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## "Count It All Joy" - -How?

*"The proving of your faith worketh stedfastness." - James 1:3 Am. R. V., Margin.*

IN THIS meditation we propose to consider the first four verses of the Epistle of James. In our Authorized Version these verses read: "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, Greeting. My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Scholars have established that the author of this Epistle is not, as some have supposed, the son of Zebedee, brother of the Apostle John, who was put to death by Herod shortly after Paul's conversion, but is rather the James whom we find presiding at the conference at Jerusalem in Acts 15, and again as the most prominent figure in the Church, in Acts 21. St. Paul speaks of him in Gal. 1:19, as "the Lord's brother." However, the Greek word for brother has a larger meaning than ours, all close relatives being termed brothers. According to a footnote in the Diaglott "James was the son of Alpheus by Mary, the sister of our Lord's mother" and was thus a first cousin of our Lord.

The Epistle of James is the first Christian document that was given to the world, the earliest of all the New Testament Scriptures. Commentators are agreed that it was written less than twenty years after the crucifixion of our Lord, before any of the Gospels which have come down to us, and even before any of the other inspired Epistles. If the New Testament were arranged in chronological order, the Epistle of James is what we should read first. And, for sonic reasons, it is to be regretted that it does not stand first; for it is more like the writings of the Old Testament than any other contained in the New, and forms a natural and easy transmission from the one to the other; To St. James- the Gospel of Christ was simply the true Judaism, Judaism fulfilled and transfigured. It was the "law of Moses transformed into "the law of liberty." -It was the beautiful flower of which the old arrangement was the bud.

The first special claim, of the Epistle on our attention, then, is that it presents us with the earliest view of the truth, as it is in Jesus, which obtained in the Christian Church. And the second claim is that it was written by the brother or kinsman of the Lord, who was the first bishop or pastor of the first Christian Church, namely, that at Jerusalem. Now, while all the New Testament writers, inspired as they were, by the spirit of Christ, unfold His (Christ's) mind to us, St. James does so in the very manner and style of our Lord. This we may see for ourselves by comparing his letter with the recorded words of Jesus.

Of all the discourses of Jesus, the Sermon on the Mount is the most characteristic and complete, that in which He most clearly laid down the laws of the Kingdom He came to establish on earth, the laws of that Kingdom which shall yet be established on earth. And the Epistle of James has been called, not without reason, a commentary on the Sermon on the Mount. It handles the same practical themes. It contains many of the same turns of expression. It is pervaded by an undertone of reference to that Sermon even when it handles other themes or uses different terms. And the style of St. James is precisely that of his greater "Brother";-plain, simple, direct, keen, and yet instinct with poetic imagination. The Sermon on the Mount contains only one extended parable, that of the two builders, with which it closes; but it is full of those wise sayings, those dramatic proverbs, which are condensed parables, such as that of the salt which had lost its savor; the city set on a hill; the lamp put under a bushel or on a stand; the sun shining on the evil and the good; the rain falling on the just and unjust; the trumpet sounded at the corner of the street; the two masters; the birds that build no barn; the lilies that neither toil nor spin; the mote and the beam; the pearls cast before swine, and many more. St. James abounds in similar proverbs. In the first chapter alone we have that of the wave of the sea; of the blade of grass; lust the harlot; of the first-fruits; of the field overrun with foul and rank weeds; 'of the man gazing on his face in the glass.

However we may account for this similarity of style, whether we attribute it to that similarity of mental gifts which often obtains amongst close kinsmen, or to the influence of constant fellowship in boyhood days and a common training, we cannot fail to be struck with it, when once it has been drawn to our attention; nor can we fail to feel that, as to the words of Christ Himself, so also to the words of James, this parabolic manner, this poetic style, lends an added grace and power.

So much by way of introduction. Let us now turn to the text. "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." James, we have seen, was the Lord's brother, or, as we should say, today, His first cousin, His close kinsman. Was not this relationship the most honorable of his titles, the surest passport to his reader's esteem and confidence? Apparently he thinks not; for he designates himself, "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ," as if *this* were the highest title he could claim, as indeed it is. For the Lord Jesus Himself affirmed that "to do the will of His Father" was better than to be His brother after the flesh; and when "a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice," and exclaimed on the blessedness of the mother who had had such a son as He, He replied: "Blessed rather are they who hear the word of God and keep it." (Matt. 12:50; Luke 11:28.) James had learned this lesson. He felt that an obedient spirit was more than kinship of blood; that to be a servant, a bond-slave, doing God's will from the heart, was better than to be a brother of Jesus after the flesh.

### **TO WHOM DID JAMES WRITE?**

His Epistle is addressed to "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad," or, as the Revised Version puts it, "to the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion."

These words have been held by our British-Israelite friends to support their theory. Then, too, there are others who believe that the New Testament is not all for Christians; that it is written in part to Jews and in part to Christians. Such also cite this opening sentence of James in support of their position. Space will not permit of an exhaustive examination of the subject here. However, in view of the importance of the question, and the light which its proper answer throws on many parts of the New Testament, it may be well if we spend a little time in considering what sort of Jews they were to whom this letter was addressed. -

That they were Jews seems clear, for the letter was written "to the twelve tribes of the Dispersion," who certainly were not Gentiles; the evidence, however, seems strong that they were not Jews who had rejected Christ, but Jews who had received Him; that is to say, *Christian* Jews.

When the Jews returned from their captivity in Babylon they left behind them the great bulk of their race. Only a few poor thousands returned to Palestine; hundreds of thousands preferred to remain in the lands in which they had been settled by their conquerors. Then, too, those who did return, multiplied, as time went on, so that, in the two or three centuries immediately preceding the establishment of the Church, the Jews had migrated from Palestine in vast numbers. Colonies of them were to be found in many lands, in both cities and farms.

Now it was inevitable that travel and intercourse with many men of many races should widen their thoughts. They could not encounter so *many* new influences without being affected by them. The influence they most commonly met, and to which they yielded most; was that of Greek culture and thought. They even went so far as to adopt the Greek language, a language which was as common in all civilized lands then, as English is today. They translated their Scriptures in this, to them, foreign tongue.

From this adoption of the Greek or Hellene tongue, they were called Hellenists, or Hellenistic Jews, to distinguish them from their brethren in Palestine, who still used Hebrew, at least in the worship of God. By thus throwing open the Scriptures (of the Old Testament) to as many as could read Greek, the Hellenists won many of the more thoughtful and pious heathen to the Hebrew faith. These heathen converts were the proselytes so often mentioned in the New Testament. - Acts 2:10; 6:5; 13:43.

Now, if we picture to ourselves these foreign Jews, these twelve tribes scattered abroad, as St. James calls them-if we picture these men, far from the land of their fathers, dwelling in busy, populous cities, where they are compelled to hold daily intercourse with men of other creeds and customs than their own, where, so to speak, a larger, freer, current of air tended to disperse the mists of local or racial prejudice, we shall readily understand that they were more accessible to new ideas, and especially to any new ideas which came to them from the land of their fathers, than were their brethren who remained at home, breathing the loaded -atmosphere of their ancient city, into which the movements of the outside world could seldom penetrate. The *Christian* ideas, the good news- that *He* was come, for whom the fathers had looked, would be more impartially weighed by these Hellenized and foreign Jews than by the priests and Pharisees who dwelt under the shadow of the temple at Jerusalem, and who felt that, if Jesus should increase, they must decrease. Not only so, but whereas to the Jews at Jerusalem it was a matter to be keenly resented that the Gospel was for Jew and Gentile alike, this would not be nearly so offensive to the Jews of the Dispersion.

In Judea the Jews held every foreigner to be a stranger and an intruder, if not, indeed, an enemy. But in Europe, in Africa, in the great towns and harbors of Asia Minor, in which the twelve tribes were scattered abroad, the Jews' themselves were foreigners, and would feel that other foreigners

had no less right to be there than themselves. When we remember how they were placed and influenced, we do not wonder that the teaching of the Apostles and first missionaries of the Gospel found a far wider acceptance with these scattered and expatriated Jews than with the homebred, home keeping Jews of Palestine; we no longer wonder that in every city into which *Paul* entered he went straight to the synagogue, and made his first appeal to the Jews and proselytes who worshiped in it, and that he seldom made his appeal in vain, Jews and proselytes in every city yielding him his first converts and disciples.

Now it is not easy to see of what value a letter from James would be to those members of the twelve tribes scattered abroad who had turned a deaf ear to the powerful persuasive preaching of the inspired Apostle Paul; but we can well understand the joy with which those amongst the Dispersion who had embraced that Gospel would welcome such a letter. And as we study his letter, and find the messages he sent them striking again and again a responsive chord in our own heart, the conviction is confirmed in us that it was to his brethren in Christ Jesus, and not to his brother Jews, this letter from a bond-slave of Jesus was intended.

### **"JOY TO YOU"**

Let us next notice the word translated "greeting." "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, *Greeting.*"

The literal meaning of the Greek word is "Joy to you." When a Hebrew met another Hebrew, the one saluted the other with "*Peace* to you"; for they had learned that the real blessedness of life was to be at peace-at peace with God, at peace with their neighbors, at peace in their hearts. But when Greek met Greek, the one saluted the other with "*Joy* to you," the Greeks being lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of peace. Of course, when they used this salutation they did not always recognize its full meaning, any more than we, when we say, "Goodbye" always remember that the word means, that it is a contraction of, "God be with you." But St. James both compels his readers to think of its meaning, by continuing: "Count it all joy when ye fall into manifold trials," and at once proceeds to put a higher, a Christian, meaning into the heathen salutation. *His* joy the joy *he* wishes them, is not that pleasant exhilaration which results from gratified senses or tastes of which the Greeks were conscious when things went as they wished. It was rather the "peace" for which the Hebrew sighed; but that peace intensified into a divine gladness; elevated into a pure and sacred delight. It was the joy which springs from being restored to our true relations to God and to our fellowman, from having all the conflicting passions, powers and aims of the heart drawn into a happy accord. A peace penetrated through and through with the exhilarating sense of gladness-this was the "joy" which St. James wished for and invoked upon his readers.

### **JOY IN THE MIDST OF TRIALS**

To any one other than the brethren in Christ Jesus (to Jews who were not Christians, for example) St. James, in wishing them joy, might seem to be mocking them; for their outward lot was quite miserable. It was full of pain, adversity- and shame. The Christian faith was not yet formally persecuted by the Roman government; indeed, it had not been long enough in the Roman Empire to attract the attention of the authorities, nor had it as yet touched the general population. But, as we all know, private hostility precedes public persecution, and is often harder - to bear. And there was that in the position of foreign Jews who had accepted Jesus as the Christ which would inevitably involve them in manifold trials and temptations. Their Jewish neighbors had listened to the same teaching with themselves, examined the same credentials, and they had deliberately rejected the Man of Nazareth. They would, therefore, regard their brethren who accepted Jesus as base and impious apostates. Not content with casting them out of the synagogue with stripes, they

would refuse all private intercourse with them. They would prejudice the minds of the Gentiles against them; and the Gentiles would be only too apt to conceive a prejudice against men whose pure lives were a standing rebuke to their vices and pleasures. The Jews themselves were eyed with suspicion and were the first to suffer when the mob of a Roman city took the law into its own hands. But *these* Jews, whom the Jews themselves loathed and denounced, would be held as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things.

We may be sure, then, that the life of the Christian Jews was made hard and bitter to them by the enmity of their fellow-countrymen, and by the growing suspicion and animosity of the foreign races among whom they sojourned. "Joy" would seem to have forsaken them. To meet them with a "joy to you" greeting, would sound like a joke or an insult, as, indeed it would have been, had this joy been simply the result of happy, outward conditions. But their joy did not flow from the mere surface of life. It bubbled up from the deep, underlying strata and still ran on whatever changes vexed the surface. It was the joy of happy, *spiritual* conditions, the joy which springs from a knowledge of sins forgiven, of a full consecration to God, and the assurance that all things are overruled by Him, and overruled for good.

### **TEMPTATIONS-TRIALS-TESTS**

Our temptations may not be the same as those experienced by the brethren to whom St. James wrote, but whatever form they may take, the Apostle's exhortation applies equally to us: "Count it all joy when ye fall into manifold temptations."

In the margin of the Revised Version an alternative rendering of the word "temptations" is "trials," the thought of the Greek being that of testing. But whether the word means temptation in the ordinary sense of inducement to evil, or means a test in the sense of being made subject to an examination to demonstrate the strength or weakness of one's character, in either case the question may well be asked: "How is it possible to rejoice therein?" To this question we would reply: It is not possible. We can rejoice in neither temptations nor tests, but there is something else associated with them, something which results from them, which enables the Christian to rejoice because of them. The Hellenistic Jewish Christians could not rejoice in their temptations or trials, but there was joy for them in connection therewith, if they could but learn the secret of extracting that joy, from their experiences.

Before we note the secret for ourselves, let us first examine both words, temptations and tests, and realize thoroughly that there is no joy to be had in either, if we were to experience temptations or tests, or even if we were to experience temptations and tests, only.

First, then, let us consider the word "temptations." If we were to experience temptations only, opportunities and inducements to sin, we might meet them, indeed, with firmness and courage, as being among the inevitable evils incident to the moral disorder of the world and our own imperfection, but to find any joy in them would be impossible. To an upright and truthful man the bare suggestion, however, it may come to him, that he should act dishonestly, or tell a lie, is an insult and an injury. A kindly, generous, man is conscious of a sharp pain if the mere thought of committing an act of cruelty enters his mind and finds a momentary lodgment there. To a pure man a temptation to sensual sin taints the air; it inspires loathing and disgust; when it has passed away, it leaves something like a stain upon his memory, although he made no movement in response to it, but repelled it, and recoiled from it as soon as it approached. Mere temptations can never be a reason for joy, even if we invariably overcome them, any more than an epidemic of smallpox or typhoid though we escape infection.

Nor can tests, if they are tests and nothing more, give us any great reason for thanksgiving and delight. It is a satisfaction, perhaps, to learn that we are strong, but the strain upon our strength is not at all pleasant; not only so, but too often the tests discover weakness in us instead of strength, and certainly there is no joy in that discovery. But while there would be no joy in temptations even if we overcame them all, instead of being frequently overcome by them; and while there would be no joy if they were not temptations but merely trials or tests, even if each test proved us strong, instead of, as often happens, discovering an unsuspected weakness, the Apostle's exhortation stands nevertheless: "Count it all joy when ye fall into manifold temptations or tests." If this is possible, then there must be something associated with the temptations or tests which we have thus far failed to notice, for there can be no joy in the temptation or trial itself.

There is something. What is that something? It is this: The tests which come to a Christian not only take his measure, not only indicate his strength or weakness, but, and, here is why he can rejoice in them, they accomplish, if rightly received, his strengthening. An iron railway bridge is no stronger after its strength has been measured by running a dozen heavy trains over it than it was before. An airplane is no better after a "Test-pilot" has pronounced it satisfactory than before he tested it. Not so with the tests applied to Christians. According to St. James the trials which test our faith strengthen it; the temptations which assault our integrity confirm it. If we master the temptation, we do not merely escape the sin to which we were tempted; we obtain a positive increase of righteousness. As we used to sing in childhood days:

"Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin;  
Each victory will help you, some other to win."

If we bear the strain which the trial brings upon our strength, we are the stronger for it. "Knowing this," says the Apostle, "that the trying, or proving, of your faith worketh patience, or endurance," the proof of our faith results in a firm and steadfast constancy. It is because of this that we can rejoice when we are tempted or tried.

In a choice passage from his pen Brother Russell comments helpfully on this experience common to all. "No doubt," says he, "as each looks back we see that there were numerous snares and temptations in our pathway. Over some, no doubt, we gained victories readily; others perhaps we conquered with a severer struggle; and still others perhaps were only partial victories -- they were partially reverses, partially victories for our enemy. What did these temptations bring us? What has been their value? One value, as the Apostle suggests, is the lesson of forbearance. They proved to us that we are still in the schooling time; to demonstrate our loyalty to the Lord, and our worthiness, through His merit, to a share in His Kingdom. All wish frequently, no doubt, that the testings were all over, and that we were accepted to a place amongst the overcomers; but patience and faith and trust are to do a refining work in our hearts making us mellow, willing and obedient to the Lord. Let the good work go on. Let us rejoice if our trials have brought us lessons of any kind that are profitable to us--that have tended to make us stronger in character, more firm for truth and righteousness, more aware of our own weaknesses, and more on guard against the same. Even those conflicts which have resulted in only partial victories have possibly been to our advantage. Surely so, in proportion as we contended *earnestly* against our weaknesses or against the besetments of the Adversary. Even on points in which there may have been absolute failure, the result may have been a strengthening of character, a crystallization of determination for greater zeal in that direction again; and a humility of heart before the Lord in prayer, which has caused us to remember the throne of grace afresh, and that thither we may flee in every moment of temptation, and find the succor we need." - Manna, November 21.

**PERFECT AND ENTIRE, LACKING IN NOTHING**

But not only is the proving of our faith to result in steadfast constancy; we are to allow this patience to "have its perfect work that we may be perfect and entire lacking nothing," or "lacking in nothing."

(James 1:4.) - -The word here rendered perfect is elsewhere taken to denote manliness or maturity. - For example, in 1 Cor. 14:20, where the Apostle writes: "Brethren, be not children in understanding; -howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be ye men," the word translated "men" is the same word as is translated "perfect" in the verse from St. James. And again, in Heb. 5:14, where the Apostle writes that "strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age," the word translated "full age" is the same word here translated "perfect." The meaning of St. James is, therefore, clear. If we endure the full trial with a patient fidelity, we become mature men in Christ Jesus, we become complete men, lacking nothing that a Christ-man should have and enjoy in his character.

And what higher reward could possibly be set before a reasonable and religious being? What we want, what we know that we want, most of all, is to have our character fully and happily developed; its various and often hostile affections and aims absorbed and harmonized by having them all brought under law to Christ. To become such men as He was, and to walk also -- even as He walked, -- is not *this* the chief end of all who call and profess themselves Christians? Is not this our chief good, our highest blessedness?

But in order' for us to develop this well-rounded, complete, Christian character; we must not only experience temptations or *trials-they must be manifold*. The more varied are the moral difficulties of life, the more complete is the discipline. The strain must come upon one muscle after another if there is to be a perfect, a mature, development of moral vigor-if, as St. James puts it, we are to be lacking in nothing. The courage which is unmoved by one form of danger may be daunted by another. The patience which submits without murmur to familiar suffering, may be changed by a new sorrow into angry resentment. The Christian love which has kept its sweetness through many cruel experiences may, at last, become suddenly embittered by some fresh outrage. If ;it is to reach the maturity which beareth all things, and en dureth - all things, it must show to those - who are guilty of the last offense the same gentleness and forbearance that it had shown to all who had wronged it before.

Our sorrow and, unrest spring, for the most part, from the partial and ill-balanced development of our spiritual nature. One man is kind and generous; but he is, also vain; he has a boastful, and inaccurate tongue; he is too much the creature of changeful impulses, or yields too easily to the several impulses brought to -bear upon him from without. - Another is modest, gentle, patient; but he has little courage, or generosity, or zeal. One is pious and devout; but he is also selfish, and lays too strong a grasp on this world's goods. Another is forward in every good work, but lacks the contemplative spirit which alone could guide him to work wisely. And still another loves truth and asks nothing better than to be allowed to study and meditate upon its wondrous secrets: but he shrinks from active service, from the toil of ministering the truth to those who are in ignorance of it.

And how shall we be made complete except by manifold- trials borne with good fidelity? How are boys changed into men mature' enough to face and use *this* world? By being kept at home, guarded from all strain, all temptation, all hardness-no wind suffered to visit their cheek too roughly? Or by being sent out to face all-weathers, even the worst; to mix with men of all kinds, even the worst; to withstand all temptations, even the worst? As boys are made men, so are the sons of God made complete men-in Christ. The Church has milksops enough and to spare! It



would have nothing else were' it not for the fact that God, knowing the value that manifold trials will have for us, graciously permits them to reach us, in order that, by faithfully and patiently meeting them, we may be trained in the image and for the service of that Son of Man who Himself, was made perfect, as a High Priest, by the things He suffered. Let us then, ask for the wisdom and grace to "count it all joy" when we are compassed about with manifold trials, knowing that the proving of our faith worketh patience, and that if we let patience have her perfect work in us, not hurrying to escape from the trials by which our fidelity is tested and trained, we ourselves shall grow into mature and entire men in Christ Jesus, lacking in nothing. Praise God for this glorious high calling held out to us now,- in this life, as well as for the glorious hope of ultimate perfection on that glad day, when, if faithful here, we shall awake in His likeness. -- P. L. Read.

## **The Shiloh Prophecy**

*"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." - Gen. 49:10.*

TO ARRIVE at a correct understanding of any Scriptural passage that presents difficulties, it is very necessary to proceed upon sound principles of interpretation. Failure to do so inevitably leads to twisting the Word of God to make it conform to the already conceived fancies of the mind. And when the mind fancies, it is never directed into channels of truth; for Satan is ever alert to lead away from "the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ," to present darkness for light, and light for darkness. - 2 Cor. 4:4.

We are all well aware that the promise of the Seed to "bless all the families of the earth" is the great promise of Scripture; and that the germ seed of all promises is in the statement of God to the serpent in Eden, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

Losing sight of the fact that this promise of the Seed runs through all prophetic utterances, either directly or indirectly, and that all God's plans for the children of Adam are based upon that promise of the Seed, we are apt to have the wrong thing in view in interpreting this passage of Genesis 49:8-11. But having this original promise in mind, and also following its development down to the time of Jacob's blessing of his sons, this blessing is then seen to have a relationship to that promise and is a step in its development.

Let us see. Originally the hope set forth was vague and indefinite. Who and what was the seed? When would the seed appear? It was applicable to no one in particular, and might be applicable to many. But as the centuries rolled on, the promise was continually narrowed down as to whom it might apply. After the flood, Noah voiced these words: "Blessed be Jehovah, God of Shem," thus indicating that Jehovah, the covenanting God, was henceforth to be in a special sense the God of Shem. Years later, the choice was further narrowed to Abraham and his seed; then Ishmael is excluded and Isaac designated; Esau set aside, and Jacob chosen. And then, when Jacob was ripe in years and his days were numbered, he "called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days."

We do not know, of course, as to just how much trust these twelve individuals had in the promises of God; yet the subsequent history shows that the promises were greatly respected by some of them, for these promises continued a vital force in their later national existence, a determining factor in many decisions.



Into Jacob's presence came first, Reuben, the eldest of the brothers. Will the promise continue through him? Harken! "Reuben, thou art my first-born, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power. Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." Thus is Reuben counted out of the chief blessing.

Next, of Simeon and Levi it was said: "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united. . . I *will* divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel." They, too, are set aside.

Now comes Judah. Will he also be passed by? Not so; for distinctly is Judah pointed out as the tribe that is to furnish the Messiah: "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise; thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies: thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be: Binding His foal unto the vine, and His ass's colt unto the choice vine; He washed His garments in wine, and His clothes in the blood of grapes: His eyes shall be red with wine, and His teeth white with milk."

If we apply here the principle that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10), we are confronted with such testimony; for the several promises of the 8th verse of Genesis 49, are much more applicable to Jesus Christ than to the literal Judah -- either man or tribe: "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise; thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies: thy father's children shall bow down before thee." This reminds us of the language of Psalm 72. "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him; and His enemies shall lick the dust. . . Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him."

Yet primarily in this is set forth the coming royalty and conquering power of the tribe of Judah. Not yet was Judah so, for "Judah is [now but] a lion's whelp." But in the days of Joshua and during the period of the judges, it was the tribe of Judah which continued to grow, until, at the death of Saul, the prophecy came to a head in Judah being made the royal tribe, and David, king.

What we are particularly interested in, at this time, *is* the 10th verse: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come."

Examining this word "sceptre," we find that it is a translation of the Hebrew word "shebet"; and it is the regular word for "tribe," and is so rendered in the 28th verse of this same chapter: "These are the twelve tribes ["shebet" - Hebrew] of Israel." This being so, and using the English word "tribe" to translate the Hebrew "shebet" of Genesis 49:10, we then read, "The *tribe* shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come." Obviously, this was intended to be a prophecy and promise of Judah's continuity as a separate and distinct tribe until the advent of Messiah, the Seed. All tribes were to share in the blessings of Abraham, but only Judah's tribal history was promised to continue unbroken until Shiloh should appear. And this was true only of Judah. All other tribes were broken up and removed, or assimilated into Judah; so that, at the time of the First Advent, all Israelites, of what tribe so ever, were commonly designated "Jews." The Apostle Paul, in his writings, on several occasions used this common designation. This prophecy was designed to be an encouragement, and a rallying point, in times when the visible sceptre did pass away. To us, who live 1900 years beyond the coining of Messiah, Christ, this is a fact of history. But remember, as these sons of Jacob gathered *around*

their father to be blessed, the Seed that was to bruise the Serpent's head was a very vague personage, who existed only in promise. This prophecy, in the blessing of Judah, was an assurance to all Israel of God's unchanging purpose regarding the sending of the Messiah, and of the fulfilling of the promises to Abraham.

We find much that is of interest and instruction in the comment of the sacred historian as found in 1 Chronicles 5:1, 2, "Now the sons of Reuben the first-born of Israel, (for he was the first-born; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph's) ." According to the custom of the times, which also was later incorporated into the law of Moses, a double portion of the Father's possessions fell to the first-born (see Deut. 21:17); but, Reuben, by his actions toward his father's concubine, forfeited this; and this particular blessing was transferred to Joseph, of whose *two* sons, adopted by Israel (Gen. 48:16, 22), Jacob said, "Let my name be named on them." "Moreover I have given to thee [Joseph] one portion above thy brethren," each son receiving an allotted portion, forming two distinct tribes in Israel. Also the right of dominion fell to the firstborn. This also, of course, was lost to Reuben by his foul deed; and Jacob acknowledged that, when he said of Reuben, "Thou art my first-born, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power." All this Reuben should have been, but, "unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." Joseph, although receiving the birth right, or double portion, did not receive the superior honor of dominion, as this was conferred upon Judah -- not the man, but the tribe, as we note, "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise; thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies: thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp," etc.

In 1 Chronicles 5:2-"For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler," the Hebrew word "nagid," translated "chief ruler," refers back to the Shiloh of Genesis 49:10, and might have been translated "prince," and so is marginally. Leeser gives it as "prince." In Daniel 9:25 we read, "Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince," etc. The word translated "prince" is the same word "nagid" rendered "chief ruler" in 1 Chronicles 5:2. Thus we have these names, "Shiloh," "chief ruler," "Messiah," "Prince, all referring to the same individual. Daniel 9:25 is definitely a time prophecy pointing to the first advent of Christ-to the anointing of Jesus with the Holy Spirit at Jordan, when He became "Messiah the Prince,"

This phrase, "until Shiloh come," has been variously translated. We do not have a Septuagint translation, but one commentator states that the Septuagint renders it, "until He come to whom the rule belongs." If so, this compares favorably with the statement recorded in Ezekiel 21:27, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is." But most translators render Shiloh "peace," "rest"; thus one who brings peace, rest. This quality of peace and rest is in many places ascribed to Christ. In fact, it is one of the outstanding characteristics set forth of the Messiah, as we read in Isaiah 9:6, 7, "And His name shall be called the Prince of Peace." And in this connection we are reminded of the invitation and promise of Jesus as He spoke to those who followed Him, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me: for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." - Matt. 11:28, 29.

And that this Shiloh prophecy was pointing forward to the First Advent is *conclusively shown* in the 5th chapter of Revelation. John had wept much because there was no one found worthy, in heaven or in earth, to open and read the scroll which he was seeing held forth in the vision. "And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not, behold: the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of

David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." And John turned, and instead of seeing a Lion he saw "a Lamb as it had been slain." And then a new song was sung; "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood." Of no one else is this true but of Jesus, the Christ, Messiah, the Prince -- the Shiloh of Genesis 49:10.

Still we have the statement that there would always be a law-giver in Judah "until Shiloh come."

The Hebrew word "chaqag," translated "lawgiver," is in other places, variously translated "decree," "appoint," "portray," "set," "governor," "be printed," "law"; so the prophecy refers not to a line of rulers with authority to promulgate laws, but rather promises that not only would the children of Israel be held together, borne up, by the continuous existence of Judah as a tribe or kingdom, but, also, there would be prophets and seers to proclaim the law of God, which law was their only code. This was fulfilled in Moses' law being continued as their national code, both civil and religious, until the advent of Christ.

We must remember that God's idea of a kingdom in Israel was not political. God, Himself, gave them their laws at Sinai; they were not left to enact laws for themselves. In fact, the true conception of a kingdom in Israel is theocratic, and any departure from the law of Jehovah was apostasy. See Isaiah 33:22: "For Jehovah is our judge, Jehovah is our lawgiver, Jehovah is our king; He will save us." And when the children of Israel desired a visible king to rule over them, as other nations had, and Samuel prayed unto the Lord about this, "The Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them." - 1 Sam. 8:7.

Israel was to be a stiff-necked and backsliding people; yet in spite of this tendency, or should we rather say, foreknowing this tendency, God made promise in Jacob's blessing on Judah that He would not forsake them; that until the coming of Messiah, He would continue to send them prophets and seers to declare to them His word. To those immediate sons of Jacob this promise could mean little; it was to those of much later date that force and meaning could be found in it, a potent message for many a sad day, when Israel, having wandered from Jehovah and His Law, and experiencing the plagues and chastenings resulting from such a course, would have their consciences aroused and the law again declared to them by men of God's own sending.

In closing we briefly consider the 11th and 12th verses of Genesis 49, "Binding His foal unto the vine, and His ass's colt unto the choice vine; He washed His garments in wine, and His clothes in the blood of grapes: His eyes shall be red with wine, and His teeth white with milk" -- a picture of peace and plenty, after the gathering of the people (nations) to Shiloh. "And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." Yes, in His Kingdom, Christ shall set forth the truth in rich abundance, cleared of all dregs and sediments -- "purified seven times"; for "He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it." - Isa. 25:6-8.

- F. A. Essler.

## Exceeding Great and Precious Promises

*"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." - Exodus 33:14.*

WHAT A wealth of promise God has given His people in all ages! To those heroes of faith given such honorable mention in the eleventh of Hebrews, great promises were made, which by faith they saw fulfilled afar off from their day, and therefore embraced them as assured realities. They held to them through long years, and died in a full assurance of faith that there had not failed, nor could there fail "one word of all the good promises" God had made to them. Such faith in the Word of God has likewise been true of those who in this present Age have set to their seal that the "exceeding great and precious promises" given to the Church are "yea and amen."

It has been true in all ages that "without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." (Heb. 11:6.) This being true, it must needs be now, as in the times covered by that Hebrew record, that trials of faith shall come, and at times seemingly strange fiery trials, making the divine promises a necessary and veritable bulwark of strength, and the firm basis of things hoped for. For holy men of old, and for us today, it has been a faith walk all the way. We began by faith in the efficacious blood of Jesus Christ, we live "by the faith of the Son of God," and finally, "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." - 1 John 5:4.

When the appointed pathway is dark, or but dimly outlined, with each step forward necessarily one of faith alone, how needful is the assuring promise: "Lo, I am with you alway." When in God's providence, and in line with some stewardship obligation, a weight of responsibility is placed upon the hand and heart, bringing something akin to a fear to touch things involving, so much, then how needed are the promises which mean, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Or perchance disappointments come, bringing disillusionments and misunderstandings, when high hopes are shattered and the heart deeply wounded. Then how cheering the word, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee." (Psa. 55:22.) Few escape accusations of disloyalty to the One loved above all others, and this means true suffering for His sake. In all such times what strength and comfort comes through such a promise as our text, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." - Exod. 33:14.

Who that has properly recognized the need for an unfaltering faith in God, the kind of faith that will trust though it cannot trace, has not looked out toward the yet unknown pathway in which faith will be severely tried, and in that looking outward beseeched the Lord with Moses, "If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." (Exod. 33:15.) God does "kindly veil our eyes" from much that lies before us, but He does not hide the fact that the faith that is counted precious in His sight, and better to us than gold and silver, must be perfected in heated fires and through deep waters. So high a calling as ours makes consistent the supreme demands on our faith and endurance. But confidence will be strong, if in soberness of spirit we think of the way before us, and counting on its difficulties and hardships, we say to God, "If Thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence," then know that He answers back to us, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." This is the true confidence with which our race should begin, and this is the assurance we are admonished to maintain, as it is written, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward." - Heb. 10:35.

## CONDITIONAL PROMISES NEED CAREFUL STUDY

We remember the importance the Apostle Peter attributes to the promises given to us. His statements stress the fact that in the making of our election sure, the extraordinary promises pertaining thereto play a most important part. "Unto us," he says, "are given exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (2 Pet. 1:4.) Doubtless there are several reasons for thus emphasizing the importance of these outstanding promises in making our calling and election sure. It is manifest that we need such promises as encouragements amid the severe tests of faith sure to come, for is it not evident that the very purpose of these trials is to afford opportunity to prove the genuine character of our devotion to God? It was so with our Lord Jesus, as it is written of Him, "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered," and, "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb. 8:1; 12:2.) If true of Jesus in all His perfections, then how much more necessary to us are the promises of joy set before us.

Then associated with each of these promises there are the conditional requirements demanded of us, which are essential to our character preparation. It being true that character-likeness to Christ is the final objective in the school of experience, it is plain that though the promises are primarily for our encouragement, yet they are intended to manifest our actual possession of qualities inherent in the character of God. Thus the promises are not only inspirational influences on the heart but also divinely intended rules and standards pertaining to the conduct.

As illustrating how these promises demand much of us in the way of a consistent reaction and cooperation, let us use that well known promise, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." (Rom. 8:28.) If this all-inclusive promise is to mean anything worthwhile in experience, it is apparent that the great requisite on our part is making certain that our *love for God* makes this promise effective in "all things" in our experience. This promise can never mean a thing to lukewarm love, for those in that state are spued out as wholly unsuited to the purpose of God's calling. It counts for little if anything unless the love is "with all the heart, mind, soul, and strength." It would be impossible for God, who works according to certain fixed principles, to so minutely overrule any life unless that life is under the influence of this supreme love for Him.

Take another oft quoted promise: "If we endure patiently, we shall also reign with Him." (2 Tim. 2:12, Diaglott.) This is a great promise indeed; but what a volume of suffering there can be supposedly for His sake, and yet that suffering be not even remotely linked with this precious promise. How many have verily believed themselves buffeted and persecuted for righteousness' sake, when as a matter of fact they were suffering through a zeal not according to knowledge, therefore not in accord with the Lord's will. How easy to place a halo of martyrdom over sufferings brought about by foolish presumptions, wholly contrary to the word and example of Jesus. No man is crowned for suffering unless he suffer lawfully, in harmony with God's will. Here again the principle of the promise will search the heart and conduct closely, demanding an obedience that is better than sacrifice, as an evidence of true character.

One more illustration: "If the Son therefore make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (John 8:36.) What a desirable boon this freedom is! It will embrace freedom from the condemnation of sin, freedom also from the fear of man that bringeth a snare, and it takes in that priceless freedom or liberty in Christ which we should cherish and defend at all costs. But to know anything of real freedom in these things, freedom through justification, freedom from entangling innovations of men, and to know the joy of being free indeed according to the full meaning of this promise, ah,

how much is demanded of us! Let the rejoicing saints of the past and present tell. Let the martyrs of bygone days tell its cost. It is still very dearly purchased, and still very easily thrown away.

Thus it is seen that if any of the "exceeding great and precious promises" are to play their part in imparting Godlikeness to us, both the encouragements they contain, and the standards they require that we maintain, must be kept well in mind. No wonder, then, that Peter urges our giving "all diligence" in connection therewith. It means a steady adherence to the principles involved until the encouragements of the promises leave us possessed of the perfect attributes of God.

### **"WHEN THOU PASSEST THROUGH THE FIRE"**

But leaving this digression relating to underlying principles in all conditional promises by which we become partakers of the divine holiness, we come again to our text, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." How greatly we need to have such a promise settled deep in our inner heart! It has been needed hitherto as dark hours and special trial times have been interwoven with times of more radiant sunshine. We will need it still more as time goes on if prophetic forecasts are being re-acted. And perhaps we need it every day we live much more than we realize. It is so possible to underestimate the malignancy and persistence of evil powers intent on doing us harm. We should never forget the warning, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood [merely], but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Eph. 6:12.) It requires a real alertness of mind to identify the many subtle devices of Satan, for he appears as "an angel of light." The warning of Jesus has proved to be no false alarm when foretelling the deceptions of our time, which He said would be so cunningly garbed that "if possible they should deceive the very elect." - Matt. 24:24.

The days are evil indeed. The hour of temptation has swept over the whole world as foretold. The fire is trying every man's work and revealing of what sort it is. Judgment has begun at the house of God, and who shall be able to stand? Everything that can be shaken is being shaken and only the true will remain. Such is our time. Yet for those to whom God can now say, "My presence shall go with thee," these warnings are not disquieting. As when He spoke to Moses, so now, to those abiding "in the secret place of the most High," the word of that great promise is given to impart peace and rest; yes, even greatly increased rejoicing. The very presence of these increased deceptions and associated shakings are to the true children of God but evidence that deliverance is near; therefore they say, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. . . . There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early." (Psa. 46:1-5.) What are these and other such words of comfort but a voice coming to us today over the tempestuous winds now rending the present heavens and earth. Are these assuring words not meant to be to us as those spoken to the storm-tossed disciples amidst the winds and waves of Galilee, "It is I, be not afraid." The Lord came to them walking over the turbulent waters, and so He comes to us now, praying the Father to keep us from the evils in the world, and saying to us as He leaves us for some further lessons or service, "My presence shall be with you, and I will be your rest." May our hearts have been so "directed into the love of God, and the patient waiting for Christ," that we can answer back, albeit with a yearning for Home, "'Tis equal joy to go or stay."

## "AT EVEN TIME IT SHALL BE LIGHT"

What if the trumpet has blown declaring this a "day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness" (Joel 2:2), there is a brightness that sets our hearts singing. It is ours to say, "Even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee." - Psa. 139:11, 12.

If we have been endeavoring to live from day to day as in the Lord's presence, striving to face the tests of faith and trials of life in the confidence that out of the sunshine and shadows His pattern for our life will eventually emerge complete, then surely "at even time it shall be light" for us. Our pathway is "all lighted with a glory none other can bestow," for has He not led us onward and upward from "grace to grace, from glory to glory"? Is it not in a more settled realization of such facts in our experience that we may now know we have been properly affected by those "exceeding great and precious promises"? Wherein will be their verification in our own case if not in such increased vision and matured character? Can there be any real hope in the fulfillment to us of such promises as belong beyond the veil, if so be we cannot surely affirm that such as should now be written into our known experience, have not been so written? After all that God has promised to us, and been prepared to do in us and for us, surely we should know it true of the past that "there hath not failed one word of all His good promises." Thus the promises having to do with our consummated hope will shine with an evening sunset glow and beauty, because our hope is anchored beyond the veil whither Jesus the forerunner has entered for us, and is keeping for us that which we have through all the years committed to Him. We know Him whom we have believed. He has kept us by **His** power. He has worked in us to will and to do His good pleasure. He has imparted to us His peace. He has helped us to live in restless times with a quiet heart, and His presence abiding with us is now our soul's rest.

Now we stand amid the dissolving heavens and earth looking at the lengthening shadows of the coming night as they spread over the world, and looking also toward the sunset of our own earthly life. The night has no terrors for us, and the dark clouds being seen by us from the heavenly side are golden hued, reflecting the glory of the rainbow-encircled throne. We see it dimly as yet, but it speaks to us of blessed anticipations beyond mind to conceive or tongue to tell. There is a vision too by which that Home of the soul is brought nearer and nearer, until it seems "but thinly the veil intervenes between that fair City and me." We look across the narrowing stretch between, and say,

"O sunset islands of the sea,  
Beyond the breakers' angry roar,  
You bring a hope that's yet to be  
The promise of a fairer Shore.

"Your straits of gold kiss shores of pearl,  
And past the far horizon's rim  
Beckons a calm and sunlit strand,  
While twilight here is cold and dim.

"Vain are the ties of earth to hold  
Once heard the Spirit's whisper, 'Come.'  
My bark would sail that sea of gold,  
Until it touched the Shores of Home."



What a prospect is ours! What sublime things can come with every passing day. Therefore, "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the (lay of God." (2 Pet. 3:11, 12.) How circumspect should be our walk, and how care fully guarded our thoughts that they be occupied with the heavenly and eternal things. So it will be if we have the presence of Christ with us hour by hour. That it will be otherwise with some, we know, because the lesser things absorb the attention. There will be failure to catch the gleam and wonder of these in between hours, and a sad discovery awaits such. This failure to see the sublime because occupied with the lower shades and objects is well illustrated in the following story:

### **"SHINGLES OR RED SUNSET"**

"Because he seemed to have unusual talent, a wealthy friend sent a young man to an outstanding art school. There he showed unusual ability as a landscape painter. One evening when God had used all the colors at His disposal, painting a most glorious sunset, the young artist was sent to catch the sunset upon his canvas. He had been at work for several minutes when the art instructor went to see how the young artist was getting along. He watched him for a while and then made this significant statement:

"If you take time to paint the shingles on that barn, you will miss the sunset. The barn shingles can be painted at any time, but the sunset will soon be gone. I sent you to catch the sunset.'

"Day by day the experience is re-enacted. Men and women have been sent to catch upon the canvas of life God's wonderful sunsets, but spend the precious fleeting days painting shingles."

May it not be so with us in these fleeting days. The shingles could well have been left for later attention but the fast fading sunset must be caught at once. So there are many things given over-much attention now which may be wisely left until the "morning without clouds" has dispersed all the obscuring hindrances to perfect knowledge. In that golden morning light we shall no longer know only in part, and glad we will then be that in these many lesser things we waited for God's unfolding time.

So, beloved, Home-bound travelers, let us covet that full measure of close fellowship with our blessed Lord, because of which He can say to us, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." May we strive still more fervently to "let the little while between in its golden light be seen," for,

"'Tis but a little and we come  
To our reward, our crown, our home!  
Another year, or more, or less,  
And we have crossed the wilderness;  
Finished the toil, the rest begun,  
The battle fought, the triumph won!"

- J. J. Blackburn,

## Lake Mills, Wisconsin, Convention

To those who attended the convention on June 27th in beautiful Tyrannena Park at Lake Mills, Wisconsin, it seemed that the Lord was literally bringing them to green pastures and by waters of quietness. Despite the rigors of gas rationing they came from many parts of Wisconsin and Illinois, with two from far off New York.

The convention opened with a talk by Brother J. C. Lange, of Racine, Wis., on the subject of "Faith." Some points emphasized were that faith is not only a first step on the Christian's pathway, but also a final test. Faith is the evidence of things unseen, and the Israelites' lack of faith was demonstrated by their proneness to substitute a visible god or image for the worship of the Most High. This lack of faith is still manifested by Christians of this day in their placing their faith in a visible "golden calf," such as a leader or an organization, which course of action gives God second place. Four elements of faith were stated as being: heart desire for righteousness; knowledge of God's will; confidence and trust in God; works of obedience. All four elements are essential, and with one or more missing, a real faith is impossible.

Brother W. J. Siekman spoke on "The Spirit of Jesus Christ," using Romans 8:9 as a basis for his remarks. With the use of many Scripture citations Brother Siekman presented a clear picture of the spirit which animated Jesus. A few of them are as follows:

Isa. 11:4 -- justice and courage; Isa. 11:5 -- faith; Isa. 40:11 tender -- heartedness; Isa. 42:3 gentleness; Isa. 42:4 -- perseverance; Isa. 61:1 -- liberty; Matt. 9:36 compassion; Luke 9:55, 56 -- long -- suffering; Psa. 55:2 -- burden bearing for others; John 8:11 -- mercy. Other Scripture texts presented showed the obligation of the Christian to manifest a like spirit.

Brother Fred W. Petran of Appleton, Wis., spoke on the subject of "Prayer," outlining five elements of prayer as follows: praise to God; expression of gratitude; petition for things needed; supplication for the Lord's grace; intercession for others.

The closing session of the convention brought forth a general discussion on the subject, "Discourses by Bible Students for- Bible Students." The question was raised as to the kind of discourses which would be most beneficial to the brethren, whether doctrinal or exhortatory; and whether controversial topics, so called, should be avoided. Comments were free and varied, the consensus of opinion of most being that both types of discourse were essential and beneficial, and that topics should not be avoided because of difference of opinion - *O. R. Moyle*.

## "As Always, So Now"

### PART IV - "TO LIVE IS CHRIST"

*"According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death." - Phil. 1:20.*

IN THOSE days of waiting, while Paul dwelt in his own hired house in Rome, he had pondered deeply upon the reasons why God had sent him, there. He had not lamented his lot as a prisoner, nor wasted his time because his environment was restricted, nor considered his cause as lost. He had spoken of Christ to Caesar's rude soldiers, and won their affection to himself, and their allegiance to Jesus. No circumstances could release him from his "charge" to proclaim the Gospel; therefore chain, or no chain, no loss of liberty could fetter his tongue, nor bind his earnest spirit. He had done in Rome, handicapped though he was, as he had earlier done at Antioch, at Ephesus, at Corinth, at Jerusalem. "As always, so now" he had redeemed the time, and used every moment for his Master, and as elsewhere, here, in the Imperial City, there was "fruit" won by his labor.

As he waited for his trial to come on, he had thought over its possible results, and had settled in his heart that neither acquittal nor death should make the slightest difference in his intention to "magnify" his Lord. Imprisonment had not arrested all his labor; it had only turned it into other channels, for during this period he penned the deepest and most spiritual of all his letters. This season of restricted travel gave him time to meditate and work out the deeper implications of his (and our) fellowship with the Lord. Hence those "prison letters" as they are called, written during that time -- Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians-set forth a range of thought that reaches to greater heights and depths than are to be found in any of his earlier letters. From these prison days came forth those priceless treasures of Christian thought and doctrine which have enriched God's people throughout the whole Gospel Age, and which are of such inestimable value, to us today, in the fuller light of this Harvest Time.

How often the Lord has had to do some similar thing for others of His followers to give them time to meditate and consider. Sometimes it has been a bed of sickness, or an accident, which has served as prison walls, and has restricted the goings and comings, in order that we may take time to ponder the ways and purposes of God, and life thereafter has been the richer and sweeter for it. Let no one hastily chafe at God's restraints, as He brings him out of the rush and bustle of life into some quiet place apart. He will meet him there and enrich and deepen his contact with Himself, and the Master, and all holy things.

While Paul had no preference to express as to the result of his trial, he seems to have had some slight presentiment that he would gain a favorable verdict and be set free. Whether some one in Caesar's household was working behind the scenes on his behalf, and had communicated to Paul that the prospects were favorable to him, we do not know. But certain it is that he said, "I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith, that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me, by my coming again." (Ver. 25, 26.) But he would have them know that if he were set free, then for him "to live was Christ"! and that by his labor he would win more "fruit." If the four walls of his house no longer constituted his cell, then, "as always, so now" again he would go forth as Christ's evangelist and missionary.

## **"WOE IS ME IF I PREACH NOT THE GOSPEL"**

He looked out upon the world of men, and saw them dying and steeped in sin. He saw the whole creation in fetters, and heard its hopeless groans. He knew of its deep inarticulate discontent, and of its disappointed longings. He knew "the whole creation groaned and travailed together . . . waiting for deliverance" from its fetters of vanity and sin. And he further knew that his own breast cherished a secret which all men needed to know; and which, if known and heeded would set them free, and heal their wounds. He saw his kinsmen bound in chains of ritualism and tradition, throwing to the winds, the greatest opportunity the hand of God had offered, and it lay on his heart as the burden of a great sorrow. For them too, his bosom held a secret, which they all needed to know and accept. It was as if a fire burned in his very bones—a white-hot glow, kindling an energy which had driven him over land and sea, to seek— for such as would hear the story he had to tell. He ' knew of a God of Love, a Living God, of infinite and tender compassion and this God, the heathen nations needed to know instead of their idol and demon gods. He saw himself as the channel—the messenger—between that fountain of Eternal Goodness, and the wide, deep need of the heathen mind. His deep sense of that need gave him no rest day or night. Out amongst, them were some . rare souls who were "feeling after God, if haply they might find Him," but they knew not where to search nor how. God had an invitation, for them, but how could they hear without a preacher? "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel" said this— fervent missionary heart. It required in a born Jew, a tremendous act of self-subjugation to go out to these Gentiles, "dogs," and tell them that God had provided for them a Savior, and would accept such as would willingly respond, just as readily, and on the same terms of surrender as any born Jew. But Paul did not shrink therefrom, nor even account such services distasteful. It was according to his Master's desire, and so he went, gladly, whole-heartedly.

His fervent heart contained a secret, which, if the Jews had accepted would have changed their whole outlook, and spared them the age-long agonies they have endured in their enemy's lands.. Paul had learned that the "Christ for whom the Jews had been waiting was to be a "spiritual Christ." Up to the moment when he saw the glorified Jesus on the Damascus way, he, like all his Jewish kin, had looked for an earthly Messiah, a Messiah in the flesh, a Messiah to reign on the earth in a fleshly form, a Messiah to restore and occupy His father David's throne and reign from David's city. But the glimpse of that glorious Heavenly Being arrayed in light, brighter than the noon day sun, who still called Himself "Jesus of Nazareth," had been the beginning of a new revelation. He learned that "Christ" was to be more than a man. "Though we have known [and expected] Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him so no more." (2 Cor. 5:16.) Christ Jesus having appeared on earth as a man, and having been "cut-off" (as Daniel said of Messiah) was raised from the dead a glorious spirit being, to become the image of His Father's Person. Paul carried this precious secret to all who had ears to hear, and well had it been for his ' "kinsmen according to the flesh if they could have" received and embraced it too. Another phase of Paul's "Christology" was that this Messiah was to be "multi-personal." This' too was a precious thing to Paul.' To realize that all upon whom came the Spirit of God, as a begetting and enlightening power, were also "anointed" by that Spirit and thereby "Christened" -- made a member of the Christ -- was a most amazing and energizing thought. For the long expected Messiah to be an anointed company of individuals with Jesus of Nazareth as their Lord and Head, was such a profound secret that neither prophet nor seer in Israel had ever dreamed of it. Yet that is what Paul had learned, and what he sought to teach to others. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." To be in Christ is to be a new creature—"christened" by the anointing Spirit of God, but before there is anything to "anoint" there must have been a New Creature produced, or begotten. This great truth, then, that the Messiah was to be spiritual, and to be composed of the members of that elect company, who, having been baptized into Christ, cheerfully accepted the privilege to "suffer with Him" in order, under Jesus' headship, to constitute His Body, and reign

with Him, was the good news which galvanized the heart of the Apostle to undertake; all his indefatigable labors and service on behalf of his Lord and his brethren.

This it was that urged him on over land and sea, by day and night, seeking those, both Jew and Gentile, who would believe the good news. Those who did believe the "good news" are they between whom Paul says there had been an enmity—a middle wall of partition which prevented their fellowship and association together. But by the Cross of Jesus this enmity was done away and the middle wall of partition broken down, and they met and coalesced on common ground into "one new man," Jew and Gentile, "accepted in the beloved" by the God who had sent Paul (and other messengers) seeking such souls. "Accepted in the beloved" -- all self-interest and self-identity surrendered and sunk in the larger "Identity" -- all yielded to "Christ."

Oh! how inspiring it is to hear this faithful courageous soul, as the greatest issue thus far in his checkered life, looms ahead, say, "As always, so now . . . to live is Christ." For Christ he had given his best years, and for Christ he should give those that yet remained. All the best things life had offered he surrendered willingly for the "excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" - all the best powers of a first-class brain he brought, "in Christ," to the service of his brethren. It is not as though these believers for whom he ventured so much were the great ones of the earth, or the saintliest among men. He understood and set out the position very fully when writing to the brethren in Corinth: "Be not deceived," he says, "neither fornicators nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves . . . nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God, *and such were some of you*; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God." - 2 Cor. 6:9-11.

### **PAUL'S SELF-SACRIFICING ZEAL**

Had he taken the place amongst his own kinsmen for which his natural gifts equipped him, he would have consorted with the great and rich—he could have been courted and flattered by all the elite in Jewry. No place of honor, save only the priesthood, would have been inaccessible to him. Into the gilded palaces of her princes, or into the stately schools of her tutors, he could have won his way and have left his name to an adoring posterity as one of the greatest of Jewry's great sons. But all these glittering prizes for which men pine and strive, he cast from him as refuse, as worthless tinsel, in order to seek and win the weak, the poor, the halt, the blind, the maimed, the very riff-raff of the nations. No matter who it be, runaway slave, or erstwhile thief, so long as they accepted the good news of his Master, and laid themselves at His feet, he loved them and taught them, and spared not time nor strength, till "Christ be formed in" them. From the lowest depths of humanity—rough, coarse, uncouth, illiterate, repulsive they had come, and he had taught them to hope and believe that God could make them suitable for His purposes. He saw the saint in every uncouth slave: the jewel in every rugged countryman, and like Michael Angelo, viewing the marble; said, "There's an angel in that stone, I shall get him out one day." And so it was, wherever he went, in high places or low, he went seeking precious souls, whom the Lord would give him as "fruit for his "labor." Like his Lord and Master, times without number, he was scorned and reprov'd by proud, callous enemies for receiving and consorting with sinners, but what matter that, so he could reach sad hearts where Christ's comfort could meet the deepest need. In very truth, for him to live had been "Christ"—Christ Jesus Himself the Centre, Christ multi-personal, the circumference—Christ, his whole life and existence, in this vale, of tears. When it might have been easy to have laid aside his burden and entered into his rest, he said, "To abide in the flesh is more needful for you." "So now, as always" should it be again when his feet were free to leave the thronging streets of Rome, and hie him to Philippi, or Ephesus, or some other provincial place, where dwelt those children of faith, whom God had given into his care.

Paul was not only the missionary and evangelist, he was also the pastor and shepherd of these scattered sheep. Here again we see his diligence and constancy in service. If in the evangelistic service we see the indomitable pioneer, always reaching out to new and still newer fields, we see in the pastor the tender watch-care of a mother. Night and day he watched them, sometimes with tears; soothing and consoling when suffering, checking and curbing when wayward, admonishing and warning when refractory; always giving himself to weariness and peril and death, that they might live. No nursing mother could be'tenderer than he. But no shepherd could be more valiant and daring when danger threatened the fold. The "care of the churches" was no light duty for any to carry lone-handed, without having the multitude of severities from without, but in spite of the manifold dangers which surrounded, he could say, "Who is weak, and I am not weak; who is offended and I burn not?" (2 Cor. 2:29.) Who is weak or justifiably offended among you, and I make not his case my own? he asks.

Every suffering heart, therefore, found him sympathetic and helpful, whether a single sheep or a local flock; and as he sensed and ministered to their need, he bore their welfare and interest to the Throne of Grace with unceasing earnestness. Scarce one letter came from his pen but that he says he was "always in every prayer of mine, making request for you" -- as a faithful under-shepherd shouldering the exacting burden, yet forgetting not to speak their names into the ear of the great Shepherd of the sheep, to ask guidance and comfort for every one in his extensive fold. As a rule it is when the faithful pastor feels the sense of the increasing load of care, thrust upon him by the brethren's need, becoming too heavy to bear alone that he turns to the Lord, and seeks for himself the succor and strength and energy which none but Christ can give. Can we think that the Lord knew not how to keep and develop that pastoral spirit in His chosen under-shepherd? Would Paul have besought the Lord so often, or so earnestly with tears, had it not been for the "care of the churches"-his intense concern for his - brethren? Could he have stood the terrific strain of all the petty squabbles, the little jealousies, the uncalled-for strife, if it had not been that he knew where comfort was to be found; and yet, as surely as he found comfort in the Lord, straightway, he opened the chambers of his heart to others, and "comforted them with the comfort, wherewith he had been comforted of God." And this, through years, not days; when lie himself was sorrowing, as well as when he was rejoicing. It was needful, for the sake of the sheep that snares and dangers should abound, else they would stray, and miss the way. How manifestly needful then, the shepherd's care, courage, and alertness all through! "As always, so now" henceforth, as Paul went forth from mighty Rome, he would show the same care and courage and alertness till his days be done! What an advantage it gives to be possessed of one objective! -- to do and pursue "this one thing"! -- to have no divided affections!

"This one thing" is a life-time's task; a whole lifetime's task! a life-time's whole task! It leaves no surplus for anything else. Christ Jesus will not share His throne with any rival. It is safest and best like Paul to run through life on a "narrow gauge" for in very truth the Christian life is a narrow way.

Then the things we do today, we shall repeat with joy tomorrow and say, "As always, so now."

- T. Holmes, Eng.