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St. Paul's Obedience to the Heavenly Vision

"Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." - Acts 26:19.

WE ARE all familiar with the circumstances leading up to the scene in which the words quoted above were uttered. The speaker, the Apostle Paul, is one of the most remarkable characters in history, and especially in religious history. If there be one stumbling-block to the higher critic more outstanding than any other, it is doubtless the Apostle Paul -- born at Tarsus, into a family with pronounced pharisaical connection in all probability, educated, wealthy or of more than ordinary financial standing, trained in the Jewish law by Gamaliel, a man of considerable influence in the council and himself a member of that council. This is a brief description of Saul, the arch-persecutor of the early Christian Church.

These critics find it difficult to reconcile Saul of Tarsus with Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ, the great evangelist of the Christian faith. How could a man with this background come to so radical a change of allegiance, from the dreaded antagonist to the staunch defender of and martyr to the cause? How can the higher critic understand anything about the changed life of any man, not having experienced that change himself? And we know that he has not done so because he is not led by the Spirit of God; therefore he is not a son of God. How can one who denies the foundation of the faith, and stigmatizes the personal experiences of the Christian as emotional and superstitious, be expected to speak the language of the consecrated believer? His conclusions are reached by the cold reasoning of his intellect, he knows nothing of the heart experiences. He has not been drawn of God, he has never had a heavenly vision to which he might be "not disobedient." He has never been led by the Holy Spirit into all truth. He knows nothing of the Comforter. What humble believer would exchange these things which he possesses, for the mighty intellect of an Alexander Hamilton, or for the power of a Caesar?

Let us contrast the principal actors in this scene. On the seat of authority' we see the representative of the great Roman Empire and the Idumean king and his beautiful sister, wearing the garb of worldly authority and surrounded by all the pomp and ceremony of those things which shall pass away; officials, soldiers, and crafty Jews, filled with an unholy curiosity to see the

prisoner, who in due time is ushered into their presence, bound in chains, but well poised and with firm step, as one who is supported by -t knowledge of the righteousness of his position, and who is ministering the truth and those things which are eternal in the heavens.

Hark back in your imagination and listen to the prisoner's account of his conversion on the road to Damascus, an account so stirring as to elicit from one: "Paul, thou art beside thyself. Much learning doth make thee mad," and from the other, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." What a witness especially under such circumstances! "Let him who would be My disciple take up his cross and follow Me"! Has one ever taken up his cross more effectively than this marvelous man, or shown a deeper insight into the truths of the Christian faith? He has a message of comfort and instruction for all, from the babe in Christ to the one who like himself can say as he finishes his course, "I have kept the faith"; and we like to add, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." What a blessed assurance of hope and of faith!

THE HEAVENLY VISION

When Paul spoke of the "heavenly vision," he voiced an experience which at some time, in some way, must come to every growing Christian. Not that one must or can see Jesus in either the fleshly body or the spirit body, but by extension of the meaning of the word vision, each must reach the point in his experience when he rises to a more exalted height of appreciation of the grace of God to him; when the things of time are seen in their true worth and his soul sincerely cries out:

"Only Thee, my soul's Redeemer!
Whom have I in heaven beside?
Who on earth, with love so tender
All my wandering steps will guide?"

"Only Thee whose blood has cleansed me,
Would my raptured vision see,
While my faith is reaching upward
Ever upward, Lord, to thee."

Paul had other visions in his life than this of which he here speaks, and by these he was led onto do the mighty works which were his. We do not look for the miraculous visions in this day, nor is it necessary for our guidance and sustenance. Paul's vision was for a definite purpose and his experience marked a momentous incident in the history of the Church. Nevertheless, circumstances often work out in such a way that we see the will of God, and figuratively speaking, hear His voice as though calling to us, "This is the way, walk ye in it." When we search the Scriptures in order to show ourselves workmen that need not be ashamed and to discover the will of God concerning us, and are led step by step into a higher life and have revealed to us the ever-increasing glories of the imparted life, we as truly have the vision as did Paul on the Damascus road, and as Moses when he saw God in the burning bush and received his revelation concerning the next phase in His plan relative to the Israelitish nation. Peter and John saw heavenly visions also which were given for a definite purpose. Luke and Mark received their inspiration through the sustained facts concerning our Savior's life, death, resurrection, and ascension. And so we of today have the record of these facts and the experiences of the Apostles to inspire us in our heavenly work.

OUR SPIRITUAL VISION

Paul saw Christ in this vision-the risen, glorified Christ, but we have the authenticated story of its effect upon the Apostle and others with whom he came in contact, to which we may turn again and again in this search for a clearer leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit. His vision was only momentary, though never to be forgotten. Ours may be perpetual if we take advantage and look often upon Him who promised to send the Spirit of truth that we may learn of Him and come unto Him and humble ourselves under His mighty hand, that we may put off the things of the flesh and put on the things of the Spirit, that we may on bended knee and with bowed heart truly and sincerely pray:

"Oh, turn me, mold me, mellow me for use,
Pervade my being with Thy vital force,
That this else inexpressive life of mine
May become eloquent and full of power,
Impregnated with life and strength divine.
Put the bright torch of heaven into my hand,
That I may carry it aloft
And win the eye of weary wanderers here below
To guide their feet into paths of peace.
I cannot raise the dead,
Nor from this soil pluck precious dust,
Nor bid the sleeper wake,
Nor still the storm, nor bend the lightning back,
Nor muffle up the thunder,
Nor bid the chains fall from off creation's long unfettered limbs,
But I can live a life that tells on others' lives,
And make this world less full of anguish and of pain;
A life, that like the pebble dropped upon the sea
Sends its wide circles to a hundred shores.
May such a life be mine. .
Creator of true life,
Thyself the life Thou givest,
Give Thyself, that Thou mayest dwell in me and I in Thee."

Besides these usual, common ways, the ways which reach us through the medium of the understanding and intellect, may there not be a more subtle way, one which reaches us through the heart side of our minds, still deeper and more real perhaps-at a time when the affairs of the flesh are laid aside and our minds have drifted into the more rarified atmosphere of the spiritual, and we feel lifted up and in closer harmony with the Infinite? Not the mere ecstasy of the emotional, but are there not moments when we seem to grow in stature as men in Christ Jesus and when we feel that God has answered our prayer and has "bid our soul on soaring wings ascend into a purer clime"?

In this state we discern more clearly the value of our experiences and impressions of life; and inspirations come and help us, when we again descend the mountain top where we have communed with God and our faces glow with His reflected glory, and it seems easier to mingle with men because of this assurance of faith. Our hearts go out in love and sympathy and we thank Him for His revelations, for the visions He has given us. These are no idle dreams or mere emotions, for men have been influenced by such things; some seeming trifle has been the turning point in their lives. They have gone on to greater things and looking back have recognized that

the hand of God has been leading them. The natural circumstances of life, its environments and preferences, have often fitted men for important roles in the unfolding of God's plans, after perhaps they have been purified in the crucible of Christian enlightenment and faith. This has been true of many of the fellow-servants of Christ.

This Damascus road experience of Paul may be duplicated by many, in that the light of God's truth concerning them comes equally suddenly to them and indeed seems to be demanded by the uninformed, some even questioning the validity of their conversion because they have known no such spectacular moment. It is to be doubted that any true, conversion can be said to be instantaneous. Such cases are those where the seed has fallen by the wayside or upon stony ground-merely emotional manifestation of a superficial mind. True conversion is invariably associated with a condition or series of events leading up to it. The words of the voice from heaven in Paul's case would lead one to think that he had been one of those over whom the power of God had been hovering. That statement, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," would seem to emphasize this thought.

Saul of Tarsus was a Christ hater. He had pursued His followers to harass them and persecute them. Nothing seemed too evil for him to do in his animosity. But he had seen their courage, their faith, their trust, their allegiance to the cause of Christ; their despoiling was taken calmly, their dispersion was accepted as one of the all things of which the Apostle later spoke. He had been present at the death of Stephen, had heard his great testimony, had seen the reflected glory of Stephen's Master in his face as he looked into the open heavens and pleaded for the forgiveness of his murderers as, "he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Could it be possible that these hated ones were right, and he with his pharisaical attitude might be wrong? Here perhaps was one of the mysterious ways in which God moves, His wonders to perform. True to the psychology of such a mind, when it began to have imaginings as to his own position, he all the more earnestly tried to carry out his object to exterminate these unbelievers in the Law. Self-justification in regard to a false premise or proposition invariably, in the human mind, will stimulate an increased activity along these erroneous lines, and so it was in this case.

WHAT WILT THOU HAVE ME TO DO?

Paul could not shut from his sight the agony and the beauty of the face of the dying martyr, Stephen. Unconsciously the thought had begun to break down his resistance, until at that final moment he became helpless. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." These words coming from Him whom he had viciously pursued, destroyed his last vestige of opposition. "Who art Thou Lord?" was his last feeble stand. God had been little by little breaking this giant whom He had selected -to carry the message to the Gentile peoples; and incidentally, largely through his efforts was it brought to the western world.

"What wilt Thou have me to do?" was not the question of a deluded man, nor of an epileptic, nor of the victim of a sunstroke, as some of the critics would have us believe; but of a man who had been brought to a complete, unquestioned final state- of submission to God. And he was not disobedient to the heavenly Vision, but immediately in his helpless condition expresses his determination to do Christ's will. He now has none of his own will. What does the higher critic know of such an experience as this in his own soul?

ARE WE OBEDIENT TO THE HEAVENLY VISION?

The practical value of this record to the professing believer is, Are we "kicking against the pricks"? We surely could not be accused of persecuting the Lord, but are we kicking against the pricks, or are -we constantly by our lives and attitude asking, What wilt Thou have me to do? If we are guilty of the former, then we need not, nor can we, properly ask the latter question. If we are still kicking against the pricks, we have not made a full consecration. Our wills are not wholly dead. Therefore, our standing in Him is merely nominal. Paul's reaction to the vision was obedience. Many professing Christians are dreamers, merely idealists into whose minds come beautiful visions of what they would like to be in character, and service, but they are not obedient to the heavenly vision. Their lips have not been touched by the live coal from off the altar, their iniquity has not been taken away, nor have they said, "Here am I; send me." They have never consecrated. If they have, they should take the viewpoint of the Psalmist when he says, "line eyes are ever toward the Lord, for He shall pull me out of the net"; and with the Apostle again we must forget the things which are behind and reaching forth to those which are before, we must press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

If we are still kicking, let us cease to do so and ask this question of Paul's, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" If done earnestly, then we have the evidence that we are led by God in the knowledge of our complete submission, our obedience to the heavenly vision.

Now if we have had the vision and if we have been obedient, what effect will it have upon our lives? This matter of vision and obedience to it, is a factor in the accomplishment of the things of the world about us. The great advancement along all lines of human endeavor are dependent on a vision of better things to be attained unto, but in this sphere of activities men have failed to conform their ways to the ways of God, so that because of him who is the prince of this world great confusion has come, with distress to nations and fear of those things which are coming to pass.

If this with regard to the vision of better things be true of the world, how much more may be done by and to those who have laid their all upon -the altar of sacrifice and are carrying their two hands full of in. tense beaten fine and placing it upon the coals of the altar within the Holy.

Visions and dreams are an oft-repeated incident in the lives of those prominent in the Scriptures. Some are manifestly of God, while some are as surely of the Adversary. It is no doubt because of this that we are cautioned to "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." It behooves us then to watch lest we yield obedience to a vision which does not harmonize with the Spirit of God. That there are such today is very manifest.

Is it possible that any of God's people may have erected an idol at the door of the inner Gate, that looketh toward the north, or caused God to go far off from His sanctuary in our hearts? Have we possibly polluted His temple, which temple we are, by marring its walls with the form of any creeping thing or abominable beast; or have we turned our faces toward the east and are we worshiping the sun toward the east; or in the chambers of our imagery do we offer false fire? If we have committed any of these abominations is it a light thing?

IMPORTANT LESSONS FOR THE CONSECRATED

These are the things the Adversary is constantly tempting the consecrated to do, and these are the things which obedience to the heavenly vision will prevent us from doing. If we have to any degree been living "after the commandments and doctrines of men," which things have indeed a show of wisdom, it is because we have not set our affection on things above, but on things on the

earth. We are not dead and our lives are not hid with Christ in God. Neither shall we appear with Christ in glory when He shall appear because He is not our life. (Col. 3:3, 4.) We cannot say with Paul that we have been "not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

Let us show forth the fruits of the spirit in love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, and let us remember that we have been "called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. Walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the desires of the flesh." (Gal. 5:13-16.) And again, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." (Gal. 6:1, 2.) How can we bear one another's burdens if we have not been obedient to the heavenly vision?

"What is it that makes a man obedient or disobedient? It is the man's own will. For there are two mysteries in life, the one that man can, and the other that men do, resist Christ's pleading voice. As to the former we cannot fathom it. But do not let any difficulty deaden the voice of our own consciousness. If I cannot trust my sense that I can do this thing or not do it, as I choose, there is nothing that I can trust. Will is the power of determining which of two roads I shall go, and, strange to say, it is incapable of statement in any more general terms than the reiteration of the fact. Yet here stands the fact that God, the infinite Will, has given to men, whom He made in His own image, this inexplicable and awful power of coinciding with, or opposing His purposes and His will."

"HAVE YOU FELT THE SPIRIT'S POWER?"

In other words, man is a free moral agent and is responsible for his conduct up to the point of his intelligence. Conscience is his guide, and if he violates that conscience he commits sin. Sin is selfishness expressed in some form, and is as much a truth as is righteousness or any other virtue. If we wish to follow the heavenly vision, we can. It may cost us something in time, effort, or sacrifice. If we wish to be led by, the Spirit of God, we can. It may lead us into unpleasant places, but nothing impossible will be asked. Nothing beyond our ability to attain will be expected, provided we exercise our conscience, which plays so large a part in the Christian's life and of which one has spoken thus:

"But, above all, the victory is most sure
For him who, seeking faith by virtue, strives
To yield entire submission to the law
Of conscience -- conscience revered and obeyed
As God's most intimate presence in the soul
And His most perfect image in the world."

Obedience to the heavenly vision requires the leading of the Holy Spirit. No man by strength of his own spirit can react to this vision, for the Holy Spirit must bear "witness with our spirit that we are the sons of God," and by this witness we are not to expect any special manifestation inside ourselves that we might call the voice of God, for while it comes through His power and by His will, it comes to and through and with our spirit also. Many Christians have failed to enjoy their privileges to the full extent because they have looked for some assurance of their standing from a source outside themselves, and many also have had a false sense of security because of an emotional experience within themselves, in which case they are trusting in their own spirit and not in the witnessing of the Holy Spirit with their spirit that they are the sons of God.

We may have this confirmation first by a realization that we are His sons; the spirit of sonship prompts our attitude toward Him because we are bringing forth the fruit of this Spirit which can properly be called filial obedience, and thus we find that we are less carnally minded, "for if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

Now the carnal things are not necessarily sensual or in themselves evil. They are the things which the spirit of the flesh clings to and which obedience to the heavenly vision requires should be relinquished. Delight in the old order of things passes from the life. Old affections are supplanted by a struggle for the more spiritual, a new freedom inspires this struggle, and some have risen to a point where the martyrdom of death and the persecutions of life- patiently borne have witnessed to the spirit within them that He who called Himself the Light of the world reigns within them and that He finds "no fault in them." They may rejoice humbly in the knowledge that they are led- by the Spirit of God and are therefore sons of God. Paul had this assurance because he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

THE INHERITANCE OF THE DIVINE NATURE

In the passage concerning those who are led by the Spirit of God, the Apostle has nicely discriminated in the use of, the word "led." It is not exactly synonymous with guide, as used for example in our Lord's statement that the Spirit of truth shall guide you into all truth. The word "led" seems to carry the thought of active compliance, cooperation, with no desire to resist the influence when recognized. Therefore, if we are led by the Spirit of God voluntarily, this is again evidence that we are His sons, and this being the case certain definite results are produced which stamp one as of this class. .

If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. This means heirship to the divine nature. And so this vision is borne in unto all who are Christ's by a proper understanding of His Word, and becomes a fixed conviction of eternal life within; a component part of thought, of faith, of consciousness, and assurance of hope and of faith, with no doubts, no waverings, because such an one is the recipient of the imparted life. He knows, "Christ in him is his hope of glory." This new relationship becomes a life principle unto him, deep, pure. God is his light, "and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

Only so can it be said that one has put off the things of the flesh and put on the things of the Spirit; only so can one become like-minded with God, for the likeness is within and reveals itself by its fruits. I say unto you, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

"Ofttimes when the days are bitter and the pulse of life is low,
And the wheels of toil in their dusty course drive heavily and slow,
When the meaning of all is blurred, and the joy of seeking palls,
Ofttimes in my desert places a miracle befalls.
Is it a trick of the blood, a cleaning dot in the brain?
Sudden the far-off shower unguessed has filled the choking stream,
Some rift in the grey horizon let through a crimson beam,
Once more for me the sky is blue; I quaff the wine of the air,
And taste the fierce tang of the sea, and find the wild rose fair.
Once more I walk the allotted round with unreluctant feet,
And daily bread has savor, and love and labor are sweet.
"Oh, once centuries olden, before Damascus Gate
Journeyed one with holden eyes and a dreary heart of hate;
When a glory shone round about him, and in the wondrous hour

He had passed from death to life. Then knowledge and grace and power
And a new word filled his lips; and joy and courage and life
Were borne henceforth in his heart, with the vision that fell from above.
And still when the days are bitter, and life is clogged with care
And the heart is salt with unshed tears and tender with despair,
An angel stirs the stagnant soul, and lo! there is healing there.
Once more my song is loosened and the life and labor sweet ;
Once more in the tangled weft the pattern shines complete
And I know that the selfsame grace on my soul has been outpoured.
My spirit, by Damascus Gate, has heard the voice of her Lord."

- S. D. Bennett, M.D.

The Letter to the Colossians

"Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry; for which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience: wherein ye also once walked, when ye lived in these things; but now do ye also put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth: lie not one to another; seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man." - Col. 3:5-10. A. R. V.

THE PORTION of this epistle that pertains to the building of Christian character, opens with these verses, showing how to clear the ground that the new building may be erected. Just as a conquering king invading a country must, as the first act of his reign, destroy the power previously established, just so the Christian's first endeavor must be, in cooperation with his powerful Ally, to obliterate the last vestige of enemy-power within his being. To war against the world and the Adversary while the will of the flesh still persists, would be like a general going forth to battle against his country's enemies when there is rebellion in his army's camp. Therefore Paul deals with this enemy first. That course is the wise one also from another standpoint: one can become so engrossed with the absolutely essential battle against the world and the Adversary, particularly the former, as to entirely forget the necessity of vanquishing self. Then, too, unless self-will is first attacked, one's battle against the world and the Adversary is almost certain to degenerate into an effort to reform the world. For that task we will not be ready until God has stamped His approval upon us by investing us with the power and the wisdom of the divine nature.

These verses are connected with the preceding discussion by the word "therefore," referring back to two reasons given for the destruction of the fleshly will: because "ye died" with Christ, and because ye "were raised together with Him." The hard, practical facts that the Apostle is setting forth are thus built on the foundation of mystical truths that to the world would be no basis of argument, but to the Apostle and all those who have the mind of the Lord, are more convincing than any human reasoning that could be adduced.

To slay habits that have grown to hardened manhood through many years of nurturing requires a blade of keenest edge. This the Apostle has supplied. In fact, something serious has happened to dull the edge of these doctrines if they are not effective in killing our human desires. Truth held in self love has lost all power for this work. A consuming desire for the approval of our fellow-men may drive us to the *curbing* of some of the most manifest of our fallen desires, but only divine grace can nerve our hand to the striking of the blow that will make the work of destruction complete.

Of wisdom the Wise Man says, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace" (Prov. 3:17); and the new creature by faith recognizes the truth of this description: but to the old creature the paths of true religion, *the* "wisdom that cometh down from above" (James 3:17), are steep, and climbing there is never easy. The upper air is bracing and exhilarating to the new creature, but trying to the old, accustomed as he is to the lower levels only. The self that is denied finds no joy in the *experience*. **On** the *other* hand, one wholly devoted to God finds no true satisfaction until the denial of self is as real and complete as the Apostle's forceful figure of death makes it. He knows that the genuine holiness on which his heart is set can never be attained as long as the will of the flesh is permitted exercise in any detail of life. It is the love of Jesus Christ and the power of His Spirit that dwells within that urges on to victory in this unending fight against the flesh in its daily strife to regain rulership in our lives. Only implicit trust in our Captain and His assurance of ultimate victory can give the courage to stand our ground day by day in the very center of the raging battle. Though a thousand fall at our side and ten thousand at our right hand, there is no reason for quailing, no reason for cowardly shrinking in the presence of the foe, for the form of our beloved Captain (Rotherham: "Princely Leader" - Heb. 2:10) is always visible *in* the very forefront of the *fray*.

THE GRIM CATALOGUE OF THE CONDEMNED

"The Apostle stands like a jailer at the prison door with the fatal roll in his hand, and reads out the names of the evil doers for whom the tumbril waits to carry them to the guillotine. It is an ugly list but we need plain speaking that there may be no mistake *as* to the identity of the culprits. He enumerates evils which honeycombed society with rottenness then, and are rampant now. The series recounts various forms of evil love, and is so arranged as that it starts with the coarse, gross act, and goes on to more subtle and inward forms. It goes up the stream, as it were, to the fountain head, passing inward from deed to desire"; "fornication," all immoral sexual relations, then "all uncleanness," embracing every manifestation in word or look or deed of the impure spirit. Then follow the sources of the evil deeds, "passion," and "evil desire." They include all forms of hungry appetites and desires after "the things that are upon the earth." No lesser condemnation could be passed on these criminals, for they are the murderers of our race, "dead in trespasses and sins." The "wages of sin [in us or in the world] is death."

The placing of "covetousness" in such close connection with the grosser forms of sensuality is deeply significant. It has the same root, and is therefore closely allied with these-it is but another form of selfish desire going out to "the -things which are on the earth." (Exod. 20:17; Psa. 10:3; Prov. 28:16; Jer. 6:13; Ezek. 33:31; Hab. 2:9; Luke 12:15; Eph. 5:3; 1 Tim. 3:3; Heb. 13:5.) So ingrained is selfishness in the animal nature that it is incomprehensible to it that self can be actually dead in the new creature. Therefore the carnally-minded gossip may not realize that the evil passions yet living in his own nature may be dead in the one whom his unholy imaginations condemn.

Some translators, and they are justified by the Greek Lexicons, make the phrase which follows "covetousness," a reason for its condemnation to death. They read "inasmuch as," or "for it is idolatry." It is an even more debased form of idol worship than that practised by the heathen since it means the depriving of others in order that our selfish desires may be gratified. Though unacclaimed among men, it numbers among its votaries more worshipers than all other religious combined.

The act of cutting off the fleshly members can never be pleasant except to the one who has learned the hideousness of sin and the beauties of true holiness. We can never hope for a full

revelation of the latter in this life, nor can our imperfect minds ever realize how hideous sin in its mildest forms must appear to the eternally pure minds of our Heavenly Father and our Heavenly Bridegroom. But we can increase our appreciation of the things that are lovely by "thinking on these things," and as these things daily gleam before our eyes with added luster, blacker will appear every sinful tendency, every trace of the old self and its ways. No longer will we make excuses for them, but rather will join with our worst enemy in the inventing of terms of reproach to heap upon them, knowing well that the condoning of our offenses only delays the day of the death of the earthward members. It is not enough to say, "That is my weakness," unless we can also say, "His strength manifests its perfection in my weakness." (2 Cor. 12:9.) Let us not say, "That is my way," but rather, "That was my way."

THE END-DEATH

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." (Prov. 14:12.) Because they think it is inconsistent with His love, many students of the Word refuse to hear anything of the wrath of God. Paul shuns not to declare the whole counsel of God, and therefore he declares that, "on account of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the children of disobedience" (Eph. 5:6, see Diaglott), or as the Authorized and Revised Versions have it, "for which things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience." In every one of these selfish propensities there is, by His pre-arrangement, the seed of destruction. Any of them uncurbed will lead to the utter oblivion reserved for all who are wedded to unrighteousness; for every form of selfishness is a crime against the God of love, and a disgrace in those who bear His name, and so must be condemned of Him. - James 1:15.

GOD'S WRATH MANIFESTING LOVE

The two thoughts of love and wrath are not incompatible. True love, associated with power and wisdom, could not eternally permit a sinner to continue in his downward path of misery. Love must spare him the misery of complete degradation. There is this distinction between the divine and the human wrath, that God's always operates because of love for all the inhabitants of the universe, and even, for the one against whom His wrath moves; whereas the human is too often a mere manifestation of malice toward another. Paul can truthfully speak of God's love toward us when we were "children of wrath." (Eph. 2:3, 4.) A God who could countenance evil and permit its continuance eternally, under any condition, would not be a God of holiness any more than we can be holy if we countenance and condone sin in our mortal bodies. God is angry "with the wicked every day," (Psa. 7:11) and "with the perverse He will show Himself froward." (2 Sam. 22:27.) And unbelievable though it may be to our human senses, there will be froward ones even in the Millennial Kingdom, "the land of uprightness." When the judgments of the Lord are abroad in the earth and the inhabitants will be learning righteousness, even then. "Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal wrongfully, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord" (Isa. 26:9, 10, R.V.); or as Young's Literal Translation renders it: "In a land of straightforwardness he dealeth perversely and seeth not the excellency of Jehovah."

"THE WRATH OF GOD COMETH"

The "majestic present tense" may be accepted as expressing both the recompense already manifest in the depravity of the creature given over to sin, and also the inevitable "utter destruction," as Thayer defines it. Accurately Zophar the Naamathite states the principle by which retributive justice works in this life: "His bones are full of his youth, but it shall lie down with

him in the dust. Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue, though he spare it, and will not let it go, but keep it still within his mouth; yet his food in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him." (Job 20:11-14.) During the many centuries in which God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath "fitted to destruction," His wrath thus has been just as much in the present tense as it will be in the day of their destruction. Then, too, the absolute certainty the "word that goeth forth out of His mouth shall not return unto Him void" is expressed in the present tense which He uses of future events.

Since the slaying proposed in this passage can be accomplished by no blade with a dull-edge, it must be done by "the truth as it is in Jesus." (Eph. 4:21.) Not only will perverted truth fail to give the blessing for which truth was divinely purposed, but if willfully "added to" or "taken from" will undoubtedly bring great injury. This seems to be the teaching of Romans 1:18, A.R.V.: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness." Every Christian whose motive in holding to the Word is as pure as the Apostle's, can make as effective use as he of Spirit-revealed truth in slaying the tendencies of the old creature and in building up the new into the likeness of Him who is Truth.

THE SPIRIT-GUIDED LIFE

Appreciating the important mission of divinely given truth, every sincere student will not only make certain that he is "established in the truth" (2 Pet. 1:12), but will be eager to most earnestly scrutinize everything that is offered to him as truth with the dual endeavor of never becoming established in any error and of never failing to apprehend, as promptly as possible, all truth that comes within the range of his spiritual vision. Nor need this carefulness result in, an ungodly fear lest in his searching he should be led into some error, for he has the promise Jesus left with us that if he has the guidance of the Spirit it will lead "into all truth." On the other hand, to devote one's time to what he realizes is error would demonstrate an ignorance of his need of sanctification and a lack of love for truth.

DEATH, A FORCEFUL FIGURE

The milder meaning which common usage has attached to the word "mortify,"- doubtless in the minds of most readers nullifies the effectiveness of the King James and the English Revision. So far as we have noted, all other translations, evidently having in mind this difficulty, have substituted synonymous but more effective expressions such as "make dead," "put to death," "slay," "destroy," "kill." It will not be safe to be less drastic than these expressions indicate. A dead member ceases to function, and no sincere Christian can countenance less than this for any of these criminal tendencies. Jesus tells us the only effective: method of dealing with each of them: "Pluck it out, and *cast it from thee.*" (Matt. 5:29, 30.) Accurately the word "mortify" describes -the sentence pronounced by God upon our earthward habits, the sentence in which we must concur not only with our will, but also with all our power and our inventive genius, discovering every possible way in which we can cooperate in the work of carrying out the divine sentence.

Note that the Apostle Paul's theology and our Lord's recognize our "members which are upon the earth" as sin-cursed, God-condemned. They do not have the thought of taking the old creature and working with the few faint evidences of righteousness that may be found in it, and developing them until they have reached perfection and then calling it a "new creature"; but their proposition is a clean-cut one: slay the old, and secure life for the new from the only Source of life. Paul's

exhortation in this passage is to first put off the old with its characteristics, and not until then does he instruct regarding "putting on."

Christ Jesus is made unto us "all things" in this work. Neither the death nor the life can be completed outside of the "truth which is in Christ Jesus." We would not, however, belittle the commendable efforts of moral men to attain the highest standard within their reach, even though under present conditions it must be far below the perfection which is the goal of the new creature—"without spot or wrinkle or blemish or any such thing."

While the "bringing into subjection" of a Christian's body must undoubtedly bring results apparent to all discerning beholders, the eye of the flesh will never be able to fully comprehend the beauty of this "new creature in Christ Jesus." (1 Cor. 2:15, margin; 1:21; John 1:10; 1 John 3:1.) Only our Heavenly Father and the Heavenly Bridegroom, and, others in proportion as they have their mind, can discover all the intricacies of the character-likeness that is being worked out in them. How can one walk in and appreciate the light who is bound with the chains of darkness? How can one be freed from blindness while still under the blinding influence of Satan and self seeking? And how can we hope with bare and unaided hand to tear out the members that are the very idols of the old life? To the Christian, "Repent and be baptized," means to "possess [the control over] your members which are upon the earth" and "rise to newness of life with Him." To have a good "victory garden" we must plant seed. Watering the weeds will only assist their growth. They must be plucked out and cast far enough away so, that they will not again take root there.

There is no more lamentable evidence of self-seeking than the using of truth for personal ends: such as, to glorify the flesh by argument, to sow discord among brethren, or to build up an earthly organization. If the fact that we differ with other students of the Word is of more importance to us than the sanctifying power of the truths in which we are established, then we are just another cult, holding the truth, but in selfishness. Truth is not given us just that our heads may differ or that we may work in a different part of the Harvest field, but that "Thou mightest create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." - Psa. 51:10; Eph. 4:23; Col. 3:10.

"SINS IN WHICH YE ALSO WALKED"

Being reminded of a sin-infested past is not an occasion for discouragement, but for rejoicing in the blood shed for us. Being reminded of the cleansing power of the blood is not that we might continue in sin, but that we might take courage in struggling against it. Being reminded therefore of the sins "in which ye also walked beforetime, when ye lived in them," should be helpful for any Christian, encouraging him to thankfulness and to faithfulness. But all the benefit of retrospection is lost unless there is no faith in self and implicit faith in the power of the blood. There must be also every evidence that we are giving "all diligence" to walk in the footsteps of the Master. All should know well that they can be "acceptable sacrifices" only as His righteousness is ours through justification and His will ours through education. This will mean (1) a deep, heartfelt contrition for sins, past and present; (2) a complete turning away from them in our wills; (3) a daily battle against them -- a relentless battle fought in the strength which He supplies and with which every power of our being cooperates; and (4) the humility that can never fail to result in one who personally knows God, and therefore has learned to hate iniquity as our Lord hated it.

An excellent test as to our hatred for sin and our love for our brethren is to note whether we have plausible and nice sounding explanations of our own "slips," and harsh ones for others'; or whether we are able to speak charitably regarding others, while violently hating our own

imperfections. How frequently we will use words and phrases regarding our own faults that sound almost like terms of affection, as compared with what we have to say about the faults of others. Let us make sure the matter is reversed and the mild sounding phrases saved for others than ourselves.

True thankfulness for the strong and loving Hands which have brought us from the filthy mire of the pit of sin cannot but result in rejoicing that the "power of salvation" is for all, and will even eventually call from the grave every one that sin has condemned, that all may have a full opportunity to "seek the Lord." (Acts 15:17; Gal. 3:8, 14.) If the spirit of this promise (Eph. 1:13, Diaglott) fills our hearts, we will never be tempted to dethrone our Heavenly Father and take His place as Judge of either our brethren or the world. Every trace of imperfection discovered will be only an occasion for greater rejoicing in the deliverance that lies ahead. That spirit alone will effectually crowd out all criticism and condemnation.

The root of no sin of the past life has taken deeper hold than that one of judging others. There are few of us who, if we could but see ourselves, would not discover this sin prevalent in some thoughts and perhaps even in some words of every day. Though so ingrained in our being as to be committed unconsciously, there is no excuse for our not using every endeavor to eradicate it and every other sin; for the wheat will not grow to its golden maturity in a field choked with thistles.

"YOU ALSO"

The phrase "you also" appears in the fourth, the seventh, and the eighth verses, but each time apparently with a different application. In the fourth verse it associates the believer with Christ; in the seventh it associates him with the entire heathen world; but in the eighth it seems to be reminding him that there are other faithful and sympathetic brethren associated with him in the desperate struggle against the inherited and cultivated imperfections of the flesh, such as "anger, wrath, malice, railing, and shameful speaking. This is another reminder that they have been translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of light (Col. 1:13); that whereas at one time they walked in conformity with the ways of the world, they should now conform themselves to the rules of the new association. It is not sufficient, however, to limit their attainments to conforming with the example of the poorest Christian they know or of the best. All must keep their eyes fixed on the perfect Pattern, the beauties of whose holiness will so entrance them that no amount of failure will deter from daily struggling for a little closer approach to His likeness. These two things therefore are essential in the life of every Christian: a clearer vision of the divine perfections, and a deeper contrition for sins past and present.

"PUT OFF THEREFORE"

In the eighth verse the Apostle substitutes for the figure of slaying another of which he also makes frequent use throughout his letters-that of "putting off" as one would lay aside clothing. This "stripping off" of various forms of *wicked hatred* is as complete as the previously mentioned slaying of different types of *wicked love*. It is not unfitting that the first should have been dispensed with by the more passionate figure of slaying, and the chill malignity of this new list dealt with finally and by the more deliberate "putting off."

The virulent poison of hatred-like jealousy, "cruel as the grave,"-is in this last list: "anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking." In fact jealousy is often easily traceable as the root of these evils. Who then, discovering them in his garden, could hesitate to grub deep until the last desecrating fiber has been removed? No Christian life can flourish to full maturity while they are permitted even a feeble existence.

The Apostle proceeds (verses 5 and 8) in opposite directions in describing the two streams of vice. In the first he began with action, and then went up the stream to its source of evil desire; in the second, beginning with the source in evil thought, he proceeds down stream to shameful communications. Our Master informed us that the real pollution is not that of physical dirt, but of mental filth such as these.
- Matt. 15:18-20.

The "anger" which opens the list is of course not the righteous kind, but selfish, fleshly. "Wrath," the second in the list, is anger boiling over, uncontrolled. The mere control of it is not however satisfactory. It also must be stripped off. Who would think of venturing before the throne of God with either of these in his heart? The putting-off process is necessary if we are to enter into the "fulness of joy" which should be ours every moment of every day, and will be if spent in His presence. The dove, not the eagle, is the divine symbol of the Holy Spirit.

"Malice" is anger that is planning action in accordance with its wickedness. Even slight satisfaction in the misfortunes of others should therefore be recognized and repelled as at least a faint trace of this wicked perversity.

Instead of the "blasphemy" of the Authorized Version, Alexander McLaren accepts the rendering of the Revised, "railing," as better. He says: "The word means, 'speech that injures,' and such speech may be directed either against God, which is blasphemy in the usual sense of the word, or against man. The hate blossoms into hurtful speech. The heated metal of anger is forged into poisoned arrows of the tongue."

"Then follows 'shameful speaking out of your mouth,' which is probably to be understood not so much of obscenities, which would more properly belong to the former catalogue, as of foul-mouthed abuse of the hated persons, that copiousness of vituperation and those volcanic explosions of mud, which are so natural to the angry Eastern."

An exhortation against lying completes the Apostle's list, and it is in the proper relation, for a failure to love others as we love ourselves must usually be the explanation of this fault. The injunction is to "Lie not one to another" -- a course that is obligatory since we are "members one of another." If my brother's interests are my interests, I must of necessity deal honestly with him.

It is not asking too much, as the association of the Apostle's ideas *here* indicates, to expect the Christian to give equal consideration to purity of word, with purity of life and conduct, however much more difficult the process may be. The writer once sat under the instruction of a teacher whose English was a model of purity. Her friends testified that her ability was the result of three years of painful, painstaking consideration of every word she spoke. She thought the goal worthy the effort. We might doubt the wisdom of her inflicting that three years on her friends, but no one will doubt the wisdom of equal or greater care in the weighing of our words that we speak nothing harmful to others or dishonoring to our glorious Head. - "Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear." - Eph. 4:29, R. V.

The principles stated in these verses are so elementary and obvious as to cause one to wonder why the Apostle has taken time to state them. His reason most probably is because we are prone to forget, and because we need to be assured that through grace the victory can be won. Though the victory be not manifest to all, if the striving is in heavenly strength and with faith in the covering of Christ's righteousness, the result will be acceptable to the One who is able to judge, and with authority.

"O sacred union with the Perfect Mind!
Transcendant bliss, which Thou alone canst give!
How blest are they this pearl of grace who find,

And, dead to earth, have learned in Thee to live!

"Thus, in Thine arms of love, O God, I lie;
Lost, and forever lost, to all but Thee!
My happy soul, since it hath learned to die,
Hath found new life in Thine infinity.

"O go, and learn this lesson of the Cross,
And tread the way which saints and prophets trod,
Who, counting life, and self, and all things loss,
Have found, in inward death, the life of God."

- P. E. Thomson.

Lessons from the Life of Joseph

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

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

AFTER THE burial of his father the story of Joseph is almost a blank. Only one incident is given. When Jacob was gone the brothers grew uneasy. They thought that their father's influence had restrained Joseph from seeking revenge upon them for their sin against him, and they feared now, when this restraint had been taken away, Joseph would visit punishment upon them. The memory of sin dies hard. It had been forty years since this wrong was committed, and for seventeen years the brothers had lived in the sunshine of Joseph's forgiveness, nourished by his love, without a word or an act to suggest aught of resentment; yet here we find the old dread still lingering. Guilt makes cowards of men. Sins against love plant thorns in the heart.

Joseph wept when he heard his brothers' words. It pained him to learn that they doubted his love and forgiveness. When you have been loyal and faithful to a friend, loving him unselfishly, making sacrifices for him, giving of your life's strength and skill to help him, putting honor upon him, it grieves you sorely to have him misunderstand you, suspect your sincerity and doubt your affection. Seventeen years of such generous love as Joseph had shown to his brothers in Egypt ought to have made it forever impossible that they should doubt or suspect his forgiveness. Do we ever treat our friends so? Do we ever treat Christ so? Do we ever doubt His forgiveness, or question His love for us whatever our experiences? Let us not grieve that gentle heart by even the faintest doubt of a love that is infinite in its constancy and tenderness.

Joseph was pained when he heard of the fears and distrust of his brothers, but his patience did not fail. "Fear not," he said to them, "for am I in the place of God? And as for you, ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now, therefore, fear ye not: I will nourish you and your little ones. This was his answer to their distrust.

The Apostle Paul prayed that our hearts might be enlarged. (2 Cor. 6:13.) It takes a large, a generous, heart to love on in spite of doubt, suspicion, and unwholesome discontent; but Joseph had a large heart. His generous love never failed. His answer was only a new assurance of affection undisturbed by their treatment; he would nourish them in the days to come as he had done in the past. He would share his honor with them. He would provide for them in the land

where they were strangers. He would care for their children. So he comforted them and spoke kindly unto them.

THE TESTINGS OF OLD AGE

After this incident Joseph lived fifty-four years, but nothing whatever is told us of these years. We can picture a ripe and beautiful old age, full of honors and full of usefulness.

We know that his life continued beautiful to its close. Sometimes old age does not fulfill the prophecy and the promise of the earlier years. Sometimes men who live nobly and richly until they have passed the meridian of their days, lose in the splendor of their character and the sweetness of their spirit as they move toward the sunset. A great many sermons are preached to the young. Youth has its perils, and needs constant warnings. But there is need also of wise words of counsel to those who are growing old. Old age has its perils and its temptations. It is difficult to bear the honors of a good and worthy life as they gather about the head when the years multiply, and not be spoiled by them. It is hard to keep the heart humble, and the life simple and gentle, when one stands amid the successes, the achievements, the fruits of one's life victories, in the days of a prosperous old age. Some old men grow vain in their self-consciousness. They become garrulous, especially about themselves and their own past.

The ease and freedom from care which come sometimes as the fitting reward of a life of hardship, toil and sacrifice, do not always prove the happiest conditions, nor those in which the character shows at its best. Some men who were splendid in incessant action,, when bearing great loads and meeting large responsibilities, and in enduring sore trials, are not nearly so noble when they have been compelled to lay down their burdens, drop their tasks and step out of the crowding, surging ranks into the quiet ways of those whose life work is mainly finished. They chafe in standing still. Their peace is broken in the very days when it should be calmest and sweetest. So in many respects old age puts life to a crucial test.

Then sometimes old age grows unhappy and discontented. We cannot wonder at this. It becomes lonely as one by one its sweet friendships and its close companionships fall off in the resistless desolation that death makes. Feebleness of health, too, comes in oftentimes as an element which adds to the difficulty of living beautifully when one is old.

These are some of the reasons why old age is probably just as severe a testing time of character as youth or midlife. The grace of God, however, is sufficient for the testings and trials of the old as well as of the young.. We should set ourselves the task of making the whole day of life to its last moments beautiful. The late afternoon should be as lovely with its deep blue and its holy quiet, as the forenoon with its freshness; and the sun setting as glorious with its splendor of amber and gold as the sunrising with its radiance and brightness. The old, or those growing old, should never feel for a moment that their work, even their best work, is done, when they can no longer march and keep step in the columns with youth and strong manhood. The work of the riper years is just as important as that of the earlier years. Young men for action, old men for counsel. The life that one may live in the quieter time, when the rush and the strife are left behind, may be even more lovely, more Christlike, more helpful than was the life of the more exciting, stirring time that is gone. Life ought' to grow more beautiful every day to its close. Let no one think lie has finished his task of sweet, true living when he has gotten safely through middle life into the borders of old age. No; we must not slacken our diligence, our earnestness, our fidelity, our prayerfulness, our faith in Christ, until we have come to the gate of eternity. God's plan for our life takes in all.

Age is a time for praying, hoping, and for reflecting to others something of the peace and love of the heaven we are nearing, and of the Christ we hope soon to see.

At last the time came for Joseph to die, as this time must come to all. "And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: but God will surely visit you, and bring you up out of this land unto the land which He share to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt."

Joseph was not buried at all in Egypt. His body was embalmed there, but not entombed. Egypt had long been his home. It had been the scene of all his honors and triumphs. His wife was an Egyptian; his friends were Egyptians. But he was still a loyal Israelite, and would not lie in an Egyptian grave. He would be buried in an Israelite grave.

But there are other thoughts: In the Epistle to the Hebrews when the faith of Joseph is spoken of, it is remarkable that it is this command concerning his bones that is mentioned. "By faith Joseph, when his end was nigh, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones." This showed his faith in God's promises concerning his people. His faith was so strong that he refused to be buried at all in Egypt; his burial must wait until his people went up out of Egypt to their own land.

Mark the difference in the dying requests of Jacob and Joseph. Jacob, too, refused to be buried in Egypt. He had spent seventeen happy years there, but he could not die until he had the pledge that he would be buried beside his kindred. Joseph's request was different. He was not to be buried in Egypt, yet his body was not to be carried to Canaan until his people should go there. He was so confident of their exodus that his mummy was not to be laid in the grave at all until they went back to the land of promise.

Doubtless Joseph felt that his body left among them unburied, waiting to be carried away to Canaan and buried there, would do more to keep hope alive in their breasts than if it lay at rest yonder in Hebron. Every time they saw it, they would remember why it was unburied, and their thoughts would turn toward their land of promise.

By and by things grew dark in Egypt. The dynasty of the Pharaohs who had been Joseph's friends gave way to a new dynasty who cared not for his memory and who were jealous of the growth of the Israelites. Bitter oppression followed. In those days of gloom, who knows how much the unburied body of Joseph, with its unspoken words of hope, helped to keep the people from despair?

Then one night there was great excitement in Goshen. The hour of departure had come. Here is the record: "And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you." Then followed forty years of marching and wandering, and during all this time the mummy of Joseph was in the column or in the camp.

At length there was a funeral one day at Shechem, and those bones, in their Egyptian mummy case, were laid to rest by Joshua. Here again is the record: "And the bones of Joseph . . . buried they in Shechem, in the parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor." When tourists visit the Holy Land, they are shown at Shechem a place purporting to be the tomb of Joseph. It is but a little way from the pit at Dothan into which his brothers cast him to die.

We may take two lessons from Joseph's dying words. One is a lesson of faith. "I die, and God will surely visit you." He would die, but the fulfilling of God's purposes would go on. Some one has said, "God buries His workmen, but carries on His work." We each have our little part to fulfill in the divine purposes; then we shall die, but the work will go on. God ever lives, and His plans and purposes halt not.

The other lesson is that we should so live that the memory of our life and its influence, when we are gone, shall inspire those who stay behind. The memory of the just is blessed. Joseph's faith, as expressed in his last words, manifested the future hope. In effect he still declared to them, This is not your home. You are but tarrying here as strangers and pilgrims. By and by you will go on.

Such should ever be the impression that our life makes and that our memory keeps alive in other hearts. We should so live that when we are gone every recollection of us shall make others think of heaven as home. We have not lived at our best if the memory of our life only makes our friends think of us. The true life must ever speak of things spiritual and eternal.

Let us then seek to be so filled with Christ that every influence of our life shall incite men upward, toward God, and onward, toward imperishable things.

The Choir Invisible

"Oh, may I join the choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence; live
In pulses stirred to generosity,
In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
For miserable aims that end with self,
In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,
And with their mild persistence urge men's search
To vaster issues. So to live is heaven:
To make undying music in the world,
Breathing a beauteous order that controls
With growing sway the growing life of man."

"God Meant It Unto Good"

Genesis 50:20

"God meant it unto good" -- O blest assurance,
Falling like sunshine all across life's way,
Touching with Heaven's gold earth's darkest storm clouds,
Bringing fresh peace and comfort day by day.

'Twas not by chance the hands of faithless brethren
Sold Joseph captive to a foreign land;
Nor was it chance which, after years of suffering,
Brought him before the monarch's throne to stand.

One Eye all-seeing saw the need of thousands
And planned to meet it through one lone soul;
And through the weary days of prison bondage
Was working towards the great and glorious goal.

As yet the end was hidden from the captive,
The iron entered even to his soul;
His eye could scan the present path of sorrow,
Not yet his gaze might rest upon the whole.

Faith failed not through those long, dark days of waiting,
His trust in God was recompensed at last,
The moment came when God led forth His servant
To succor many, all his sufferings past.

"It was not you but God, that sent me hither,"
Witnessed triumphant faith in after days;
"God meant it unto good," no "second causes"
Mingled their discord with his song of praise.

"God means it unto good" for thee, beloved,
The God of Joseph is the same today;
His love permits afflictions strange and bitter,
His hand is guiding through the unknown way.

Thy Lord, who sees the end from the beginning,
Hath purposes for thee of love untold.
Then place thy hand in His and follow fearless,
Till thou the riches of His grace behold.

There, when thou standest in the Home of Glory,
And all life's path lies open to thy gaze,
Thine eyes shall see the Hand which now thou trustest,
And magnify His love through endless days.

- *Freda Hanbury Allen.*

Another Course Finished with Joy

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only but unto all them also that love His appearing." - 2 Tim. 4:8.

Unusual vitality, in **spite** to of failing health in recent months, kept Brother Silas J. Arnold, active in physical and in spiritual duties until the end which came in the night of December 22, at his home near Dayton, Ohio, at the age of eighty-three. Physical sleep merged into the rest that waiteth for those whose trust is in the Lord.

Reared in the Dunkard faith, and as a very young man, a minister in that denomination, he soon came in contact with the earliest writings of Brother Russell and promptly saw that he was being guided of his Heavenly Father to the true understanding of His Plan of Salvation. His energetic preaching of these truths to his associates in this faith, however, bore no immediate fruit except for his life-companion and one sister in the flesh.

His zeal and ability soon came to the attention of Brother Russell, who was prompt to press him into the service of the truth -- the first to do any Pilgrim service, though it was later that this title was applied to that branch of the work. While the responsibilities of a home and family precluded the possibility of continuous activity along that line, he was never idle, but always active in the local Ecclesia. It was only in the closing months of his life that failing strength forced the slackening of his energetic cooperation in all the services of the local group. Formerly his guiding hand gave ready assistance to many Classes in several surrounding States. For many years he was prominent on the programs of a large percentage of the conventions in the Central States, and also at times engaged in Pilgrim service among the "free brethren." In the years 1928 to 1932 his services were appreciated as a member of the Editorial Committee of the "Herald."

A son and a daughter, both sympathetic with their father's views, and a number of spiritual sons and daughters are left to mourn their loss in his passing, and to rejoice in the confidence that he has fought a good fight, finished his course, and kept the faith. None who has heard him in recent years, or at any time, can doubt his full devotion to the Lord and his love for His appearing.

"Some day, some glad, sweet day
We shall be like our blessed Lord
And see Him as He is.
Soon we shall strain our
Weary eyes no more
To catch, beyond this earthly
House of fettering clay,
A gleam of heavenly glory
From His radiant face.

"Some day, some fair, sweet day
His loving hand will wipe
Away our tears. His tender
Voice will thrill our souls
With rapture, when we

Hear Him say, 'Well done,
Dear heart, well done,
My joy is thine; for thee
The victor's crown is won.

"Thou hast been faithful,
Thou hast borne the cross,
The thorns have pierced thy feet;
But now the Night is past
The Day hath come-bright,
Glorious Day of endless joy and love.
The trial time hath proved thee true,
And thou art safe, beloved, In thy Father's home.'

"O, glorious Day, for thee we long!
We will be faithful, will the
Burdens bear, sustained by grace divine.
In meek submission to Thy holy will,
Dear Lord, by faith we clasp
Thy hand As side by side we tread the Narrow Way
And wait-for it will surely come --
Some day, some dear, sweet day,
O, tarry not too long!"

Encouraging Messages

Dear Brethren:

Greetings in the Lord's name. I am writing to thank you for your kindness and brotherly love in sending me the "Herald" for the past year. You have sent me two copies per month, which I have received safely despite the submarines, and which I have passed on to interested Christians. If I am not asking too much, I could use three copies per month, for every one who has read them tell me they are pleased to get such help in the proper interpretation of God's Holy Word.

I am an aged pilgrim, now in my eightieth year, and praise God I have been in the Truth as it is in Christ Jesus for thirty years now. It was hearing Pastor Russell in April 1913 here at East Ham that was the means of my learning the full duty of a convert to consecrate land then go on to perfection, by walking daily in the light till the end, for only they that endure to the end will be saved. There is only one other brother in this district, and we meet as often as possible.

I thank God we do not suffer overmuch through this World War. Our food is good, but we get plenty of air raids, and have had just about twelve bombs in this district, though not many deaths -- seven, I think, is the number; so I feel the Father is caring for His own. One of these bombs fell in our garden, fifty feet from the bungalow, but my dear wife and I lost only one fingernail each by things falling on us in the house, which shows to me the Father's loving care. He preserved us. The bomb must have fallen on a very soft patch of earth and gone down so deeply that it had so much earth to lift, the blast could do no damage above the surface. It blew up twenty-one fruit trees, twenty-four small bushes, and of course a lot of flowers, leaving over one hundred tons of earth above grass level. So I think you will agree that it is a wonder we were preserved.

Farewell now, dear brethren. I hope this may, interest you, for it does show the Father cares. I pray God to bless you all abundantly for your love and kindness to the brethren, and that your work may prosper till we all need it no longer.

Yours in Christ Jesus,
S. W. N. -- Eng.

Beloved in the Lord:

Once more I esteem it a joy and privilege to greet you at this season of the year. I would like to say that the past year has been full of blessings, and prominent among them have been the monthly visits of the journal we love. We have eagerly devoured its contents, yea read and reread the precious messages that I am sure come from the Lord.

We are now looking forward to the new year with its privileges and opportunities, bearing in mind it is to us as well as to Abraham that God said, "I will bless thee and **thou** shalt be a blessing."

Amongst the glad services I feel I can render unto the Lord during the coming year is that of passing on the "Herald" to some of the Lord's dear sheep. I have forwarded to our London Office (B. S. C.) the sum of £1 for you to send me month by month four extra copies, and these I pray and trust will be as big a blessing to others and as helpful in fighting The good fight as they have been to me. Our prayers will continue to ascend to the Throne of Heavenly Grace for you, dear brethren, that our Heavenly Father will be your keeper (Psalm 121:5) and will feed and bless you that you may be channels of His grace to us.

Once again thanking you, and asking a share in your prayers for us, that we with you may ever be kept faithful, finding our greatest pleasure in serving and praising God's glorious name.

Yours in His great favor,
J. W. -- Eng.

Dear Brethren in Christ:

Warm greetings in the Lord.

We would thank you for your letter of October 25th with its enclosures, and would say that all matters therein have now received attention. As per enclosed account, you will see that your latest Order Sheet has also been dealt with. We are pleased to say that all Order Sheets have come to hand up to and including No. 33. . . .

As we now draw to the close of another eventful year, we would again assure you of our very warm love and of our prayers for you dear ones "over there" that grace and strength may be given you for the future days. We cannot say what lies in store for each of us who are sincerely walking this "narrow way"; we do not know and we would not know, for our trust is in our all-wise Father, and we'd "rather walk in the dark with God, than go alone in the light." All the indications are that the year upon which we are entering will be full of severe tests and trials; the whole world is in keen expectancy, and who knows just when the storm will break? However, we are not fearful; the Lord is our Refuge and Strength -- "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide [pass the night] under the shadow of the Almighty." What wondrous peace is ours, even though our hearts are filled with sadness as we note the agony of the world's travail. We know that these are but the "birth-pangs" of the new and better world which is to be under the Kingship of our Prince of Peace. Then will come the "desire of all nations" and the world will be at rest.

And what about us who are "in the world, yet not of it"? Our hearts are lifted- up because we see in all these things our own deliverance and the consummation of our glorious Hope. Just think of it-to be united with our glorious Lord for the wondrous purpose of sharing with Him that work so near to His heart, of bringing to His Father the redeemed world restored to full perfection and with hearts filled with love for Him and their fellow-men. What a prospect! Shall we not "hold fast to the end," enduring whatever transitory difficulties are permitted to fit us for our future service? If we are weak, then He is our strength and will give us grace and courage for each moment as it comes.

God bless you all "over there" is our prayer, and may we be accounted worthy to meet in the Grand Convention of the "First-horns."

I would just like to add a personal word of appreciation for the blessings received through the "Herald." Carry on the good work and may our Father guide you in all wisdom for the edification of His people.

With Christian love,
Your brother in Christ our Lord,
On behalf of Bible Students Committee
E. A. -- Eng.

Dear Ones in the Lord:

Just received the parcel containing the two years, 1941 and 1942, of the "Herald," and what can I say or do to show my gratitude to you and my Heavenly Father for the bountiful provision of food He is providing to two hungry souls such as my daughter and I are and have been for quite a few years past. When I opened that parcel, and scanned over some of the items (I say scanned, as I can only read a little at a time due to very poor eyes), a lump came in my throat, and I could not keep back the tears of joy and thanksgiving as I thought of the days to come when I could get in to my daughter's and together we would feast on the truths so dear to our hearts. I am reminded of the Savior's words, "Blessed is he who hungers and thirsts after righteousness, for he shall be filled." It took me back to the days when Brother Russell was with us. When our "Watch Tower" would arrive, at that time, I would leave everything and sit right down and feed to my heart's content. Can you wonder that I am thrilled to know now that I can have these precious truths brought to me while I am still able to grasp the deep things of God's Word? While I am quite dependent on others to care for me in temporal things, the Lord is now providing graciously for my spiritual sustenance. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

How I would love to tell all of my former brethren what blessings are in store for them if they would just taste and see these things so dear to us, in these few remaining years of our earthly pilgrimage.

Many, many thanks, and God bless and keep you, and give you the necessary strength to continue to feed His flock.

Yours in the One hope of our calling,
H. D. B. - Mass.