather than to expose them.

Let us then carefully and prayerfully take heed to James' words found in the remaining verses of this chapter: "Which of you is a wise and well instructed man? Let him prove it by a right life with conduct guided by a wisely teachable spirit. But if in your hearts you have bitter feelings of envy and rivalry, do not speak boastfully and falsely, in defiance of the truth. That is not the wisdom which comes down from above: it belongs to earth, to the unspiritual nature, and to evil spirits. For where envy and rivalry are, there also are unrest and every vile deed. The wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peaceful, courteous, not self-willed, full of compassion and kind actions; free from favoritism and from all insincerity. And peace, for those who strive for peace, is the seed of which the harvest is righteousness." - James 3:13-18, Weymouth.

"Whoever shall drink of the water [absorb the spirit of the truth into his heart and being] that I shall give him, shall never thirst; for the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

We know of no better thought with which to conclude this subject than the words of our Lord as recorded in John 7:37-39. - Weymouth.

"On the last day of the Festival-the great day -Jesus stood up and cried aloud. 'Whoever is thirsty,' He said, 'let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, from within him-as the Scripture has said--rivers of living water shall flow.' He referred to the Spirit which those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not bestowed as yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified."--Contributed by J. T. Read

"Ye Have Need of Patience

"Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."-James 1:4.

THERE ARE two quite distinct words in the Greek which, in our English Scriptures, are translated "patience." One of these is a word that in a general way corresponds to the common thought of patience as we speak of it in connection with the every-day affairs of life, meaning merely forbearance, or long-suffering. Indeed, the Greek word is generally translated long suffering. It is the other word with which we are more particularly interested in the treatment of our text, and which is the one most frequently translated patience by the New Testament writers.

This word has a much deeper and fuller significance than attaches to our English word patience. It signifies, rather, constancy, the thought being an endurance of evil in a cheerful, hopeful, willing, patient manner. It represents, therefore, an element of character, and not merely a temporary condition or restraint of feeling or action. It signifies that development of heart and character which manifests itself in an endurance **of wrong** or affliction with contentment, without rebellion of will, with full acquiescence in the divine wisdom and love, which, while permitting present evils, has promised to overthrow them in God's due time.

This grace of patience smooths the way for every other Christian grace, because all must be acquired under the process of patient and continuous self-discipline. Not a step of progress can be gained without this grace of patience; and not one of the graces more beautifully adorns the Christian character, or wins the approval of the world's conscience, or glorifies the God of all grace whose truth inspires it. It is **enduring meekness**, striving to stem the tide of human weakness, and endeavoring with painstaking care to attain to the divine likeness. It is slow to wrath and plenteous in mercy; it is quick to perceive the paths of righteousness, and prompt to walk in them; it is mindful of its own imperfections and sympathetic with the imperfections and shortcomings of others.

Patience Necessary to Fruit-bearing

Patient endurance is mentioned in the Scriptures as being the Lord's Word, or teaching. Our Lord says, "Because thou hast kept the **Word of My patience**, I will also **keep thee**." (Rev. 3:10.) Twice in the Gospels also we note that our Lord brought to the notice of the disciples the importance of the quality of patient endurance. Once was in the parable of the sower. (Luke 8:11-15.) He said, "That [sown] on the good ground are they which in an honest and good heart, having heard the Word, **keep it**, and bring forth fruit with patience [with cheerful endurance, constancy]." The thought here is that in order to be of the fruitbearing class, which the Lord will approve and accept in His Kingdom, it is necessary to do more than receive the Word of His testimony, even though we receive it with joy; for that class in the parable is represented by the stony ground, which at first gave evidence of great fruitfulness and vigor, but withered under the sun of persecution, because of lack of depth of soil. That stony, shallow ground represents, the Lord explained, a class of hearers who rejoice greatly in the truth, but do not endure; they are such as cannot withstand persecution or opposition, but wither under it, become discouraged. Such cannot be, of the Kingdom class, all of whom must be overcomers.

In this parable, our Lord shows us that patient endurance, constancy, is the final **test**, following after the readiness of preparation to receive the seed; following after the seed has been received

and has sprouted; following after love and hope and joy and faith have caused it to spring forth and to give promise of fruitage. Patient endurance, then, is necessary in order that the grain may be developed and thoroughly ripened and made fit for the garner. How important patient endurance, cheerful endurance, seems to be, in the light of the Lord's Word! for we cannot suppose that He who judges the thoughts and intents of the heart would be pleased with His children, even if He saw them enduring much for His sake, if they endured **in an impatient or unhappy frame of mind**. They would not in that event be copies of God's dear Son, whose sentiment is expressed in the words, "I delight to do Thy will, O God!"

Our Lord at another time was telling His disciples that as the result of being His followers they must expect opposition, trials, **tribulations**. Perhaps it may assist some to realize the strength of the meaning of the word **tribulation** when they know its origin. It is derived from the Latin word "**tribulum**," the name of a roller, or threshing-machine used in olden times for cleaning wheat, removing from it the outer husk, or chaff. How appropriate the term when applied to the Lord's consecrated people, who in the Scriptures are symbolized by wheat! Our new natures are the kernel, the real grain; yet this treasure, or valuable part, is covered with the husk of earthly conditions. In order that the wheat may be made properly ready for the "garner" and for usefulness, it is necessary that each grain shall pass through the tribulation necessary to remove those qualities which, until separated, render us unfit for the future service to which we are called of the Lord.

In proportion as we are able to realize our own imperfections, and the perfect will of God concerning us, we shall be enabled to bear patiently, and even with a certain kind of rejoicing, all the tribulations which the Master may see best to let come upon us. Our Lord explained to His disciples that so long as they lived in this present age, when sin abounds, and when Satan is the prince of this world, they must expect tribulation from various quarters; but He assured them that they would, nevertheless, be fully and completely under divine care and protection, even though the persecutions would be permitted to reach and to affect them. Then follow the words, "In your patience [patient endurance, cheerful, hopeful constancy] possess ye your souls." - Luke 21:19.

"He that Overcometh Shall Inherit All Things"

One object of the test of patient endurance is that we may be "strong in the Lord," that we may have the character-likeness of the Lord Jesus-not merely the firmness, but also the gentleness. All this must be developed before we can receive the things promised, the things which God has in reservation for those that love Him. (1 Cor. 2:9, 10.) These things are spiritual and might be apprehended by our minds, but could not be comprehended. The promise that we are to be like our Lord includes not only the spiritual and heavenly conditions, to which we shall attain in the first resurrection, but also the blessing of sharing in the uplifting of the world. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:29.) But to "be Christ's" means, not only that we shall accept Him, join Him and His standards, but also that we shall be good soldiers. Those who would not be good soldiers would not be worthy of being members of the body of Christ, for such could not be conquerors and "more than conquerors" through Jesus Christ our Lord. - Rom. 8:37.

We already have the "promise," but it has not yet been received in the sense of being fulfilled. The promise is a conditional one. "He that doeth these things shall live by them." (Lev. 18:5; Rom. 10:5.) So in our Lord's arrangement, the condition of the promise is that we shall abide in His love, His favor. Whoever accepts of Christ's death and trusts in Him and seeks to follow the divine commandments, walking not after the flesh, but after the spirit, will receive the promise, for the promise is made to "**overcomers**." All the promises of the Gospel Age are made to the

"overcomers." Such shall sit upon the throne. Such shall become the bride of Christ. Such shall be jointheirs with the Redeemer and participate in all His great work as the great Messiah, to bless Israel and through Israel the world of mankind.

By faith the Church now begins to enjoy this conditional promise, which depends upon their faithfulness to the end-their patient endurance. Such loyal ones have the earnest of the promise and shall be joint-heirs in the Kingdom. All others will be cut off from that membership. "Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth [cleanseth, pruneth] it, that it may bring forth more fruit." (John 15:2.) We are on trial; and the trial is to prove our loyalty. If this trial time, or probation, is satisfactory, the membership is made permanent. Those who fail to live up to the conditions, are not counted worthy to be members of the body of Christ and joint-heirs in the Kingdom.

Let us Abide in His Love

Who can consider the importance of becoming copies of our blessed Lord and Head without feeling that to attain to this character-likeness will be a life-work! It cannot be accomplished in a day or in a year; but the whole life must be devoted to it; and day by day, if we are faithful, we should realize a measure of growth in grace and of development in Christian character. It is not enough that we know the truth, or that we be contentt to hold it in unrighteousness. We must see to it that the truth is having its legitimate and designed effect upon the character. And if the truth is thus received into good and honest hearts, we shall have the assurance of the Apostle Peter that "we shall never fall," but that in due time we shall be received into the Kingdom.

Hence we see the necessity of ever keeping the instructions and precepts of the Lord fresh in our minds, and of drinking deep into their inspiring spirit, although 'we are already established in the faith. To be established in the faith is one thing; to be established in Christian character and in all the graces of the spirit is quite another.

Beloved, "Let us run with patience [cheerful constancy, patient endurance] the race set before us" in the Gospel. - Heb. 12:1.

-Reprints, November 1, 1911, p. R4909.

Letters of Interest

Dear Brethren:

From time to time you have been kind enough to announce the Fifth Sunday meetings being held in Zion Hill Schoolhouse, near Weatherford, Texas, for which those attending desire to thank you.

About three years ago the writer learned of these regular Fifth Sunday meetings, and upon invitation decided to attend. We found a company of friends endeavoring to keep up these meetings which were started during the lifetime of Brother R. P. Barton. Upon request I advised the friends I would endeavor to attend regularly so they could depend upon some one to lead the service.

At first we had an attendance of twelve to fifteen. Gradually attendance increased and I do not think we have had less than 40 at any meeting for the last two years, and one meeting we had 80 present. It has become a neighborhood meeting. We would not consider all attending as consecrated, but surely they are friends and appreciate the Truth (as much as they understand it). We leave the results with our loving Father. Last Sunday we had a glorious time of fellowship, and the best of attention to three talks,-one in the morning by an old soldier of the Cross, taking for his subject "The Fundamentals of our Faith." Then dinner, which all enjoyed, was spread on the benches.

At 2 p. m., a talk by the writer, subject: "The Lamb of God," being suitable prior to the Memorial service which will be held at the home of Sister B. and conducted by our dear blind brother, on April 10th.

The announcements of these meetings have come to the attention of isolated friends, and yesterday we had a couple from Gainesville, others from Pilo Pinto, Mineral Wells, Denton, Fort Worth, Dallas, and as far as from Electra, Texas. Several are meeting with us who have long been hungering for refreshment from the *table* of the Lord, and we rejoice in the great privilege thus afforded.

Your brother in *hope*,
J. W. -- Texas.

Dear Friends:

Greetings.

Please find payment for another year for the "Herald," with difference at your disposal.

You will see I have been spared to write to you once more. I am glad I know the meaning of the dreadful time we are going through here in England, with death and destruction daily around us. The trial seems long, dear friends, yet I will believe that faith and hope shall not be disappointed, and that Satan, who is a liar, will be defeated.

The lovely little leaflet, "The World of Tomorrow," enclosed with your letter, makes -joyful reading. My answer is Hymn 72.

Let me thank you for all the comfort I find in the "Herald," also for your kind and loving sympathy for us all here.

Yours in the love of Christ,

Mrs. A. J. -- Eng.

"Then came from Paul that letter to Philemon --
'Charge up to me what this man owest thee.'
The answer to it is not given.
But on that day with joy unspeakable,
We'll see the One who looked into God's face and said,
'Charge up to Me what this man owest Thee.'"

Recently Deceased

Mrs. Seymour Barton, Hartford, Conn. -- (April).

Dr. F. L. Walters, Mattoon, Ill. -- (May).

Mr. Chas. E. Kraner, Columbus, O. -- (May).

