

# THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

VOL. XXVII    January, 1944    No. 1

## A New Year Our Year Text for 1944

*"As many, therefore, as are perfect, should be of this mind; and if in anything you think differently, God will also reveal this to you; but TO WHAT WE HAVE ATTAINED, LET US WALK BY THE SAME LINE." - Phil. 3:15-17, Diaglott.*

THIS ADMONITION of the Apostle Paul should prove to be a helpful text for the New Year, especially that portion of his counsel that reads, "To what we have attained, let us walk by the same line."

The dawn of a new day is always a fresh start in the accomplishment of life's tasks; for after the rest and refreshment of the night which, in a sense, ended the labor of yesterday, we are ready to begin anew. and to continue in the line of that which was worth while or else to try to improve on that which fell short of our ideals. If this be true of a new day, the dawn of a new year should give us still more cause to inventory our lives that we may set ourselves for the work that is yet to be done. As each new day was a new page in the record of the year past, so each new year becomes a new book in the records of life.

Viewed from this standpoint, we should ask ourselves the question, What will it bring forth? Will it be considered "just another year of the same old grind" as some are wont to say, or will it be a wonderful opportunity, greeted with joy and yet with fear and trembling lest we come short and fail? The attitude of mind and heart with which we enter into the new year's possibilities and problems will determine to a large extent the results at its close.

## IN RETROSPECT

As we scan the year that is past, and realize that in so far as its opportunities are concerned it is gone from us forever, some may experience regrets that they did not make better use of its days and hours. It is true, generally speaking, that most of our time is - mortgaged, and that about eight

out of every twenty four hours is needed for sleep; but how many of the remaining hours which were more or less subject to our control did we redeem for study, prayer, and meditation? How many hours were spent in the cause of Christ? Did we always keep in mind the solemn obligation of our agreement to give unto God all that we have, and strive to meet that obligation honestly and whole-heartedly or, like Israel of old, did we rob God of -tithes and offerings? If Paul deemed it wise to caution the early Church (Eph. 5:16) as to the necessity of redeeming the time, seeing the days were evil, how much more necessary is such an admonition today when devices for consuming time have been multiplied a thousand-fold? The things that would occupy our hours and attract our attention are so many and so insistent that unless we are alert and determined in our efforts to ignore them, we will have no time for our own development or for service in spiritual matters. It is not within -the province of any one of us to tell another how he shall carry out his consecration vows, or what portion of his time should be given over to the Lord's service; each must decide for himself what constitutes faithfulness. Paul says, "Every one of us shall give account of. himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way." - Rom. 14:12, 13.

Our task, therefore, is not one of criticism, but of encouragement, that both by precept and example we may help each other in making the best use of our opportunities. The Church has always had some in her midst who were fault-finders rather than builders-seeing the "mote" in their brother's eye and seemingly unaware of the "beam" that caused them to be critical. But such, if they continue in this way, will not be of -the approved; for it is those who become like Jesus in their disposition and seek to comfort and encourage fellow-mourners in Zion that, when they appear before the judgment seat of Christ to account for the deeds done in the flesh (2 Cor. 5:10), will not need to feel shame for their course or for the excuses they once offered in justifying their indifference and neglect.

And who, as lie scans the pages of last year's book, does not find blots upon its leaves due to sin and imperfection of thought, word, and deed? We may thank God that though they still remain in our book of memory and are not pleasant to recall, yet, "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from *all* unrighteousness." (I John 1:9.) The Divine record, therefore, does not contain all the imperfections of which we are so painfully conscious, but viewing us through the merit of our Redeemer, remains pure and white.

In contrast to the foregoing, our inventory of the year past also reveals much for which we may be thankful. Above and beyond the blessings common in the lives of men, we have seen the Lord's hand shaping our course in life to the end that we may become more and more like our Forerunner. We have seen how experiences, some of them trying and hard to bear, may become stepping-stones toward the goal we are striving to attain. We have realized growth in grace and in knowledge; faith has become a little stronger, hope a little brighter, and the proof of Godlikeness in love more evident. These all give witness to the fact that God is working in us *both to will and to do* of His good pleasure; and that if we faint not, we may confidently expect to be more than overcomers through Christ. Not only through Christ as making good our Adamic shortcomings, but also through being *in Christ* and so partakers of His spirit and the special schooling designed to make - us fit to be associated with Him in all that He shall do. And so we thank God for every little victory of faith.

It may be that some of us have not been aware of many such victories, but if it were really the case that we had few victories, is it probable that we would now be rejoicing in the truth or in fellowshiping with those of like precious faith? We, as New Creatures, "live [exist] by faith," and the victory that overcomes the world-its allurements, besetments, and way of life, is faith. All those occasions that were afforded us for mortifying the fleshly mind and body in order that the

image of Christ might be more and more manifest in us were hard, you say! Perhaps so, but exceedingly precious, and call for heartfelt thankfulness.

It goes without saying, of course, that most of us did not triumph in every such experience, and we might be inclined to look back upon the failures as wasted opportunities; but failures often prove to be stepping-stones. If we have been conscientious in an endeavor to cooperate with God in our character structure, we will also recall times when the battle was successful, and we were able through supplied grace and strength to gain and to hold new heights of glory.

## INTROSPECTION

Retrospection will naturally lead to introspection: and so a further question we would ask ourselves is, What profit and- loss as represented in Godlikeness and in treasures laid up in heaven does our inventory show? This is a difficult question to answer, in fact so difficult that only Divine wisdom can give a definite response. Knowing this, it is doubtful if any one of us would be willing to venture an estimate unless, like Paul, having finished our course, we might give testimony of faithfulness and confidence in the outcome. Those who feel competent to pass judgment upon a brother (or even upon themselves) would do well to heed the warning given us that this is a dangerous practice and exposes the self-appointed judge to a similar treatment.

In speaking of this the Apostle states (1 Cor. 4:2-4), "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; though [to continue the quotation from Weymouth] I am not conscious of having been in any way unfaithful, yet I do not for that reason stand acquitted; but He whose scrutiny I must undergo is the Lord. Therefore form no premature judgments."

Again Paul says (Phil. 3:12-14), speaking of his own striving toward perfection, and in his argument leading up to the advice given in the text that heads this article, "I do not say that I have already won the race or have already reached perfection. But I am pressing on, striving to lay hold of the prize for which also Christ laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not imagine that I have laid hold of it. But this one thing I do-forgetting everything which is past and stretching forward to what lies in front of me, with my eyes fixed on the goal I push on to secure the prize of God's heavenward call ["the high calling of God." A. V.] in Christ Jesus." - Weymouth.

If Paul could not rely upon himself to take a correct inventory of his attainments or degree of progress toward the goal, there is not much probability that any, one of us will presume to do so; but we can and should examine ourselves for evidences of growth. We must realize, however, that the New Creature is under a decided handicap in so far as its medium of expression is concerned; for these old bodies and minds are wholly at variance with its efforts and aims, and so have to be "browbeaten in order to subject them to the sanctified will. Therefore it is difficult for even ourselves to pass judgment upon all our thoughts, words, and deeds, that is, as respects the degree of our accountability. We know of course, whether we have waged a good fight in our endeavor to be dead to the world and alive toward God or whether we have let the will of the flesh and the way of the world take possession of us. If we fought and still have the will to fight, we may be sure that there has been advancement, and that the fruitage of the Spirit has had a measure of development. And if we have sought to be pleasing unto God in our course of life and in our service one for another, not supinely selfish and critical, but generous and forbearing; and if our affections show a tendency to grow toward heavenly things, then doubtless we have been laying up treasures in heaven.

The Corinthian brethren, like many since their day, were inclined to place too much value upon the gifts of the Spirit, and upon the efforts and sacrifices which they might force themselves to make in seeking to conform their lives to the pattern that brought approval one of another. In calling this -to their attention (1 Cor. 13), Paul, as we would understand it, is not objecting to gifts or prophecy or eloquence or knowledge or any of the other things he mentions, but is pointing out that apart from the fruitage of the Spirit -- that development in Godlikeness which constitutes love, they have no value in qualifying the possessor for the Kingdom. Even if one had all knowledge -- could understand all mystery -- possessed wonderworking faith -- gave all his

substance to aid the needy -- spent even life itself in service, it would avail him nothing unless love motivated the exercise of all he did.

The Corinthian brethren would very likely think that such works were evidence of great love, and many a one since has deceived himself in like manner; so Paul does not leave them in ignorance, but gives the tests whereby they may know if the gold is real and the diamonds genuine. In effect he says to the brethren at Corinth, Love, like God, is hard to define, but we may know it by its operation. Therefore I will give you an analysis so you may know if the operations of your life in thought, word, and deed "work by love." I want you to realize that Godlike love is far more than just the feelings or sentiment that give it vitalizing warmth. It is the principle of Godlikeness and life, and without it we are nothing-our life is negative.

The one who acts from the impulse of love is characterized by kindness and patience (long-suffering) -- he never boasts of what he does (vaunteth not itself) -does not begrudge another his superior attainments or good fortune, nor is jealous because of favors and preference accorded him (envieth not) -- is "not puffed up" -- does not conduct himself in an improper manner (unseemly) -- acts from an unselfish motive, not with the thought of returned favors (seeketh not her own) -- does not give way to hasty temper (not easily provoked) -- is not inclined to impute wrong motives or brood over slights, fancied or real (thinketh no evil) -- has no pleasure in injustice done to others or in unrighteous conduct committed by or attributed to opponents, rivals, or enemies (rejoiceth not in iniquity) "but rejoiceth in the truth," in every evidence of uprightness in friend or foe -- knows how to be silent and not retaliate in thought, word, or deed (bearth all things) -- is full of faith in the goodness of God (believeth all things) -- desires and expects the fulfillment of His promises unto all in due time (hopeth all things) -- "endureth all things" patiently, as seeing

God's hand in all the experiences of life; and so, fortified on every side with grace and strength to meet every condition whatever it may be, "Love never faileth."

Paul does not mean to convey the thought that one imbued by such a love is able to manifest it perfectly through the medium of these imperfect bodies, for he was painfully aware that such was not the case; but if we strive to this end, and love takes possession of our hearts, God, who looks upon the heart, knows when the goal has been reached and our transformation into the image of His Son completed. To Him belongs the right of decision, but this does not hinder us from knowing if we have made some progress.

## **PROSPECT**

In the verses which precede our text, Paul tells of his craving for complete oneness with Christ. All things that were gain unto him prior to his conversion he now counts as nothing, or as hindrances to be cast aside that he may know and win Christ.

It is quite manifest from his words that knowing and winning Christ was not an attainment that came with belief and conversion, but was still the objective of his striving. Most Christians have no conception of discipleship beyond faith in the ransom provided to save them from condemnation and death to a happy hereafter; but Paul, in addition to the righteousness that had come to him by faith instead of by his own efforts to keep the Law, and through which there had been opened up unto him an opportunity never before realized or possible, speaks of a race course not yet run -- or a goal not yet reached, and a prize not yet won; and he is so entranced by the prospect ahead that he has willingly and gladly relinquish ed and put aside every former object in life.

He speaks of *knowing* Christ, not just knowing about Him; of winning Christ, not merely enlisting His power as *a* savior; of union with Christ, not merely as being an advocate of His cause. He wants to experience the power of His resurrection-a resurrection that began with the transfer of his desires from an earthly to a heavenly inheritance and will be fully realized when, raised from the dead to nature Divine, he will be forever united to his Lord in glory.

Paul realizes that if he would know Christ and share in His resurrection, he must also share in His suffering and death. Jesus was led to reveal the necessity of this when He asked the sons of Zebedee if they were "able to drink of the cup" from which He must drink and "be baptized with the baptism" with which He was being baptized. Whether or not they were overbold in their assurance of being "able" to follow in His footsteps is more or less a matter of opinion, but the Greek word "dunamai," translated by the word "able" means to be powerful or to have power (Young),\* and Jesus immediately affirms that they would share in His suffering and death.

-----  
\* See Matt. 3:9; 10:28; Luke 1:20; 21:15; James 4:12; Rev. 5:3 for examples that indicate Power rather than just being willing.

What a privilege, what a glorious prospect, lay ahead of Paul! Several years later he writes Timothy that he is "like *a* drink-offering which is already being poured out" -- that the time of his departure is at hand-that he had fought the good fight, finished the race and kept the faith. "Henceforth," he says, "there is laid up (reserved) for me, a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day." (2 Tim. 4:6-8.) But here (Phil. 3:12-14) he is not sure that the race is won, or the goal (perfection) reached-he does not yet consider the prize to be his, but says "I am pressing on, *striving* to lay hold of the prize for which also Christ laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not imagine that I have yet laid hold of it. But *this one thing I* do-forgetting everything which is past and stretching forward to what lies in front of me, *with my eyes fixed on the goal I* push on to secure the prize of God's heavenward call in Christ Jesus." - Weymouth.

What an inspiration is here set before us as Paul cites his own example to preface the admonition with which he calls all true brethren to continue faithfully in their effort to win the prize. The prospect that lies ahead of us as we enter the new year is the same that allured Paul; and if our faith is sufficient to grasp and lay hold of the inexpressible hope that awaits the loyal overcomer, no sacrifice will seem much in comparison-no trial much to bear. His exhortation is not intended for the novice, the wavering, the double minded or the indifferent, but is addressed to as "many as are perfect"-well-grounded, mature Christians, wholly consecrated and of the same mind in respect to "this one thing I do." Paul is not referring to perfection in thought, word, and deed, or perfection of the body in which we tabernacle, but of perfection of purpose, of will and intent to faithfully perform the vows we have made unto the Lord. It is to all who are thus perfect and who therefore press on to the goal, confident of securing the reward if they but remain faithful, that Paul exhorts "*To what we have attained, let us walk by the same line.*"

"He will never fail us, He will not forsake;  
His eternal covenant He will never break;  
Resting on His promise, what have we to fear?  
God is all-sufficient for the coming year.  
Onward, then, and fear not, children of the day;  
For His Word shall never, never pass away."

- J. T. Read.

## Another Year is Dawning

Another year is dawning!  
Dear Father, let it be  
In working or in waiting  
Another year with Thee.

Another year of progress,  
Another year of praise;  
Another year of proving  
Thy presence "all the days."

Another year of service,  
Of witness for Thy love;  
Another year of training  
For holier work above.

Another year is dawning!  
Dear Master, let it be,  
On earth, or else in heaven,  
Another year for Thee!

- Frances R. Havergal.

## Your Victory Garden WHAT TO GROW AND HOW

*"The seed is the Word of God.... Take heed therefore how ye hear." - Luke 8:11, 18.*

IN VIEW of the emergency occasioned by the war, our Government, as all are aware, called upon its citizens to grow vegetables in their gardens and thus avoid a food crisis. All over the country people responded, some cultivating their own gardens, some renting additional plots of ground for the purpose.

Since food is of vital importance, not only in time of peace, but also during the war, these gardens were promptly termed "Victory Gardens," in recognition of the fact that their output would contribute to and hasten the day of victory. Reliable information has been freely disseminated by the Government and many magazine articles have appeared, all designed to assist the "Victory Gardeners" in getting the best possible results from their labors.

Some people who have not done any gardening in all their lives are learning how. Some, who thought they knew something about it, are finding out how much more there is to learn. We saw one article captioned, "Start your 1944 Victory Garden *now*." The article, which appeared in October, gave many reasons why the early start was wise. The chief reason, of course, was that the preparation of the soil is so much easier in the fall of the year than later.

As we glanced at this article, we thought of the warfare in which we, as Christians, are engaged; of the good seed planted in our hearts by the Lord; of the possibility of making a real contribution

to the Victory of the Christian Cause by a careful and continuous cultivation of that seed in the gardens of our hearts. And then that caption came back with emphasis, spiritualized: "Start *your* 1944 Christian Victory Garden *now*."

Where is the place to obtain the most reliable information so as to get the best possible result in *this* labor? In God's Word, of course, and particularly, in our Lord's parable of the Sower. And so we reviewed, once again, His wondrous counsel, disclosed by the Master in that parable, with the thought in mind of getting better results in 1944 than otherwise. The result of our meditations is submitted hereunder, in the hope that those who read may also derive some profit from them.

Of all the parables of our Lord this one, the parable of the Sower, is doubtless best known and remembered, yet like all other portions of our Father's Word, it grows richer and more precious through study and reflection. That it is foremost amongst the parables in importance, and that a proper understanding of it is of assistance in understanding the others, is plainly indicated by our Lord, when, on finding the disciples unable to grasp its significance, He remarked: "Know ye not *this* parable? And how then will ye know all parables?" or, to quote from the Weymouth translation: "Do you all miss the meaning of *this* parable? How then will you understand the rest of My parables?" - Mark 4:13.

### **THE PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM**

In St. Matthew's account, which appears in Chapter 13 of the Gospel which bears his name, the parable of the Sower is the first of seven parables which seem to bear a relation to one another similar to that which the seven messages of our Lord to the churches, given by St. John in the Revelation, bear to each other. Together these seven parables are known as the Parables of the Kingdom, and their teaching seems to portray the successive eras of the Gospel Age from the beginning of this dispensation to its close. In them we have a vivid delineation of the trials and resistance which the Kingdom of Heaven was to encounter front the Adversary, from its first introduction into the world until the end of the Age. At this time, however, we propose to consider the parable of the Sower by itself, apart from the others with which it is associated, and seek to develop its own particular lessons.

First, let us refresh our minds by reading it, taking St. Matthew's account, reading the first nine verses of chapter 13: "Behold," says our Lord, verse 3, (reading from the Weymouth translation), "the sower goes out to sow. As he sows, some of the seed falls by the wayside, and the birds come and peck it up. Some falls on rocky ground, where it has but scanty soil. It quickly shows itself above ground, because it has no depth of earth; but when the sun is risen, it is scorched by the heat, and through having no root it withers up. Some falls among the thorns; but the thorns spring up and stifle it. But a portion falls upon good ground, and gives a return, some a hundred for one, some sixty, some thirty. Listen, every one who has ears!"

In explaining the parable, as He did later on when alone with His disciples, our Lord showed that the seed is the Word of God, that is to say, the Word of God respecting the Kingdom (Matt. 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10), the Word which, when "understood" (Matt. 13:23), "received" (Mark 4:20), and "kept" (Luke 8:15), will produce "sons of the Kingdom" (Matt. 13:39), and that the four different conditions of soil on which the seed fell represent four kinds of hearers. We shall consider these in detail later on, but first we wish to notice the moral Jesus draws from the parable. It is stated by our Lord in St. Luke's account in these words: "Take heed how ye hear." - Luke 8:18.



## **ABSURD RESULTS REACHED IF DETAILS OF PARABLE PRESSED TOO FAR**

"Take heed how ye hear." In this sentence we have the moral, the lesson, which Christ Himself drew from the parable. And it is instructive to note that *His* moral, which is the natural lesson, and which was drawn by a divine wisdom, nevertheless indicates, not the force and beauty of the parable, but the weakness and insufficiency of even the most perfect parabolic forms of instruction, and the absurd results we will reach, if we attempt to press every little detail too far. Our Lord, summing up the lessons of the parable, declares that we are to be careful what we hear and how we hear it; but how can the ground exercise any care as to what seed it will receive, or as to the conditions into which it will receive it? The ground must take whatever seed the sower casts upon it; and if the good seed should be choked by thorns or fail for lack of soil, the ground is not to blame for that; its conditions depend, not on its own care but on the farmer's care. In actual farming, it is not the ground but the farmer who is responsible for the condition of the soil. It is *he* who should have burned off the thorns or added the necessary soil; it is *he*, *not* the ground, who is to blame if the wrong seed be sown, or the ground yield no fruit.

Thus, from the very first parable uttered by our Lord we learn that we must not push His analogies and comparisons too far; that natural phenomena and processes are inadequate expressions of spiritual truth; that we must bring an understanding and discriminating heart to even the most perfect words ever uttered. To give its full force to the moral of this parable we must supplement the parable. We must remember that different hearers of the Word are not only like different conditions of soil, but also like different farmers. We must remember that just as the farmer, by skill and application, may compel the ground to bring forth, despite the curse which has fallen upon it, so we, by a wise application, may constrain these otherwise barren hearts of ours, to bring forth fruit unto God. *We can* determine what seed we will receive into our hearts; and therefore we are to see to it that we receive only the good seed, which will produce sons of the Kingdom, not the tare-seed, which, as our Lord shows in the next parable, the enemy will be only too happy to scatter on our hearts if we permit *him*. *We can* determine the conditions of the soil into which the good seed is to fall; and therefore we are to see to, it that there, be a good soil for the good seed, a soil rich enough, and deep enough, to bring it to perfection.

It is interesting to note that the possibility that two kinds of seed might be sown, one good, one evil, is not even mentioned, much less dwelt on. We know, of course, that there are two kinds of seed continually being sown in the hearts of men. One is a good seed, the other evil. One is a seed of truth, the other of error. There are seeds of love and seeds of hate; seeds of kindness and seeds of unkindness; and elsewhere in the Scriptures these different seeds, and how they may be distinguished, are discussed. But they are not under discussion in this parable, which refers throughout to only the good seed.

Then, too, we are sometimes represented as sowers, sowing seed in the hearts of each other; and then the lesson is that we should be careful to sow only the good seed unmixed with our best guesses and fancies, and be careful to prove all things which others seek to sow in our hearts, and hold fast to that only which is good. But, once again, we note that that is not the lesson before us in this parable. There-is only the one Sower here, and it is the Lord Himself.

The reason for limiting the seed, in the parable, to only the good seed, and referring to only the one, Sower, is that the Master is giving us, here, the first, the most elementary lesson, concerning the Kingdom class; other lessons will follow. Here, in this parable, the Master's one lesson is as to the frame of heart and mind which should be ours when the good seed comes our way.

The good seed in this parable is not a discussion of the intricacies of difficult doctrinal- points, things upon which even inspired Apostles differed, as did, for example, Peter and Paul. It does not include things in Paul's writings which even Peter admitted were hard to understand. It is the Word of God which, in its simplicity, discloses the wondrous character of God that any one in the right attitude of heart cannot fail to understand it-that word which will produce in one who embraces it, a whole-hearted consecration of mind and life.

In the parable we have a description of four kinds of hearers: three of them unprofitable, and one, a good or profitable hearer. Let us consider these in the order in which they appear in the parable.

### **"THIS IS HE THAT WAS SOWN BY THE WAYSIDE"**

Of the three sorts of unprofitable hearers, the first set before us is. he to whom the Word is as seed sown by the wayside. As the sower goes over the field, scattering seed broadcast, some of it falls on the path, or close by the side of the path, which runs through the field-where the earth has not been broken up by the plow -- and lies on its hard surface until it is either trodden down and crushed beneath the feet of passersby, or is caught up by the birds which flock around the sower's heels. And the spiritual significance of this familiar, 'rural scene, is explained by our Lord in these words: "When any one heareth the Word, and understandeth it not, then cometh the Evil One, and snatcheth away that which was sown in his heart, lest he should believe and be saved."

Now observe -- the soil of the path and under the path may be as deep and as rich as the best of the field; its natural capacity for yielding fruit may be very large; but it has been trodden hard by many passing feet, so that the seed cannot penetrate the surface, but lies there, an easy prey to the birds; only rotting, not growing, even should it escape their keen eyes and the bruise of the passing heel.

The first unprofitable hearer, therefore, is not a man of a cold, hard, nature, nor of a nature all overrun with growths of evil; he is simply negligent, uninterested, indifferent. Unlike the good hearer, he does not understand the Word; that is, *he does not perceive its bearing on himself*, its true worth and importance to *him*. He has no objection to listening to it, but it does not penetrate to the depths of his being; it excites no personal interest, does not throw out slight root-filaments on every side, to twine around the thoughts and affections which lie closest to his heart. The Gospel message does not *grip* him, as when you tell him something that will be helpful in his business, or advise him along other lines of earthly interest.

How has he reached this condition? What has made him thus impervious to spiritual truth? Alas! he has made his heart a highway-has suffered *all* thoughts, evil as well as good, to pass to and fro. For many a day his heart has lain open like a public thoroughfare; all base, and low, and sensual imaginations, have claimed their right of way over it, not less than those which, are pure and noble, till the soil, good enough in itself, has been trodden hard, and can no more take seed, or bear fruit, until the keen, grinding plowshare of affliction has been driven through it.

He has felt the Word fall upon his heart, perhaps, hard though it be; he has dimly, and from afar, apprehended that there is a life, a reality, in the truth of God, which' he has not hitherto recognized; and he has thought, from time to time, as the seed has fallen upon him, that it would be well for him to look into the matter for himself, some day; but about the time he should be reaching a decision for God, something else interferes, and the impression of the good seed, which fell *upon*, but not *in*, his heart, disappears.

## **"HE THAT WAS SOWN UPON THE ROCKY PLACES"**

The second unprofitable hearer is he to whom the Word is as seed sown in rocky places. In the great field in which the sower goes forth bearing precious seed, there are places in which the hard rock crops up close to the surface; and the seed which falls into the shallow soil that covers the face of the rock, springs up very quickly in the heat which the rock holds and radiates; but because there is little moisture and no depth of earth, the sun scorches them, and they wither as quickly as they grow. And, says our Lord, translating these familiar, natural symbols into spiritual truths: "He that was sown upon the rocky places, this is he that heareth the Word, and straightway with joy receiveth it; yet bath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while; and when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the Word, straightway he stumbleth."

This second hearer, then, is a man of shallow, superficial, character, who does nothing thoroughly, brings nothing to perfection.

And that surely is a very fine touch, which describes a man of this superficial stamp as being of a hard and impenetrable heart. Under the light, thin, surface of easily-stirred dust, there lies a bed of rock. For it is among those who lead a life of light enjoyment, and who tread a round of trivial cares, and ambitions, and pleasures, that we learn how heartless men can be. It is not among the poor, or the busy, but among the elegant votaries of pleasure and fashion that men, and women too, are trained to stifle emotion, to harden themselves into indifference, to cultivate that selfishness which is death to all love, and to all nobility of character.

And when a man of this sensitive, yet shallow, character, has -the Word of God earnestly pressed upon him, it often happens that, struck by its novelty, and moved by the emotion of the moment, he forthwith receives it with joy; not only understands and assents to it, but, like the good hearer, receives it unto himself, suffers it to dwell and work in him and shape his course. For a while his life is changed; he is eager to give his susceptible and easily-moved heart altogether to this new, stimulating, excitement. Nothing in his experience was ever comparable to it. He will break through all rules of good taste, and good sense, to show his esteem for it, and to make others esteem it as he does. He lives in a rapture, and would have all men share it with him.

But like all other raptures, it is quickly past, its force is soon spent. The times change, and he changes with the time. He has no root in himself, and cannot withstand any influence that is brought to bear upon him. A strong temptation comes, and he has no strong faith with which to meet it. The excitement is over, and now the consecrated life looks as dreary to him as all previous forms of life had looked. "Tribulation or persecution ariseth and immediately he t; offended." He does not *keep* the Word; his nerveless hands cannot hold it fast. As quickly as he received it, so quickly he lets it go.

## **"HE WHO RECEIVED SEED AMONG THE THORNS"**

The third unprofitable hearer is he to whom the Word is as seed sown among thorns. For besides the trodden and rocky places, there are broad patches in the field which are thick with the seeds of thorns; and these spring up with the good seed, *but faster than the good seed*, so that it is choked before it can yield fruit.

Now, if we ask: "Who among all the hearers of the Word corresponds to this thorn-infested soil?" our Lord Jesus replies: "He who received seed among the thorns is he who, when he has heard the Word, goeth his way; and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the

pleasures of life, and the lust of other things entering in, choke the Word, and he bringeth no fruit to perfection."

We observe that the ground is good enough to grow either wheat or thorns, *but not good enough to grow both*; that is to say, not good enough to bring both to perfection. Here, on this soil, the seed has a better chance than before. It gets *into* the soil, takes root, springs up, *forms the ear, even*. It is not trodden down, nor snatched away; nor is it scorched for want of moisture or depth. Long after the farmer, going his rounds, has discovered that the sides of the path will be bare, and seen the withered stalks of the seed sown on rocky places, he has hopes that this on the thorny ground is doing fairly well, though there are too many weeds among it. But *when it has well-nigh accomplished its task*, and its promise is at its best, it is choked by quicker growths, and not suffered to mature the full corn in the ear.

Now it is thus with some hearers of the Word. Like the good hearer, they understand, receive, they even hold fast the seed. They do not suffer the impression it has produced to fade away instantly, like seed picked up by the birds, the very moment it has fallen: nor do they renounce it as soon as it demands a firm resistance to temptation, or a patient endurance of trial, like the seed that after it has sprung up withers in the stalk. They *keep* the Word through all such trials and tests as these. Nevertheless they suffer it to be choked *when it is on the point of bearing*. Much as they love it, they love much besides it; and these other loves grow very quickly, and overtop the growth of the good seed, and suck away the juices which should nourish *it*; insomuch that the life and power of the Gospel message are gradually neutralized and drawn out of them, and, though fruit is formed in them, *they do not bring it to perfection*.

### **WHAT ARE THE THORNS WHICH CHOKE THE WORD?**

What are the thorns which thwart and choke the Word? Some of them are: "The cares of this world," those daily recurring anxieties about what we shall eat, and what we shall drink, and wherewith we shall be clothed, which distract our attention; so that while the Word of God draws us one way, these petty cares and worries draw us another way.

Other of these thorns spring from the deceitfulness of riches, from the peculiar and subtle cunning with which they beguile us from the simplicity that is in Christ. And though, like the cares of the world, riches are not in themselves evil, yet all careful observers of human life have admitted that wealth has a special trick of gradually withdrawing drawing men from the love and service of the truth. As a rule rich men are content with the world as it is-naturally-for, as they think, the world has dealt very kindly with them, and therefore they see no need for bettering it. Wealth has many wiles; it is full of deceit; and no man is worthy of greater honor than -the rich man who keeps himself unspotted from the world and its ways. As we recall from time to time, the many examples of Christian grace which characterized Brother Russell's ministry, we may well pause once and again to remember that among the many tests he successfully endured was this one which few to whom it is applied prove able to withstand.

The pleasures of life and the lust of other things are more common weeds or thorns, but hardly less fatal. They ruin thousands where the deceitfulness of riches ruins one. Who that has gone through life with open eyes, has not again and again seen the young man, who, while still young, gave himself ardently to God, beguiled away from the simplicity of Christ by the lure of pleasure and the excessive pursuit of other objects? He does not suddenly and completely fall away; but first this object attracts him and then that, and between them they choke his early devotion. There is not one of these objects perhaps which, if the issue were distinctly raised, he would not sacrifice for Christ's sake. But among so many quick springing thorns, the good seed has but a

poor chance, and seldom brings its fruit to perfection. How many a fair, bright, promise has been thus nipped in the bud! Let us see to it that we come not into their number. Let us see to it that these deadly thorns do not make us unfruitful hearers of the word of truth and grace.

### **"HE THAT RECEIVETH SEED INTO GOOD GROUND"**

We come now to a happier task, the consideration of the good hearer. And, as we note the various points in our Lord's description of him, may we be encouraged and strengthened in our determination to develop in ourselves, by God's grace, the characteristics he portrays, characteristics which, if found in us, will enable us to yield a rich fruitage from the good seed of the Word of God which He has sown in us.

Each of the three Evangelists will be found to help us; for St. Matthew tells us that "he that receiveth seed into good ground is he that heareth the Word and *understandeth* it"; St. Mark, that it is he that heareth the Word and "*receiveth*" it; and St. Luke, that it is he, who, "having heard the Word, *keepeth it in an honest and good heart*, and bringeth forth fruit with patience."

The first characteristic of the good hearer is that he *understands* the Word. Scholars tell us that the Greek word here rendered "understand" is very significant. It denotes a state of mind in which having compared one statement with another, having weighed each apart, and then placed them side by side, having viewed truth as truth, and then in its relation to himself, a man gives it the assent of his whole intelligent being, and affirms, not only that it is true, *but that it shall be true for him*; that he believes it, will act upon it, and, *so far as lieth in him, will see that his life is governed by it*. It includes the assent of the reason, or the intellect, the determination of the will, and the sympathy of the heart. So that the very first characteristic of the good hearer of the Word, is a very large and comprehensive one. Before any one of us can claim to be *such* a hearer, we must have personally studied and considered the truth as it is in Jesus, and have weighed any objections to it of which we have been cognizant, and have found such objections wanting. We must have felt how well adapted it is to our own individual needs, and have been gripped with a strong conviction that it is from God, and that it is for us. Not only must our reason, our intellect, consent to its being true; we must also determine to act upon it, and find *our* sympathies and affections engaged by it. This done, we will have the *first* qualification of the good hearer; for we hear nothing to advantage while we doubt it, or dislike it, or do not mean to let it influence our life. It is only when we listen in faith, in love, and with a resolve to benefit by what we hear, that we are in a condition to make the most of the divine Word of truth, and to get the most from it.

St. Mark's word is equally significant with St. Matthew's and carries the thought still, farther. According to Mark, the good hearer is one who *receiveth* it; and to receive it, in Mark's sense of the word, is "to take it into one's self." It implies that the good hearer is so charmed and won by the peculiar fitness of the gracious Gospel message to his own dire need, so touched and penetrated by it, that "with joy" he embraceth it, receives it into his very being; he prepares, so to speak, a habitation, a sanctuary, for it, in the innermost recesses of his spirit, from which, like the Shekinah in the tabernacle and the temple, it sheds a hallowing and enlightening influence, through all the courts and avenues of his life.

The model hearer, then, is one, who not only understands the Word, not only gives it the sanction of his intelligence, and will, and affection, but, in virtue of this sanction, admits it into himself, to become a part of him, to become the guiding and shaping spirit of his life.

## **"IN A GOOD AND HONEST HEART"**

St. Luke tells us that in the good hearer the heart into which the Word is received, will be "a good and honest" heart; that is to say, a heart sincere and earnest. Obviously a man with an untrue heart will not make a good hearer of truth. We cannot be good hearers unless our hearts are good-candid, open, sincere; hearts like little children's; hearts like Nathaniel's, of whom our Lord could say, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." If we would know the secrets of truth, we must be unselfish, unprejudiced; we must care rather to be on the side of truth, than to find the truth on our side.

Then, too, having received the Word into an honest heart, the good hearer will "keep" it or "hold it fast." He will not let it go, whatever allurements he may meet. He will not suffer the good seed to be withered by wayside influences, nor choked by incoming cares or pleasures of life, nor obstructed by rocky impenitences. He has found it hard to get the truth, and having got it he will not part with it. At times it may be very difficult to hold it fast. A great gain may be his, or an intense delight purchasable at a very small cost of being untrue to his convictions; a terrible danger may be averted, by a lie on his part or even by being evasive or by leaving a wrong impression; a friend he greatly desires to please may be made happy by only a slight deviation from the path of integrity; but he will hold fast his integrity and truth. He will be assured that the laws which he has deduced from the Word, the laws by which he commonly governs his life, *must not be reconsidered, much less repealed, while the storm of passionate desire is beating upon him; that then, most of all, he needs to abide by them.* This is the good hearer-the man who is a doer of the Word, and a doer when doing is most difficult, not a hearer only. He never forgets what manner of man he is, or should be; but, looking with a constant gaze into the perfect law of our liberty, walks by it, and is blessed in his deed.

## **BRINGS FORTH FRUIT WITH CHEERFUL CONSTANCY**

Again, the good hearer, who understands the Word, who receives it into a good and honest heart, and holds it fast, also brings forth fruit, "with *patience.*" And of all his characteristics, this, as it is the most valuable, so also is it the hardest to attain. To wait, is even harder than to labor and to obey. Unless we are to have our harvest very soon, we have hardly the heart to sow. The farmer has long patience-must have it -till he receives the early and the latter rain. The 'winter frost must mellow the seed lying in the genial bosom of the earth; the rains of spring must swell it, and the suns of summer mature it. So with us. To become a good hearer, that is, a good doer, of the Word, is a task which requires long patience. We must suffer many a killing frost, many a darkening shower, many a burning sun, before the good seed, cast into our heart by the great Sower will gladden us (and Him) with its thirty, or its sixty, or, it may be, its hundred-fold. But, if we do but wait with patience, or with "*cheerful constancy,*" as the word here translated patience more exactly means; if with cheerful constant endurance we bring forth fruit, the more precious will be the harvest. It is only ill weeds that spring up apace; and God is not unjust that He should forget our labor of love. In due time we shall reap, if we faint not. We shall reap all that we have sown and more than we sowed. For He that giveth seed to the farmer and bread to the eater, will multiply the seed we have sown, and give us to eat of the fruit of our toils. One day, nearer somewhat than when we first believed, all the seeds He has planted in us, which we have received in a good- and honest heart, which we have kept, and cultivated, will have grown to maturity, and we shall awake "in His likeness." Let us be patient, therefore; let us be steadfast; let us stablish our hearts before Him. Thus may it be with us all, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

- P. L. Read.

## Echoes from the Atlantic City Convention

Though the Convention this year was held later in the season than usual, November 20 and 21, the weather was beautiful, which added to our pleasure. Instead of the City being a training camp, as last year, we found they now have hospitals for the returned wounded soldiers. How our hearts long for the time when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

The Convention opened at 2 p.m. on Saturday, and the Chairman in his welcome address, speaking of "keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," read the following paragraphs from the sixth volume of Scripture Studies, pages 240 and 241:

"Unity of faith is desirable; it is to be striven for yet not the kind of unity that is generally aimed at. Unity is to be along the lines of 'the faith once delivered unto the saints' in its purity and simplicity, and with full liberty to each member to take different views of minor points, and with no instruction whatever in respect to human speculations, theories, etc. The Scriptural idea of unity is upon the foundation principles of the Gospel. (1) Our redemption through the precious blood, and our justification by demonstrated faith therein. (2) Our sanctification, setting apart to the Lord, the Truth and their service-including the service of the brethren. (3) Aside from these essentials, upon which unity must be demanded, there can be no Scriptural fellowship-upon every other point fullest liberty is to be accorded, with, however, a desire to see, and to help others to see, the divine Plan in its every feature and detail. Thus each member of the Body of Christ, maintaining his own personal liberty, is so thoroughly devoted to the Head and to all the members that it will be his pleasure to lay down all, even life itself, on their behalf.

"The Apostle declares that it is the Lord's pleasure that there be no schism in the Body -- no splits, no divisions. With human methods divisions are unavoidable -- except as in Papacy's period of triumph, when the nominal system became powerful and used drastic methods of persecution in dealing with all not fully in accord with itself. That, however, was a *unity of force*, of compulsion -- an outward unity, and not a unity of the heart. Those whom the Son makes free can never participate heartily in such unions, in which personal liberty is utterly destroyed. The difficulty with the Protestant denominations is not that they are too liberal and, therefore, have separated into many fragments, but rather that they still have much of the spirit of the mother institution, without possessing the power which she at one time exercised for quelling and suppressing liberty of thought. We will, doubtless, surprise many by saying, that instead of having too many divisions or splits of the kind we now see on every hand, the real need of the Church of Christ is *still more liberty* until each individual member shall stand free and independent of all human bonds, creeds; confessions; etc. With each individual Christian standing fast in the liberty wherewith he was made free by the Lord (Gal. 5:1; John 8:32), and each individual Christian united in loyalty to the Lord and to His Word, very quickly the original unity which the Scriptures inculcated would be discerned and all true children of God, all members of the New Creation, would find themselves drawn to each other member similarly free, and bound each to the other by the cords of love far more strongly than are men bound in earthly systems and societies. 'The love of Christ *constraineth its*' [*holds us together* - Young's Concordance]. - 2 Cor. 5:14."

The subject of the first speaker was, "Gleaning." His remarks were based on one of the most beautiful and touching stories of the Old Testament-that of Ruth and Naomi, and especially the question which Naomi Asked Ruth, "Where hast thou gleaned today?" The question was brought home to us all-that we might well ask ourselves at the close of each day, "Where have I gleaned today?" What would our answer be should our Master ask the question of us? Could we say we had been faithful? Regardless of where we are, each one of the Lord's followers has opportunities to glean-sometimes by word, sometimes by the printed page, and sometimes by reflecting Him in our daily life-preaching the Gospel, and living the Gospel. "He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto eternal life."

After a brief intermission, the Chairman conducted a Bible study on the subject of "Christ, the Anointed," from the twelfth chapter of 1st. Corinthians. It was a free and helpful discussion engaged in by many, and enjoyed by all.

The Saturday evening discourse was an earnest and stirring talk on being filled with the Holy Spirit. We were made to feel a greater desire if possible for this infilling. Many Scriptures were cited showing the oneness of Christ and His Church, and that as with the vine and the branches there is a very real and vital union the sap of the vine running through all the branches, giving them life and enabling them to bring forth fruit, so if we would be members of Christ we must have His Spirit dwelling in us, and only then have we life and can we bear fruit. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." These were good thoughts to take with us as we separated and went to our rest for the night.

Sunday morning we came together at 9.45. After the devotional service, the keynote of the first discourse was the keeping of ourselves in the attitude of prayer, like "Cornelius, a devout man which prayed always." He was regular in the habit of prayer. We were reminded that as in the case of Cornelius, the Father can and will use those who are in this attitude. Emphasis was given to the lesson learned by Peter in his experience with regard to the enlightening of Cornelius who, according to the previous training of Peter, could not be accorded the privilege of becoming a partaker of the heavenly promises given to the Jews. He was learning a lesson profitable throughout the Age-that what God, who sets the *various* members in the Body *as it has pleased Him*, calls clean, he was not to call unclean.

Following this, we listened with interest and profit to "The Happy Results of Waiting on God," from Isaiah 40:31. Four results are here mentioned: renewed strength, mounting up as on wings, running without weariness, and walking without fainting. These are very special favors that God delights to bestow, but they require a constant spirit of prayer and expectation. Such blessings are withheld till we prove the sincerity of our desire. Thus Christian experience is always progressive. God intends that there shall be a constant inflow of spiritual life, making it a continuous experience of such inspirational, present possibility as well as of future hopes and prospects. All this depends upon our "waiting on the Lord," looking to Him in that full assurance of faith that makes His promises a reality.

The last discourse on "The Prince of Peace and His Kingdom" (Isa. 9:2-7), pointed to the incoming Kingdom of righteousness and peace, and showed how the downfall of the present governments would usher in the glorious Kingdom for which we have so long been praying. The long valley of the shadow of death will soon be turned into "the valley of blessing" when the "ransomed of the Lord shall return with everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." How our hearts thrill to the glorious message which in due time will be fulfilled through this great "Prince of Peace."

Two praise and testimony meetings gave evidence of the Lord's abounding grace with His people, and many good testimonies were given. It was at these meetings especially that we missed a number who in past years have met with us. Some were detained on account of illness, others because of travel conditions. Messages were read from some of these, and others-one telegram from Houston, Texas, and a message from far-off Australia. All of these were much appreciated, and the friends especially remembered in prayer. But some absent ones there were who have completed their earthly pilgrimage. With these we rejoiced and gave thanks to God for their faithfulness and their noble example. "Our friends are passing over."

The closing hymn, "God be with You till We Meet Again," was sung with fervor and with hearts uplifted in thanksgiving to God for the blessings received in the hours of fellowship together.

- *Contributed.*



## Lessons from the Life of Joseph

*Scripture Reading:* Psalm 105:17-23; Genesis chapters 37, 39-50

EVERY SIDE of Joseph's character is beautiful. Everywhere we see him he bears himself nobly. We pass now to another chapter of his life, and here, too, we shall find the beauty unsullied, the splendor undimmed. We look at Joseph and his father, and we see that through all the strange and varied experiences of life he kept his love for his father warm and tender.

There is one incident which at first thought seems to have shown forgetfulness of his old home. When his first son was born he named him Manasseh. "For God," he said, "hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house." But he did not mean that the coming of this child into his home blotted out all memory of his father. The words reveal the heart hunger of Joseph for home, love, and domestic ties. He had been torn away from these, and for more than thirteen years had lived unblest by human affection. Now the hunger of his heart was met by the child he held in his arms. He had now a home of his own, and in the new joy, the years of hungry, unmet love were forgotten, as the earth forgets the desolation of winter when spring comes with all its glory of bursting life and bloom and foliage.

But his father was not forgotten even in the gladness of his own happy home. All through the story of the brothers' visits we have glimpses of Joseph's love for his father. Little did those men from Canaan know how eagerly the great governor watched their words to hear about their father. And when he pressed on them the charge that they were spies, they dropped the words: "Thy servants are sons of one man. . . . The youngest is this day with our father." They spoke carelessly, but their words told Joseph that his father was yet alive, sending a thrill of gladness into his heart.

### THE COURTESY OF A TENDER FILIAL LOVE

The brothers went home and came again, and when they stood before the governor, almost his first word was the inquiry, "Is your father well-the old man of whom ye spoke? Is he yet alive?" The brothers saw nothing in the words but the fine courtesy of a noble gentleman; yet under the courtesy there throbbed a tender, filial love. -When Judah presented his plea for Benjamin, referring again and again to his father at home, his old age, his loneliness, his bereavement, his love for Benjamin -- so deep and tender that he would die if the lad were not returned to him -- he little knew what chords he was touching in the soul of the great man to whom he was speaking. It was this picturing of the aged, sorrowing father which most of all moved Joseph as he listened to Judah's words. When the plea was ended, Joseph broke down -could not refrain himself longer, and said amid sobs, "I am Joseph." Then his very next words were, "Doth my father yet live?"

A few minutes later, after the passionate assurance of forgiveness had been given to quiet the hearts of his brothers in their consternation, he bade them hasten to their father -- "my father" he says now -- and say unto him, "Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt; come down unto me, tarry not. . . . Ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither." He sent also wagons to bring his father over the rough roads as gently as possible; and presents-twenty asses carrying provisions and comforts for his father's use on the journey.

Weeks must have passed while the caravan slowly wended its way to Canaan, and while preparations for breaking up the old home and moving were progressing, and while the family journeyed again toward Egypt. At last, however, word came to Joseph that his father was approaching; and he made ready his chariot and went to meet him. Who can tell the tenderness of that meeting! The Bible never indulges in sentimental narration, and yet the picture its words present is very touching. "Joseph presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. It had been twenty-two years since Joseph, a lad of seventeen, had gone away from home to carry messages and tokens to his brothers, expecting in a few days to return. He had never seen his father's face since that morning, and the pent up love of all the years found expression in this greeting.

Here again the character of Joseph shines in brilliant splendor. Egypt was then the first nation of the world in its civilization, its refinement, and culture. The court of Pharaoh was a place of great splendor. Jacob was a plain shepherd, lowly, unconventional in manners, without worldly rank or honor, withered, limping, famine-driven. Far apart were these two men, the governor of Egypt and the patriarch of Canaan. But the love in Joseph's heart for his father was so strong and so loyal that he never thought of the difference, and he led the old shepherd into the presence of the great king with pride. He told Pharaoh of the coming of his father as eagerly as if Jacob too had been a king. He made provision for his father, also, in Egypt, and nourished him as long as the old man lived. When Jacob was dying, Joseph stood watching by his bedside, the Prime Minister of Egypt by the old shepherd, with beautiful filial devotion.

Through all the years his love continued warm and tender. Amid the splendors of rank and power he never forgot the old man, waiting in sorrow and longing, in his tent in Canaan. When his father came to him, bent, withered, limping, he honored him as if he had been a king. During the remaining years of his life he nourished him in almost royal state. When he was dead he honored him with the burial of a prince.

### **"HONOR THY FATHER, AND THY MOTHER"**

All this illustrates the nobleness of Joseph's character. The lesson is plain. Children should honor their parents. Nothing more sadly mars the beauty of a life than anything which shows want of filial love and respect. Children never come to an age, while their parents live, when they may cease to treat them with affection and honor, in return for unselfish devotion, self-denial, and care on their behalf in the days of infancy and childhood. These are debts we can never pay save by love that stops at no cost or sacrifice, nor flags in its faithfulness, until we have laid away the revered forms to rest in the grave.

The beautiful example of Joseph should inspire in all children whose parents are living, a deep desire to give them comfort, gladness, and tender care as long as they live. If we are blessed with wealth or with plenty, they should share it who shared their all with us in days gone by, perhaps pinched themselves that we might not want, or that we might be better fitted for life. If we have risen to higher position and greater honor than our parents had, we should bring them into the sunshine that is ours, that the benediction of our favored life may brighten and sweeten their old age. If they are a little peculiar, or odd in their ways, lacking some of the refinements of our more fashionable life, we should remember that these are only outside disfigurements, and that beneath, beat hearts of love, and dwell spirits that are noble with the nobleness-of Christlikeness. Even if parents have marred their lives by sin which has brought shame, it were better, like Noah's nobler sons, to close our eyes and to fling the mantle of filial love over the shame.

There is another part of the story of Joseph and his father which has its lessons. We turn back to Hebron, to the time when the brothers came home from Egypt after Joseph had made himself known to them. They told their father that Joseph was alive, and that he was the governor of Egypt, but the old man could not believe the tidings. His heart was overwhelmed. For more than twenty years he had mourned Joseph as dead. Now to hear that he was alive in Egypt was too much for the old father. "His heart fainted, for he believed them not."

His sons sought to make him believe, repeating the words of Joseph. While he still listened, bewildered, doubting, the wagons Joseph had sent to carry him to Egypt were driven to the door; and the asses bearing the good things of Egypt also appeared. Now Jacob was convinced; his spirit revived. "And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die." Why did the sight of the wagons help Jacob to believe that Joseph was alive?

Wagons were not known in Canaan at that time, at least such wagons as those sent from Egypt. Joseph must indeed have sent them. So the fruits and other things sent to Jacob's door were unmistakably from Egypt. They could not have grown any place but beside the Nile.

### **"AS SEEING HIM WHO IS INVISIBLE"**

All this is suggestive and illustrative of the way we are helped in this world to believe in the existence of Jesus Christ in heaven. We know that Jesus died on the cross, slain by wicked hands. We know that He was laid in the grave, and that a stone was rolled before the door. The Gospel comes to us, telling us that He is alive. Note here again the similarity of Joseph to Christ. Joseph was alive in Egypt, that was what they told Jacob. Jesus Christ is alive in heaven, that is what the Gospel tells us. Not only was Joseph alive, he was ruler over all the land of Egypt. Jesus is alive for evermore, beyond death; and He is ruler over all things, King of kings, and Lord of lords. Jacob was convinced Joseph was alive in Egypt when he saw the tokens he had sent. Christ sends us blessings out of heaven, which prove to us that He is really alive there and in power. Do there not come answers to your prayers when you plead with God? Do there not come comforts for your sorrows when your heart is burdened?

Canaan was famine stricken. There was no bread in all the land. The people were starving. In Egypt there were great storehouses. From these supplies certain good things came to Jacob's door. Somebody had sent them-somebody who knew him and loved him. They said it was Joseph and the old man believed it.

This world is famine-stricken. There is no bread here for our souls. Heaven has its storehouses. Daily there come to you from these reserves of goodness, supplies of blessings. There are blessings just for you. They meet your needs exactly. They come just at the right time. You say, "There must be some one in heaven who knows me; some one who keeps his eye upon me and knows what I need, and then sends his good things to me at the right moment." Yes, that some one is Christ. He is not dead-He is alive and on the throne. These good things that come into your days, with their joy and brightness, are all from Him.

Yes, we know that Christ lives and reigns in heaven. For every day blessings come to us that could have come from no land but the heavenly land, and that no one but Jesus could have sent. The forgiveness of our sins, the peace that fills our heart, the joy that comes in sorrow, the help that comes in weakness, the human friendships that bring such benedictions, the answers to prayer, the blessings of providence who but Jesus could send all these heavenly good things to us? These are the best proofs to us that Jesus lives and rules in the land of blessedness and glory.

## **FORETASTE OF GOOD THINGS TO COME**

To know that Christ, though unseen, is yonder in heaven, that He ever lives to make intercession for us, that He sends blessings down to us on the earth, heaven's good things, is a very precious truth. Even this is a joy that thrills our hearts. But there is something better: The wagons came and took Jacob away from that land of hunger, with its mere handfuls of the good things of the land of plenty, and bore him right into the heart of the country where his son ruled. He was met on the borders of the country by the son who had died to him, but still lived. He was welcomed by him with love's warmest welcome. He was presented to the king who bade him dwell in the best of the land. There he stayed, close to his son, nourished by him. No longer did he have merely a few of the good things, sent from far away, as tokens of the abundance in store yonder; he dwelt now in the very midst of the storehouses and had all that he could wish.

We see how beautifully true all this parable is in its application to Christ's believing ones in this world. Here our joy is very sweet, but we have only little foretastes of the heavenly good things. By and by the wagons will come for us to take us into the very presence of Christ.

When Jacob got into the carriage and it drove away, he was not sad. He was leaving his old walks and the place of his sorrows, but he was going to his son. He was leaving famine and want, and was going to a land of plenty. That is what is in prospect for us. We shall leave the place of toil and care, to find rest. We shall leave the land of tears and separations, to go into the presence of the loved and lost. Our Savior will meet us on the edge of that blessed country. He will welcome us with tenderest love. He will present us to His Father-not ashamed to own us as His friends, His brothers, His sisters, before heaven's angels. He will give us a place near to Himself. There He will nourish us with heaven's choicest fruits. Our Joseph has gone before us to prepare a place for us: and when we are prepared for the place He will come again and receive us unto Himself, that where He is there we may be also.

## **OLD AGE AND DEATH**

Word was sent to Joseph one day that his father wished to see him. The old man was thinking of his departure. He knew he must die in Egypt, but he did not wish to be buried in that strange land; he wanted to lie in the land of promise. So he asked Joseph to swear to him, in the rude fashion of the times, that he would not bury him in Egypt.

It was no mere sentiment that made the old man, as his end drew nigh, crave to lie beside his father and his wife in the cave of Machpelah; it was his strong faith in God's promise to give Canaan to his descendants. He believed that the promise would be fulfilled and he wanted his grave to be where the future home of his children would be. Then he wanted his family, though still abiding in Egypt, to have a constant reminder that Egypt was not their home. He knew that his grave in the land of promise would continually draw upon their hearts.

Then came another incident. Jacob was sick. Joseph heard it and hastened with his two sons to his father's bedside. Jacob adopted these boys as his own, taking them in among his own sons, kissing and embracing- them, then stretching out his thin, trembling hands and laying them on the heads of the lads, while he uttered this beautiful benediction up on them: "God, before whom thy fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which hath fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel which hath redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them."

Then we have the death scene., All the sons are there, and the dying Patriarch in prophetic words, unveils the future of each in turn. We need not linger on these predictions interesting as they are, but we will note the blessing pronounced upon Joseph:

"Joseph is a fruitful bough,  
A fruitful bough by a fountain;  
His branches run over the wall.  
The archers have sorely grieved him,  
And shot at him and persecuted him  
But his bow abode in strength,  
And the arms of his hands were made strong  
By the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob;  
(From thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel,)  
Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee;  
With blessings of heaven above,  
Blessings of the deep that coucheth beneath;  
Blessings of the breast, and of the womb.  
The blessings of thy father  
Have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors  
Unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills:  
They shall be on the head of Joseph,  
And on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren."

Those were intensely solemn moments to Joseph. All his honors seemed small as he stood there by that bed and felt the touch of the hand now growing cold in death. At length the feeble voice ceased to speak. The blessings were all pronounced. Then came the dying charge: "Bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron." And when Jacob made an end of charging his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his fathers.

Strange mystery of dying! How orphaned it leaves us when it is a father or mother that is gone. We never get ready to lose our parents. No matter how old they are, how ripe their life, how full their years, the time never comes when we can lose them without a pang. Life is never quite the same again. Something has gone out of our life, something very precious, which we never can have again. Never more a mother's prayers, lost and missed now for the first day since we were born. No more a father's love, thought, care, and hope in this world, wanting now first since infancy. The consciousness of bereavement is keener when a parent is taken away in the child's earlier years, and the loss is greater in a sense, but perhaps the pain is no deeper. No wonder Joseph fell upon his father's face and wept upon him and kissed him, when he saw that he was dead. His grief was sore; his sense of loss was great.

Quickly Joseph set about to do all that love could do to honor the name and memory of his father. The body was embalmed. Then followed seventy days of mourning, according to the custom in Egypt. After this the patriarch's dying command was obeyed, and the twelve sons, with many Egyptian friends, among them men of rank, bore the body away to Canaan, and laid it to rest beside the bodies of his kindred.

The burial was at Hebron, in the cave of Machpelah. This cave is covered now by a great Mohammedan mosque. The entrance is so sacredly guarded that none save Mohammedans can enter. There are shrines in the mosque for each of the dead who sleep beneath-Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Leah, Jacob. In the interior of the building is a small circular opening which leads down into the ancient cave, where no doubt the twelve sons of Jacob laid the embalmed of their *father* . - *Contributed*.

*(To be continued)*

## One Solitary Life

Here is a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew- up in another village. He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty, and then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He never owned a home. He never had a family. He never went to college.. He never put His feet inside a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where He was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompanies greatness. He had no credentials but Himself.

While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies. -He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed upon a cross between two thieves. His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth while He was dying, and that was His coat. When He was dead He was taken down and laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Nineteen centuries have come and gone, and today He is the Centerpiece of the human race and the Leader of the column of progress.

I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that ever were built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as has that One Solitary Life.

*-Author unknown.*

## **"Cast Down! But Never Forsaken!"**

"Cast down! But never forsaken!  
O, praise His holy Name!  
I feel His arm steal 'round me  
As I think on my sin and shame.  
Cast down! But not forsaken!  
Could sweeter words be said?  
So I seek to rest in His promise,  
And meekly to bow my head.

"Cast down! But never forsaken!  
What though the tear-drops may fall:  
As the sacrifice is consuming,  
My Jesus is sweeter than all.  
Cast down! But not forsaken!  
Yes, Lord, I am willing to bear  
In my flesh the dying of Jesus,  
Since Thou wilt sustain me there.

"He knoweth the humiliation,  
He knoweth the heart-break and pain:  
This thought is my only comfort  
While my tears descend as the rain.  
But, oh! such a blessed promise!  
And oh! such a loving Lord!  
Then crushed be my heart at His bidding,  
Yet my soul shall rejoice in His Word.

"Then help me, dear Jesus, more meekly  
To bow to Thy sweet, holy will:  
For infinite goodness and wisdom,  
With mercy my cup shall fill.  
I know I can rest in His promise,  
He ne'er will deny me His grace,  
Till I've passed from the valley of sorrow  
To rejoice in the light of His face."