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## A Song Celebrating the King's Marriage

### A MEDITATION ON THE FORTY-FIFTH PSALM

*"My heart is inditing a good matter." - Psa. 45:1.*

THIS PSALM was undoubtedly composed to celebrate the marriage of a Jewish king with a royal bride, the bride being apparently of foreign birth. This was evidently its primary purpose and application. However, as we read and study it, we shall see that the Psalm is Messianic in character and that much of the language employed transcends the circumstances of any earthly monarch's marriage.

Psalm 45:1 reads:

"My heart is inditing a good matter; I speak of the things which I have made touching the King. My tongue is the pen of a ready writer."

Whoever it was that wrote this Psalm feels very strongly that his subject is great. He says his heart is "inditing" a good matter; the margin reads "bubbleth"; other translations read "boils," "overfloweth." Such is the condition of his heart. The word occurs only here according to the scholars.

Next he addresses the king about whose marriage the Psalm or poem is written. Verse two:

"Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into Thy lips; therefore God hath blessed Thee for ever."

First the King's beauty is mentioned; then his persuasive eloquence. An able commentator has remarked that it is more kingly for kings to win their subjects' hearts by gracious words than to rule them by brute force. Concerning Messiah, the true King, we read that men wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth (Luke 4:22) for never man spake like this Man. (John 7:46.) Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. (John 1:17.) To Him Jehovah gave the tongue

of the learned that He might know how to speak a word in season-that He might know how to sustain with words them that are weary. - Isa. 50:4.

The Psalmist continues, Psalm 45:3-7:

"Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O most Mighty,  
With Thy glory and Thy majesty.  
And in Thy majesty ride prosperously  
Because of truth and meekness and righteousness;  
And Thy right hand shall teach Thee terrible things.  
Thine arrows are sharp  
In the heart of the King's enemies;  
Whereby the people fall under Thee.  
Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever;  
The sceptre of Thy Kingdom is a right sceptre.  
Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness;  
Therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee  
With the oil of gladness above Thy fellows."

Yes -- King Messiah is not only fair to look at, and gracious of speech, but He is mighty in battle. However, He does not engage in war for the purposes usually underlying warfare-to acquire more territory, or commercial supremacy, or personal aggrandizement, or glittering renown, but in behalf of truth and meekness and righteousness. Truth and meekness and righteousness have been humiliated in His Kingdom and for *this* cause He takes His sword.

In connection with verses 6 and 7 (Psa. 45:6-7) we note the passage in Hebrews 1:8, 9:

"But unto the Son He saith: 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy Kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.'"

These words of the inspired New Testament writer settle forever the fact that this Psalm is Messianic in character for he quotes these verses as distinctly referring to the Son (our Lord Jesus). He is endeavoring to show the superiority of Christ to the angels, both in nature and in office. In proof of that superiority he quotes from a number of old Testament passages, among them being this very Psalm, as an evidence, which the Hebrews to whom he wrote would not dispute, of Christ's supremacy, and the righteous and endless character of His reign.

Turning again to the Psalm, verses 8 and 9 (Psa. 45:8-9), we see our King pictured once more, not now clad in armor but in marriage robes:

"All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. Out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made Thee glad.

"Kings' daughters were among Thy honorable women; upon Thy right hand did stand the Queen in gold of Ophir."

It is difficult to read this description of the King in this Psalm, as one possessing more than human grace and beauty, as a victorious warrior, as a righteous sovereign, as a bridegroom arrayed for His approaching marriage and surrounded by the praises of an exultant people, without recalling the vision recorded in the Book of Revelation, chapter 19, of one who is

declared to be the King of kings and Lord of lords, who is all, King and Warrior and Bridegroom. We quote verses Rev. 19:11, 15-16:

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war.

"And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nation's; and He shall rule them with a rod of iron; and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

"And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, *King of kings, and Lord of lords.*"

Rev. 19:1, 6-7:

"And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation and glory and honor and power, unto the Lord our God;

"And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready."

Returning now to the Psalm we find the poet turns from the King to address the Bride. Let us read the 10th, 11th and 12th verses:

"Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty; for He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him. And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favor."

For so kingly a bridegroom, as Messiah has been described in verses 2-8, where shall a fitting bride be found? Surely she, too, must be of exalted character and great spiritual loveliness, queenly in rank -- that is to say, the daughter of a king -- and queenly in the purity and excellency of her spirit.

Such is her description here, and the language employed by the Psalmist can be truly applicable only to the Church in glory.

He says her appearance is "all glorious," her clothing of "wrought gold" and that she is to be brought to the King "in raiment of needlework. In the Book of Revelation, chapter 19, verse 8 (Rev. 19:8), we read:

"And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."

Note also, in this connection, the words of Eph. 5:25-27:

"Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

In the Diaglott, the rendering of verse 27 is: "That He might place the Congregation [the Church] by His side, glorious." In other words, when Christ (the King) who is our Life, shall appear, then we also shall appear, with Him, in glory. - Col. 3:4.

After addressing the Queen in the words of Psa. 45:10, 11, and 12, the Psalmist apparently waits while all eyes turn in her direction. According to Rotherham, Psa. 45:13, 14 and 15 may be understood as being exclamations of admiration on her splendid appearance. She is seen within the palace, at her King -- Bridegroom's right hand, His Queen. And the first wondering exclamation on beholding her is "All-glorious!" Then, as the Divine Fatherhood of the Ecclesia is discovered, a second acclaim is heard: "Daughter of a king." We quote these three verses. from Rotherham's translation:

"All glorious! daughter of a king!  
Pearls in chequer work of gold her clothing!

On tapestry of divers colors is she conducted to the King; virgins in her train her companions are brought to her, with gladness and exulting are they conducted to her, brought into the King's palace to her."

Once more the Psalmist is the speaker, and ere the King finally disappears in His palace and the Queen is conducted to Him, followed by her companions, the Psalmist addresses both King and Queen, congratulating them and expressing hopes as to the issue of the marriage. These words appear in the last two verses of the Psalm, 16 and 17, (Psa. 45:16-17) and read as follows:

"Instead of Thy fathers shall be Thy children whom Thou mayest make princes in all the earth. I will make Thy name to be remembered in all generations; therefore shall the people praise Thee for ever and ever."

These last two verses have perplexed scholars for centuries. Many of them, not seeing the special salvation of the Church as distinct from that of the world, offer only confusing comments.

Some get a little nearer the truth, suggesting that the words appear to refer to a larger kingdom than Israel ever became.

Some have noted that the children mentioned are to be princes *in the earth*, which, since they believe all who do not go to hell will go to heaven, leaves them with a Scripture unexplained.

Rotherham sees much more clearly. Note his words: "The consummating crisis [the marriage of the Lamb] which lies between this Dispensation and the next will be fruitful in blessedness to the nations of the earth, in providing them with 'rulers' worthy and capable of sharing with the Messiah the honor and responsibility of reigning over all the earth in righteousness, and ruling it, in justice."

So also Guinness: "We cannot escape the conclusion that Scripture distinguishes between the future portion of the Church of Christ, that of the Jewish people, and that of the nations of the earth. Too many in their thoughts of the future leave out this last; the destiny of the Church of this dispensation figures so largely in their anticipations, that they seem almost to forget that 'the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world, and to lose sight of the blessed prospect that, not only is the present Church to be saved out of the ruined world, to become the Eve of the Second Adam, but that the ruined earth itself is yet to be renewed, and to become the happy home of saved nations, who participate in the results of redemption.

"The narrowness which sees nothing but the salvation of the Church of this dispensation," continues this writer, "is born of human selfishness, and not of Divine love; it is founded not on the teaching of Scripture, but on tradition and prejudice. The Bible ... plainly teaches that while the peculiar glories of

the Church are hers, and hers alone, that while the special privileges of the natural seed of Abraham belong to Israel, and to Israel only, there is yet a blessed future awaiting mankind also under the gracious government of *Immanuel*; that one of the effects of the completed work of Christ will be to place the saved nations of the eternal Kingdom in a restored paradise, completely delivered from the tempter, and so established in righteousness that the Holy One can take up His abode among them for ever. 'He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.'

"The salvation of the Church of this dispensation is not the whole result of the death of Christ. There is to be in addition the establishment for ever of a Kingdom of God, in which His will shall be as fully done by men on earth as it is now done by angels in heaven. The consummation, for which we daily pray, is destined to come at last; and holy and happy service, without a flaw and without an interruption, is yet to be rendered to God, not merely by the glorified saints of the New Jerusalem, but by redeemed nations on the earth, who walk for ever in the light of the celestial city."

These and other writers, then, saw clearly that Christ and His Church, the Second Adam and His Bride, were to be blessed with "children," some of whom they may make "princes in all the earth." But how are these children to be "instead of thy fathers"? Only in the writings of our late beloved pastor, Brother Russell, have we found any satisfactory answer to this riddle of the centuries. "The fathers," as he observes in his luminous exposition of this passage, *Scripture Studies* Vol. V, pages E142, E143, was the honored title applied to the patriarchs, prophets, and founders of the nation, and it was a title that would be especially applicable to such as were in the kingly line from which Messiah was to come. But these "fathers" of the nation had no *life* in the true sense of that word; they were all members of the death-condemned race. "And when Jesus took hold upon our humanity, and became identified with the seed of Abraham and of David, and accomplished the work of redemption, it applied not only to the world in general, (as Guinness has so ably presented in the previous paragraph) "but as well to these, His progenitors according to the flesh. . . . Hence, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David and all the Prophets, and all the remainder of the world, must receive future and everlasting life from Christ, or not at all." He will be the "Everlasting Father" and together with His glorified Church will accomplish the world's regeneration, the regeneration of "the fathers" included. These "fathers" will thus become the "children." With what' intense delight will Christ and His Church establish them as "princes in all the earth"!

"Our lamps are trimmed and burning,  
Our robes are white and clean.  
We've tarried for the Bridegroom,  
And now we'll enter in.  
We know we've nothing worthy  
That we can call our own  
The light, the oil, the robes we wear,  
Are all from Him alone.

"We see the marriage splendor,  
Within the open door,  
We know that those who enter  
Are blest forevermore;  
We see our King more lovely  
Than all the sons of men;  
We haste because that door, once shut,  
Will never ope again.

"Behold, behold, the Bridegroom,

And all may enter in,  
Whose lamps are trimmed and burning,  
Whose robes are white and clean."  
*- P. L. Read.*

## **The Still Small Voice**

*"And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. And He said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice." - 1 Kings 19:10-12.*

THESE THINGS are recorded of Elijah, the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, who was one of the grandest and most romantic characters produced by the nation of Israel in all its history. Little is known of his family or personal life, but the few facts spoken' of him give us an idea of his character and peculiarities. He was strikingly Bedouin, as indicated by his sudden appearances, first before the king to denounce his wickedness and to predict punishment, or to demonstrate the power of God in some startling manner-probably a wanderer, familiar with the deserts and with the mountain passes, which enabled him to elude his pursuers when they desired to take his life. He was simple of habit in food and raiment, with long, thick, black hair hanging down his back, with a skin for a garment around which he wore a leather belt, which he was in the habit of tightening when about to make some movement of importance; occasionally wearing the sheepskin mantle, which has given us one of our most familiar figures of speech. It was this which fell from his shoulders when separated from Elisha by the chariot of fire in that last spectacular occurrence of his life, as given by the historian.

### **THE PROPHET OF FIRE**

Elijah's function in the life of Israel seems to have been of this spectacular kind. His name as well as the events of his life, as given in the Book of Kings, speaks of his high ideals and aims. Eli, the Israelitish form of God, or mighty one, and Jah, the Hebrew word for Jehovah, indicate, My God is Jehovah or Jehovah my God. We find our Savior using the word when He cried upon the cross, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Well may this man have been chosen to represent the Christian Church of this Age. As he was buffeted, pursued, and persecuted by his enemies in power, so has the true Church of Christ had the same experiences as recorded in secular history and prophesied by these ancient Prophets of God of the Hebrew nation and by "the Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto Him to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass."

Elijah, "the Prophet of fire," as he has been called, was an emotional man, and like all such was at times highly elated, as evidenced by his experiences upon Mount Carmel, and equally depressed, as we find him in the sacred record quoted above. Jealous for the Lord God of hosts, and knowing how Israel, gone after Baal, had rejected God, he constantly expected by some wonderful manifestation that they would again turn to the God who had led them out of Egypt, so miraculously provided for them during their sojourn in the wilderness, given them wise judges for a period of four and a half centuries, and permitted kings to rule over them up to this time.

## **HOREB THE PLACE OF GOD'S PRESENCE**

Being greatly disappointed at their failure to repent after witnessing God's power on the priests of Baal, and threatened by Jezebel, he fled to Horeb in despair, to the place where God had shown His power on those former occasions, when He had called Moses up into the Mount, given him the Law, and before which he had gathered the nation to receive this Law. It was here that Moses gathered the two millions of his people to meet with God, "and they stood at the nether part of the Mount. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it with fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." It was here too that Moses saw the burning bush, and heard the voice of God as He called him to his mission of delivering his people.

A fitting place this was for Elijah in his hour of discouragement, for he also was to see the manifestation of God's power in the disturbance of the elements of nature. "No other spot on earth was more closely associated with the manifested presence of God," and by nature better fitted for this purpose. Majestic peaks, surrounding a barren desert valley, made a vast natural amphitheatre upon which Elijah might look-a picture of desolation and loneliness in keeping with his own heart at this time. Travelers tell us "it is one of the most silent places in the world and as hidden as it is silent." It is into the silent places we must go at times to commune with God, to appreciate His greatness, to regain our assurance that God in His own way and in His due time will bring to pass the things He has determined concerning man. It was this lesson that Elijah was now to learn.

## **OUT OF WEAKNESS MADE STRONG**

There is something about this experience of this man of God that strikes a sympathetic chord in the heart of most of us. We, like him, have at times suffered defeat. We have had perhaps our Carmel experience, when we have boldly stood for the Truth against wrong, when we have beaten the enemy in the field of our own heart, overcome some temptation, or done some other thing which we knew pleased God. As a result we felt the joy of triumph, when we could truly say, God has been with us.

Peter's weakness and Paul's wretchedness indicate that they too held this treasure in earthen vessels. And Elijah's discouragements, with his subsequent triumphs, teach us that God can use us for His high purpose, but we must humble ourselves under His hand and conform to His will-consecrate ourselves, make a covenant by sacrifice with Him. -Had these and other men of God passed their lives without such defeats, they would have been no inspiration to us; they would have seemed to have no kinship with the sons of grief. Each seems to have emerged from his defeat stronger and better fitted for the work which God had for him to do. Out of David's fall came the 51st Psalm-that beautiful prayer which has been the consolation of many of God's people. Out of Peter's weakness and Paul's wretchedness came a new and strong determination to serve God more faithfully and zealously, which faith and zeal led them to a martyr's death.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation." "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." These and similar pleas have restored to us that peace of mind and strength of character which has evidenced our growth in grace. Only in our weakness can we be strong -- strong in the strength of Christ, strong only so far as the mind of God, His Holy Spirit, rules our lives. We are too prone to exaggerate our own importance in the portion of the work God permits us to do. And sometimes like Elijah we look too much upon externals, too much upon the outer edge of things, too little upon the center. We have lost our way. We have in fact lost God, and this is the condition in which we now find the Prophet.



## **HOW GOD SPOKE TO ELIJAH**

Now let us consider how God revealed Himself to Elijah, how He brought him back to a true perspective, how He lifted him up from this slough of despond and placed him again upon the solid foundation of faith in His ability to accomplish His work in His own way and permit him a share in that work. The narrative tells us first what God was not in -- "A great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire."

Here were three powerful forces of nature operating before Elijah, for the Lord had said unto him, "Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by." But Elijah did not find Him in any of the three. As he stood, a fierce storm broke over the mountain, a tempestuous outburst rolled up from the sea, "a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord." We can picture Elijah standing probably at the entrance to the cave as this tropical storm broke with all its horrors and fury, rending rocks into fragments and casting them down into the plain below--a scene of disorder which can be caused only by one of these sudden furious outbreaks of the tropics coming often with little warning and destroying everything in its pathway. As we look, we can imagine that all this wild turbulence and confusion appealed to him. It was kindred to his own mind, particularly at this time of discouragement. There are times when such scenes as this appeal to us, when we may liken this manifestation of God to our own wild thoughts and fancies, when we may see in them a kinship to ourselves. Possibly some such thought came to the Prophet as he watched the progress of the winds in their destruction. Was the spirit of God akin to his own? "But the Lord was not in the wind." He was not speaking to Elijah in the winds. It was only a manifestation of His power.

### **NOT IN THE GREAT WIND, EARTHQUAKE OR THE FIRE**

"And after the wind an earthquake." Again we can imagine the mighty upheaval as it appeared to the Prophet--mountains rent asunder; great chasms and fissures where before there had been solid rock; the whole mountain rocking and shaking with violence, for "Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel." As the Prophet looked, he asked, Will God show Himself in, this mighty convulsion of nature? Will He cast down the temples of Baal and destroy its priesthood? Will He thus show to the people of Israel His displeasure at their conduct? Will He thus turn them again to Himself? This is what Elijah would have done, but he finds again only a reflection of his own turbulent mind. For "the Lord was not in the earthquake."

"And after the earthquake a fire." We see those towering granite peaks suddenly lit up by the lightning of the rapidly advancing storm. As they reflected the light, so continuous was its play and so fierce that the heavens and the earth seemed literally ablaze with the fire of God's fury, of His glory. Surely now God was going to manifest Himself, to speak some approval of the Prophet's conduct. His turbulent mind--pictured some such agency as this -- a fitting one to destroy the enemies of Israel, her seducers, the priesthood of Baal. "But the Lord was not in the fire."

How strikingly God could have used His fire to rid His people of the influence of Jezebel,, and the wicked. court of the weak and cowardly Ahab. God has used the spectacular to speak with men, and He might have spoken to Elijah as He spoke to Job out of the tempest, and as He spoke to Moses and the people of Israel on this very spot some centuries before, when He displayed His presence, fire and smoke as of a furnace, and when the whole mount quaked greatly. God

evidently desired to show the Prophet and His people of a later Age that the greatest revelations are to be received in the quiet and peaceful atmosphere, by the more common and familiar way. It was the simple things about Him which inspired all of our Master's parables and illustrations.

### **OUR FEELING OF SAFETY WITH GOD**

We must take God with us under any circumstances, should we seek for help or benefit from the manifestations of nature. David drew his strength from the hills because in them he saw God. We must divest ourselves of all materialism, if we would be helped by communion with nature. It makes a difference whether we take God with us when we look upon the hills or the sea, into the stars of the heavens, or into the microscopic world, etc. These without God are incomprehensible; with God we have a feeling of safety and security-another means of establishing our faith.

When we can look into the works of God and consider their might and remember we are taught to call Him Father, remember we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, then have we the unspeakable privilege of rejoicing in that relationship. Then can we say with the Psalmist, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endureth forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; and gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south. " - Psa. 107:1-3.

The poet has recognized that nature without God is not satisfying:

"With kindlier mien, one said, 'Go forth unto the fields,  
For there, and in the woods, are balms that Nature freely yields:  
Let Nature take thee to her heart! She hath a bounteous breast,  
That yearns o'er all her sorrowing sons, and she will give thee rest.'

"But nature on the spirit-sick as on the spirit-free  
Smiled, like a fair unloving face, too bright for sympathy;  
Sweet, ever sweet, are whispering leaves, are waters in their flow,  
But never on them breathed a tone to comfort human woe!

"Small solace for the deer that hath the arrow in its side,  
And only seeks the woods to die, that o'er his dappled hide  
Spread purple blooms of bedded heath, and ferny branchings tall,  
A deadly hurt must have strong cure, or it hath none at all.

"And the old warfare from within that had gone on so long,  
The wasting of the inner strife, the sting of outward wrong,  
Went with me o'er the breezy hill, went with me up the glade,  
I found not God among the trees, and yet I was afraid!

"I mused and fire that smouldered long within my breast brake free;  
I said, 'O God, Thy works are good, and yet they are not Thee;  
Still greater to the sense is that which breathes through every part,  
Still sweeter to the heart than all is He who made the heart!

"I will seek Thee, not Thine, O Lord! for (now I mind me) still  
Thou sendest us for soothing not to fountain, nor to hill;  
Yet is there comfort in the fields if we walk in them with Thee,  
Who saidest, "Come, ye burdened ones, ye weary, unto Me."

"Yet is there comfort, not in, pride that spends its strength in vain,  
But in casting all our care on Thee, on Thee who wilt sustain;  
Not in dull patience, saying, "This I bear, for it must be,"  
But in knowing that howe'er grief comes, it comes to us from Thee!

"Thou Lord! who teachest how to pray, oh, teach us *how* to grieve!  
For Thou hast learned the task we find so hard, yet may not leave;  
For Thou hast grown acquaint with grief-*Thou knowest what we feel,*  
Thou smitest and Thou bindest up, we look to Thee to heal!"

### **THE RESTLESSNESS OF MAN AND THE CALMNESS OF GOD**

Elijah was born of Gilead and retained his Bedouin characteristics throughout his life, as seen in his restlessness, his enjoyment of the turbulent and fiery. We can imagine his enjoyment of the scene at Carmel and hear his ironic remarks to the Priests of Baal, "Cry aloud: for he is a god, either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awakened." Impetuous and headstrong, intense and earnest, he could confront the whole college of idolatrous Priests of Baal, put them to rout, and enjoy it. Then in confident faith he could turn with the same earnestness to the rebuilding of the altar of the Lord which had been broken down, never doubting God's ability and desire to manifest Himself in a miraculous way at this time. In the unusual and spectacular he was happy. He saw here a counterpart of his own fiery nature. He could quickly see the working of God in a national catastrophe, but he was slow to see God in the humbler, quieter things.

This seems to be the lesson the Prophet was to learn this day on Sinai. His counterpart, John the Baptist, was much the same type of man from the recorded events of his life. Languishing in prison, he thought the Savior slow to manifest Himself, and he became impatient and even doubtful if it really were He who should redeem Israel. So he sent his disciples to ask if He really were the Christ. These two Prophets well typify the Church of this Age, constantly expecting God's Plan to develop more rapidly, and willing to hasten the coming of the Kingdom by plans of their own. These men both served their mission of warning their nation of the needed reforms.

Savonarola was of this type and preached that only through a storm of vengeance would the Church and clergy of the fifteenth century be rescued from licentiousness and abuse to a higher spirituality. When the Reformation came, it came in God's way and without such demonstration. Luther's tempestuous nature needed the slower and saner mind of a Melancthon. St. Peter's impetuosity was tempered by the quieter nature of John. To all of these God's way seemed slow. So it has been within our own midst. Some have not been content with the way of God. Not content with the assurance that if it seem to tarry, it will not tarry, they rush about with doctrines, explanations and the wild application of types which serve only to confuse many others who may not have reached the stature of a man in Jesus Christ. Much ado is made about nothing, in many cases forgetting that where the Spirit of Christ is, there is liberty and there alone.

### **IN SILENT SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP**

Let us remember then that God does not manifest Himself to us finally and most fully in the forces of nature. Among the savages in ages gone we find the worship of the forces of nature, and more recently we find the scientists falsely claiming that the forces of nature are the ultimate source of all things. Both are similarly wrong, for the Lord is not in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire. These are merely the fringe of His mantle, the shadow of His glory. God is a spirit and

communes with His people only in the spirit; in silent, spiritual fellowship, through the Holy Spirit only, do we find strength.

Men look upon the wonders of nature, the hills, the sea, the falls, the rapids, the heavens, and turn and forget God in the pursuit of some earthly bubble. It is doubtful if any ever heard the call to God through the voice of nature. Else would we find the most godly in proximity to His greatest wonders. Men live their lives and die in such closeness to nature and never come to know Him, for He is not in these things, but is in the still small voice.

Earthly passions may be fanned by the wind of religious zeal, but the results are not always satisfying. Some are inspired by a form of godliness without the substance thereof, and no matter how close a tare may resemble a grain of wheat, it is only a tare and as such must be destroyed. Trouble may sweep down upon the soul of man and rend him as the rocks of Sinai were rent, but whether it speaks to him depends upon his relationship with God before it came. As a rule man does not come to God through the voice of the earthquake, though he may profit by it if he has already come into fellowship with Him. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, not the fear of other things.

God was in the burning bush and in the tongues of fire at Pentecost, but He was not in the fire that flashed around the Prophet at Horeb. The fire of religious passion, when misdirected, has caused more heartaches, enmities, and even wars, than any other one thing in all the world. The intolerance and prejudice existing in the religious world, and especially in the so-called Christian world today, is doing much to perpetuate the restlessness and confusion, the doubt and despair, the uncertainty, amid which men live, and because of these the love of many grows cold, and men's hearts are failing them because of fear for the things which are coming to pass. Surely the Lord is not in the fire of prejudice.

### **MEN GO THEIR WAYS AND FORGET**

In the modern religious movements men are too prone to be moved by excitement and emotions, and without duly considering the will of the Lord rush into some dramatic or spectacular movement which does not glorify Him or meet with His approval. Many think their standing depends upon their zeal for work, so we find them engaged in building up organizations and thus surrendering their liberties and restricting their opportunities for growth, but happy in the false idea that they are doing the Lord's work. Not that the Christian should not bear witness whenever and wherever possible-instant in season and out of season, but development as new creatures should have first place in our hearts.

Human organization in the Church during all the ages has fostered prejudice, hatred, and intolerance. The much more at this period in the history of Christianity should the Church see that these organizations have been rejected and cast off by God, thus indicating the nearness of the close of the present Age and the ushering in of the next-the Millennial Age. Nominal Christianity is making a great stir, using the winds, the earthquake, and the fire, but deaf to the still small voice of God. The presence of the great Enemy is constantly with us, but men go their ways and forget. A great catastrophe comes upon the nation, or the world, and many think in their worldly wisdom, surely men will hear the voice of God in the wind or the earthquake or the fire. But we find that the Lord is not in them. These violent disturbances in nature or in the souls of men may however soften the soil, harrow the ground, and prepare man for the reception of the voice of God. We should not despise these agencies, for they may open the way. The most powerful sermon, the most sublime scenery, the contemplation of the power of God in the heavens or

through the microscope can never regenerate a man, but it may bring him to see his own insignificance and humble him that he may hear the still small voice.

### **HOW GOD HAS SPOKEN TO SOME IN THE PAST**

This was the case in Israel at the time of which the historian writes. God had shown His mighty power in the consumption of the sacrifices placed upon His altars under the most trying of tests, after the failure of the god Baal to vindicate himself. This and other demonstrations might have softened the hearts of Israel and prepared them to hear the voice of God and turn aside from their whoredoms and idolatries, but the man of the hour had fled discouraged and utterly routed because the miraculous, the stupendous, had failed to turn their minds. He had overlooked and failed to grasp the great opportunity to go forth among the people in the might and power of the Lord and persuade them through the still small voice.

It was thus that God dealt with the people of Israel in the early days of their wandering in this very mountain to which Elijah had fled. He first aroused, their feelings of awe, as He manifested Himself in the elements of nature, and then He gave them the Law. In this favorable frame of mind thus created, they promised that all that He commanded them they would do. That they failed to keep the Law is another question.

It was thus that God spoke to Job. Provoked by the advice of his false comforters, he spoke with his lips and was ready to justify himself, when suddenly amid the lightning and thundering -of the tempest which came upon them, he heard Jehovah speaking to him out of the whirlwind, reproving him, "Then Job answered the Lord, and said, Behold, I am vile; What shall I answer Thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth." And he heard the still small voice and was comforted. So He dealt with Isaiah; and so He dealt with Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus, when the glory of the Lord shone around him and he heard the voice of the Lord, the still small voice, speaking after he had been awed and humbled by the glory of the Lord.

Thus God had prepared the land of Israel-the prophets of Baal had been confounded and then destroyed, and the land had been grievously afflicted and then delivered. Surely their minds were ready to hear the still small voice, but the agent for the purpose had fled in a spirit of despair and defeat.

### **TIMES WHEN WE NEED THE REBUKE OF THE WINDS**

We experience these things in our own lives. There are times when we need the rebuke of the winds, the terror of the earthquake, the refining influence of the fire, that our minds may be cleansed of the errors and delusions of the day. False doctrines may easily gain a hold on our lives unless we are kept steadfastly in touch with the Master, and through the Holy Spirit in harmony with God. There is much -today circulating in our midst, setting forth the doctrines and ideas of men, that we may be more or less easily misled-strong delusions which would deceive if possible the very elect. Our sheet anchor is the Word of God and the line is earnest communication with Him by prayer -- sincere, deep, honest prayer, seeking His leading by the study of, His Word and by developing the fruits of the Spirit.

"Blessed is the Christian who when the fury of the storm is past recognizes the voice of God in its wake and bares his head and bows his knee as Elijah did." It seems necessary in the discipline of some of the 'Lord's people that He show Himself in the desolation of the storm to recall to them that they are wandering a little away. We all need the disciplining, the polishing, the chiseling, the

pruning. How painful it sometimes seems, but how it does show the love of God for us, and in looking back we can praise the way in which He has led us day by day.

How much more pleasing to Him we may be by so living that the chastenings may be few and of a less violent form. Again this can be done only by putting aside the things of the flesh, and following after the things of the Spirit. Only are we God's, if we are led by the Spirit of God. And only can we be led by His Spirit, if we live close to Him, striving by His help to be filled with His mind. This requires determination and strength of character. And thus we grow in stature, one victory with Him helping on to others.

"'Tis not the whirlwind, o'er our fair fields sweeping  
That speaks God's present wrath,  
This is but nature's course, for all men keeping  
One indiscriminate path.

"Nor yet the earthquake, firm foundations shaking  
Of houses long since built;  
This is but fortune's chance, its havoc making  
Without affixing guilt.

"Nor yet the fire, whate'er is near confounding  
In blind remorseless flame;  
This is but man's fierce ire, which all surrounding  
Treats good or bad the same.

"It is the still small voice within which speaketh,  
When guilt's fierce gust is done,  
That tells the doom God's righteous anger wreaketh  
Yet tells that he may shun.

"O gentle Lord, who like a friend reprovest,  
Tender, not less than true,  
Thou our hard hearts by whispered warnings movest,  
Their erring ways to rue.

"Thou whose pure eye like lightning might consume him  
On man with pity lookest;  
Thou who to fire, storm, earthquake well might'st doom him  
With still small voice rebuk'st."

- S. D. Bennett, M.D.

*Continued in next issue*

## The Letter to the Colossians

*"And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.... Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.... Whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." - Col. 3:15-17.*

THREE PHRASES are the keys and inspiration of the verses under consideration: "The *peace* of Christ," "the *word* of Christ," "the *name* of the Lord Jesus." The first sentence could as well have been considered in connection with the previous discussion, for it is as much related to the one as to the other. But since it is not a portion of the metaphor with which the previous passage closed, it seems more appropriate in connection with the present discussion. This sentence has to do intimately with the personal life of the Christian; the second with our fellowship, teaching, and admonishing each other. The last sentence deals in the broadest of generalities, covering the "whatsoever" of Christian activities.

Rather than interrupt our discussion later for its consideration, we note here that the Apostle is not in harmony with using Jesus' name and His title, Christ, as applicable to Him at different periods of His life. This passage uses the two forms with evident reference to Him without the thought of any such distinction.

Some manuscripts read, "the peace of Christ," and others, "the peace of God." The former is approved by such authorities as the Revised Versions, Diaglott, Rotherham, etc. Either rendering is quite acceptable. It is logical, however, that the Apostle should write regarding the peace of Christ since Christ's closing legacy to His Church was, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you," and since the peace of God is the peace of Christ. (John 14:27; Mark 9:50; Rom. 5:1; 8:6; Gal. 5:22; Psa. 119:165; Prov. 3:17; Isa. 26:13; Phil. 4:7.) Paul was a good student of the Lord's words and could not overlook so precious and so startling a legacy as this one -- startling because given at a time utterly out of harmony with the spirit of the words, judged from a natural viewpoint.

From the spiritual viewpoint there was nothing more logical than that under the shadow of the cross on which He was to secure the purchase price of redemption for the world, He should assure this little band to whom the secrets of the Lord were being made known, that they were to have a prior claim upon the peace He was securing for the universe. Like their Master, who in that very hour was "troubled in spirit," dark shadows would fall athwart their pathway beset by many foes, endangered by numberless pitfalls, yet they too could always have with them that peace to rule in their hearts. According to the American Version this peace would "arbitrate in their hearts"; according to Rotherham, "act as umpire."

The English language, we believe, stands alone, in having an apostrophe "s" to show possession. Other languages use what is literally rendered into the English as "of." "The peace of Christ" or "the peace of God," means the peace which is the possession of the Father and the Son. The phrase, "My peace," therefore carries the same thought, though doubtless used here to add greater emphasis and to make the promise a more personal one, as well as to contrast His perfect peace with the lesser degree the Apostles already enjoyed. During the years the disciples walked with Jesus in the flesh, their peace came from contact with Him, and from their confidence in Him that their physical necessities would be supplied, as their Master, if necessary, could miraculously multiply loaves and fishes to satisfy their hunger, and use a living fish to bring a coin to pay their taxes. But beyond this was the peace that came from their hope that He would "redeem Israel." All the peace that natural things could give was theirs. But they must wait, until the day of

Pentecost to experience the joy that He promised in the phrase, "My peace I give unto you." Then they learned something of what *His* peace had actually been, the peace of sonship, the peace of full submission to the infinite power and wisdom of their Heavenly Father.

### **PEACE A POSSESSION OF THE INNER MAN**

Our Lord's legacy and the Apostle's exhortation give no thought of a life protected against all enemy threats or even invasion. The Apostle does offer the consolation that in every dispute in this sanctified territory, all that is out of harmony with the peace of God will eventually be ruled out. He who spoke peace to the troubled waves of Galilee assures calmness to every heart fully submitted to Him. His promise is not that there shall be no storms, but that the "prince of the power of the air" shall not prevail to do harm to any of His beloved ones. (John 16:33.) Without the storms we would never know His power or love, nor ever learn what it means to trust.

Where the peace of God -rules in the heart of every individual in a Christian communion, no Satanic power can stir up discord. (Psa. 29:11; Rom. 14:17.) Six thousand years of endeavor on Satan's part has not yet disturbed God's peace. Where that peace rules, there is no power that can prevail against it. The peace that was bequeathed to us is a peace of submission to a power "greater than all that can be against us." There must have been experienced first, of course, the peace of reconciliation through our forsaking of sin, and recognition and acceptance of the full atonement made for us. Then the great Accuser can bring no charge against God's elect who from sin's condemnation have passed into the realm of divine love.

For the Christian there is often the strange anomaly of a peace temporarily disturbed because of his eagerness for a quick establishment of complete and eternal peace.. Our restless wills are usually long in arriving at that condition where our immersion into His will is so complete, that we are eager to have not only His will, His peace, but are perfectly willing to abide His time for the installing of its undisputed reign. Not one point was left out of Christ's submission to the Father's will, therefore His peace was complete-it was beyond -the reach of any disturbing influence.

His willingness to suffer ignominy and death for the deliverance of the human race demonstrated the eagerness of His desire to give them the blessings of life and all that attends it. What a contrast there is between His peace and our impatience! Even we who live apparently at the threshold of the new day, find it difficult to be patient during a few years of warfare and bloodshed. Perhaps the explanation is that we are seeing the suffering more clearly than the certainties and the glories of a resurrection for the groaning creation under the dominion of righteous judges. Or perhaps we have not learned how inferior our wisdom is to the perfect Mind that has planned and is accomplishing every feature of a flawless plan for the entire universe, as well as for each of us personally.

How then shall we carry out this exhortation of -the Apostle to "*let* the peace of God reign"? As it is to "reign in our hearts," there is only one way-to ruthlessly uproot everything else that is in our hearts and give Christ full, possession. If we are to be "strengthened with power" sufficient to ward off every adversary of our souls, natural and spiritual, in order that we may have this peace, it will be through the undisputed reign of "His Spirit in the inward man." That means Christ "dwelling in our hearts by faith" - submitting every smallest detail of that life to Him for His direction and overruling. (Eph. 3:16, 17; John 14:20; 17:23; Rom. 8:10; Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27; 1 John 3:24; Rev. 3:20.) There is no reason to suppose that Jesus was exaggerating when He said the Father took note of even a falling hair. We are therefore slighting Him when we take under our own direction the smallest detail.



The reigning, arbitrating peace not-only rules out all illegal contestants for our hearts and awards the final prizes, but throughout the contest permits no violation of the rules. It is hardly possible that under this arrangement even our physical organisms should fail to feel the benefit of so wise an arrangement. If this end is not being attained, the explanation should be sought and a means of correction discovered. Whatever ruffles the surface of our sea of Galilee so that the face of Jesus cannot be seen, must be avoided. One who has for a season enjoyed the peace here recommended, will instinctively shrink from anything that would even slightly disturb it. All the treasures of earth would not be sufficient inducement to cause us to sacrifice the peace that a Christian through experience has learned to rightly appraise.

This peace is a mutual possession, not the treasure of a few isolated Christians, those that have lived in monasteries, etc. It is a thing "*to which we were called* in one body." (Eph. 1:23; 4:4-6, 12; Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 27; Col. 1:24; 2:19.) The rendering of Young's literal translation of the next phrase, "become thankful," infers that those who have not the peace of Christ have no basis for knowing true gratitude; and also that those who experience a measure of it must be on guard against the sin of ingratitude.

Jew and Gentile have been knit in the one body, not to -continue the old warfare, but to enter upon a mutual possession of peace, such peace as attended Him who went to the cross rather than sacrifice it. Since the Apostle's day the situation has changed in the Church. The test is no longer as to whether peace will reign between Jew and Gentile. Today's corresponding one is no less searching. It is as to whether we are rejoicing that He has "set" the members in the *Body as it hath pleased Him, "all by the same Spirit."* - 1 Cor. 12:4-6, 18.

### **THE INDWELLING WORD OF CHRIST**

In the American Revision the sixteenth verse reads: "Let the ' word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God." This associates the wisdom with the teaching through psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

When appropriating the word of Christ by feasting as largely as possible upon the precious words of the Gospels, we must never forget Christ's assurance that when He left His disciples, there were still many things He would like to tell them. The only source available to us for learning these additional things is the Spirit-inspired utterances of His servants.

The phrase, "the word of Christ," may, according to the Greek, have the force of, "the word concerning Christ." With this thought the exhortation sends us to His Word, not only to read the words which Jesus actually spoke and later inspired His disciples to speak, but to consider all that relates to Him. Our Bible study under the guidance of this exhortation will not cease with the New Testament, but under Jesus' own instructions we will turn to the Old for whatsoever is written concerning Him "in the Law and in the Prophets and in the Psalms." Additionally, every word given by inspiration during the first four thousand years may be accepted as the Word of Christ, not only because of His harmony with it, but because of His cooperation in its delivery to man. This is all a wonderfully interesting treasury of the very finest of literature. To the Christian, however, it has a vastly greater appeal than to the one who approaches it merely from a literary standpoint. To the Christian it is received as the peace of God is, that it may reign in his heart. It is thus manifest in his contacts with his brethren, even to the extent that in his selection of hymns in their assemblies, he will be influenced by their spiritual needs, requesting a certain selection not merely because either the words or the tune are a favorite with him, but primarily because he

finds in those words teachings which he believes will be at that moment especially valuable to his brethren and to himself.

### **OUR RESPONSIBILITY**

In one respect "the Word of Christ" is like other words -- the question as to whether or not it shall *dwell in the heart* is the responsibility of each individual. An effort, and for most of us a great effort, must be made to establish it permanently in our memories. In our school days we were not supposed to have mastered a subject because we had gone over each item once. Instead, there was the home study, the recitations in class by ourselves and others, a review of that subject a few days later, another review and examination at the end of the term, and at the end of the year a final examination covering the whole matter. These many reviews finally established a few points in our minds. One of the old Greek philosophers, with a brain better than any of ours, said that he never knew anything until he had forgotten it six times, meaning that the process of frequent reviews was what gave permanence to his mental impressions. In dealing with the Word of Christ we are handling treasure so vastly superior to any of the truths and supposed truths that philosopher labored so hard to make his own, there can hardly be imagined any endeavor too strenuous for us to make. To this end the daily reading of four chapters that the Bible may be read through once a year, suggested in our issue of August 1942, is to be highly recommended. Some have found it profitable to memorize whole chapters and entire books of the Bible, finding in so doing each word emphasizing and adding to its depth of meaning. These things will assist considerably in the process of making the Scriptures our own. But to them, study and meditation must be added if the Word of God is to "dwell in us richly." When these processes have accomplished their purposes, because of the very nature of our hearts and minds, we will be "in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." This will give balance to the character, no phase of the Christian life crowding out any other, but all leading to that love and zeal that overflows in service for our brethren and for all men as we have opportunity. - Gal. 6:10.

Young's literal comment would make the passage read: "Let the doctrine of Christ dwell inwardly in you, richly in every (kind of) wisdom, teaching and admonishing yourselves in (or with) psalms (accompanied with musical instruments), and hymns, and spiritual odes, in joy odeing in your hearts to the Lord." How devoid of wisdom we can be in connection with so simple a phase of our spiritual worship as this, is indicated by the fact that some dear brethren have made a prominent phase of their religious life their insistence on singing only psalms and these never to be with the accompaniment of musical instruments. No less lacking in wisdom would seem to be those who entirely omit singing from their gatherings because "we have no singers in our class," or because "we have no musical instrument." The fact primarily to be considered is not the artistry of the rendering, but the heart devotion to the Lord and the spiritual profit of the words to those who sing them and hear them. Just as unwise are those who have a hymn book well representing Wisdom's wide horizon, but use little of it. Even so simple a thing as this in a measure may be determining our faithfulness to this injunction in the Word of the Lord. The depth of our appreciation of the riches at our disposal is determined by our faithfulness not only in seeking them or in meditating upon them, but also in our use of them for ourselves and our brethren. We know from many sources that song had a large part in the worship of the early Church. A great burst of Christian song attended each new awakening to Christian life throughout the following centuries. It is not however music as an art form, but as a heart expression of closeness of relationship to the Lord that marks these revival periods.

## PERSONAL DESIRES SACRIFICED

"What is it then, brethren? When ye come together, each one hath a psalm, hath a teaching, hath a revelation, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying." (1 Cor. 14:26.) This and other texts indicate that the meetings of the early Church were very free and informal, and apparently, at least, on most occasions open to all. The Apostle's exhortation that follows is against any individual taking more than his share of the meeting. No one brother should select all the hymns or make all the comments or even any large proportion of them unless it so happens that he is either the only competent or the only willing brother present.

Spiritual songs were apparently a freer form in word and music than psalms and hymns, perhaps in spirit at least moderately corresponding with our solo and other choir numbers of this day. Whatever the form, psalm, hymn, or spiritual song, if sung "with grace in the heart," and therefore "unto God," all will be edifying to the hearers whose hearts are attuned to the divine message conveyed, and acceptable to our Heavenly Father, regardless of the degree of artistry. Pure devotion, however, will always rejoice to bring its best.

There is much that must be brought under the guidance of the divine Spirit; therefore the next verse records the Apostle's injunction: "*Whatsoever* ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." Nor do we suppose that this injunction is limited to the conduct of fellowship meetings. Rather, it seems to encompass the entire Christian life, leaving no minor detail untouched. All human slavery is galling. But there has never been a slavery so confining as that of the Christian. Yet the yoke of the Master is easy, His burden light. Those who attempt to enter upon this slavery from any other motive than that of doing it "in His name," that His name may be glorified, can never long stand the strain of this bondage.

There are two phases to performing our every task in His name. Everything must be done not only in *obedience* to His authority, but also with complete *dependence* upon His help. That name hallows and makes noble every endeavor. Nothing is so trifling, so uninteresting but that this talisman can transform it into a thing of freshness and beauty. As of old, this name casts out devils and stills storms, gives all sufficiency to the weakest, and a deep interest in the dullest task.

By the magic of that phrase, in His name, a reason is discovered for thanksgiving in "whatsoever ye do." Thanksgiving is an alpha and an omega of the Christian life. Thankfulness prepares the way for all Christian graces; for tribulation is necessary for their development, and only a thankful heart can properly and promptly appropriate the blessings which are effectively concealed from all other eyes in this strange wrapping. All others think of God as a harsh exactor, and will later hear applied to themselves the term "slothful. The one who thinks of Him as a God who gives, and is always giving, will joyfully bring to Him the service of obedience and carry away the reward of a ripened character. He will bring his service not that he may be paid, but that the Master may be glorified.

If, when confronted by new duties or sufferings, we hear Jesus saying, "This do in remembrance of Me," life will be a sweet fellowship with Him; and every moment a golden vessel on which His name is engraved; each moment will bear the inscription, "Holiness to the Lord." Ours is the altar that sanctifies both the gift and the Giver. By day or by night, in sunshine or under a clouded sky, in moments of repose or during the fiercest of activities, the sweet incense of a life devoted to Him arises from that altar, acceptable to God the Father through Him.

- P. E. Thomson

## Service to Relatives of Deceased Soldiers

As the casualty lists continue to increase, who of us is not moved with a desire to express a word of sympathy to the grieving ones and to extend the Word of Hope which has thrilled our own souls? From one of our readers has now come a most excellent suggestion for a practical way to let our light shine. He suggests that each individual (or class) secure the names and addresses of the next of kin from their local papers which print these in connection with each casualty list. To each of these individuals a short personal note should be sent as introductory to a suitable tract or two which should also be enclosed. The letter could be a printed form or one written individually. In either case it should bear the name and address of the sender. The following is a suggested letter:

Dear Friend (or Mr. or Mrs.)

Please pardon the intrusion of this note, but we feel impelled to offer our sympathy in your sorrowful experience as reported recently in the news.

The enclosed writings have been helpful to us in times like yours now, and we are taking the liberty of sending them to you, only with the hope that they may likewise be a comfort to you.

Yours sincerely,

Our tracts, "Why God Permits Evil" and "When the Morning Cometh" are especially appropriate. Also the "Do You Know" tract. For those who reply with some interest there might possibly be sent them "Immortality and the Resurrection of the Dead" and "Where are the Dead."

To avoid duplication, individuals or classes in adjacent territory will need to cooperate by restricting themselves to their own locality and by exchanging lists. The Institute will be glad to assist in every way possible.

In order that the brethren may know what response there is to their distributions, they should either keep us informed as to the territory they are covering, so that we can send them all inquiries received, or they should have a rubber stamp with their own address so this can be added to each tract sent out.

Feel free to order all you can use. We shall very much appreciate it at all times if those who write for tracts will tell us the exact number they wish sent. They may not be able to know positively just how many they can use, but they will have a much better estimate of their needs than we who have no knowledge at all of their time for or privilege of service.

We believe this suggestion opens a door of service to fit our individual abilities. At the very least, we have here the privilege of expressing a word of sympathy to 'some sorrowing one, and may we not hope that the Lord's Word may also reach into the grieving heart?

Let us all prayerfully consider our brother's suggestion in the light of the Lord's will for us, and let us "cast our bread upon the waters" as we have yet opportunity; leaving to Him the eventual result. We shall appreciate hearing our readers' views and any further suggestions for service to others.

## In the Way of God's Appointing

*"Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." - 1 Peter 5:7.*

LEAD ME in the way everlasting." Such was the Psalmist's very earnest prayer as he realized his special need of God's guiding hand. The things occupying his mind were such as we find in the one hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm, the last verse of which reads, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." The same line of meditation on our part will surely produce a like earnestness, leading us to consider the way everlasting with a true appreciation of how much it is the way of God's appointing for us.

As we bring ourselves into God's presence in this meditative way, we see ourselves more as He sees us. Life becomes invested with much greater meaning through such contemplations, and the realization grows more clear that the guidance which God only can give us is our urgent need. We are likely to become more distrustful of our own wisdom, therefore more ready to seek the hand of God that He may lead us in the way everlasting. We know that to be guided in this way is to be kept in the way leading to eternal life, and if our feet are to be kept from straying therefrom, the prayer of the Psalmist must be ours also. To such a prayer God will never fail to grant an answer. He has anticipated our need in this and answered it in our Lord Jesus Christ, making us complete in Him.

In Jesus we have the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He is the only Way to God's favor. He is the perfect Truth to receive and follow. He is the Life to possess and manifest. Without this-Way there can be no going heavenward; Without this Truth there is no light in the darkness. Without this Life there is no growing into the knowledge of God which is eternal life.

The way everlasting is a high road, and a way of unendingly needed discoveries in the will of God. In these clearer conceptions of His will, there are sure to be seen greater visions of how that will, faithfully submitted to, brings closer fellowship with Him, and in which fellowship there is a special supervision and care promised. The way everlasting is indeed a way of delight in God's guidance and never-failing protection.

In the ninety-first Psalm the blessings of this protected high road are outlined for us. This way leads us into "the secret place of the Most High." In that place of special favor there is imparted an increasing sense of a rich personal possession of God. Our own testimony can henceforth be, "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God: in Him will I trust," In this deepened sense of personal possession and protection, in which we are linked in such nearness to the Infinite Creator and Sustainer of the universe, there comes to pass a communion of heart with Him in which we find a rest that abides through sunshine and shadow. This communion is essential if we are to have any real and satisfactory sense of how we may cast all our care on God, knowing that His care for us is real and constant.

When in this degree of faith we can turn over all our interests to His keeping, it is then we may hear and rest in His words of comforting assurance: "Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.... For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." Here we are hidden safely under His banner of love, and it is of ourselves He speaks in saying, "Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on

high, because he hath known My name. -He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him. To all this we may surely say in a happy confidence,

"I know not where His islands lift  
Their fronded palms in air;  
I only know I cannot drift  
Beyond His love and care."

In this way everlasting, leading as it so often does through paths both rough and hard, the overshadowing of God's love and care is promised us. To those hidden in the secret place of God's favor the word is; "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him." And again, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry." Under His wings all such may trust and not be afraid, for even as He said to His Israel of old, so God speaks to His own today, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Being the object of such love can there ever be any circumstance befalling us wherein 'we need to ask,

"Among so many, can He care?  
Can special love be everywhere?  
A myriad homes, a myriad ways  
And God's eye over every place?"

His eye notes the sparrow in its fall, while the grass clothing the hillside has His attention; and are His own children not of much more concern to God than these? Indeed they are, and if we could always see how all our varied experiences are but the moldings by His hand by which we are being made meet for His presence, wherein would come our opportunity to demonstrate our faith in that loving concern? We know that the faith that trusts and rests under all adverse circumstances is a very precious thing in God's sight. The way everlasting being a way of faith, particularly when beset by ordeals demanding sweet submission, how better can we please and glorify God than by taking all things as from His hand, knowing that in some future time we will understand and give thanks accordingly?

Since we cannot doubt the verity of all that is set forth in the ninety-first Psalm, we should be able to lay all of our burdens down before God, knowing through good or ill He carries on His work in us and for us. This is only believing that all things do work out our highest good just because we have our place in the love of God, and the evidence to us that He has set His love upon us for eternity. Thus we are brought into the sheltered place of rest, and of which we too may testify, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love."

In this way everlasting, what a blessed outlook is made possible! If in this way the wisdom and love of God are always operating in our eternal interests, so also His power is ever active on our behalf. If the mountains round about Jerusalem suggest its fortified strength, even "so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even for ever." Whate'er betide us therefore, always, "underneath are the everlasting arms" of divine power. If fiery trials seem strange at times, because this power reigns over us without cessation we can wait until in due time all that is now mysterious or veiled from our eyes will be made clear.

What we need most to remember now is that our life is tied to the will of God to the end that He may have His way with us. Being centered in that will we look not at the things seen or temporal, nor at the transitory trials which providentially and intermittently shadow our pathway. We will look instead to the afterward of blessing, and so gaze on the eternal-joys reserved for us in the heaven of rest and joy to which the way of the cross will eventually lead us.

If the threads of varied and complicated experiences in our life seem to be a hopeless tangle as we see them, we may remember that "according to the power that worketh in us," all that may seem confused and inexplicable to us now will appear beautiful in the pattern God will have wrought out through making all our tribulations work together for our good. Herein is the basis for our confidence that when privileged to look back over all the pathway we trod in the way everlasting, we shall see then, how all that God's permissive will allowed had some part in shaping our character. Over all the times in which faith was matured in the "much tribulation" promised us, we shall see, with clearness' the loving hand of God, and glad we will be that He carried on His work according to His loving wisdom

"Until, by dint of strokes and blows,  
The shapeless mass appears  
Symmetric, polished, beautiful,  
To stand the eternal years."

That it may be so with us, and the way everlasting, bring us at last to a glorious awakening in the likeness of God's dear Son, shall we not pray with the Psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Can it be too great a test of our submission to His will to pray thus? Need we fear to let God have His way with us, since His power, wisdom, and love, are all pledged to be continually active toward us? It need not be so, for

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

"I cannot read His future plan;  
But this I know:  
I have the smiling of His face,  
And all the refuge of His grace,  
While here below."

- *J. J. Blackburn.*