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Idle Tales or Sublime Verities

"And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not." - Luke 24:11.

AS JESUS moved about with His disciples, and especially as the time appointed for His death as the Lamb of God drew near, He took occasion to inform them that though put to death by His enemies, He would rise again from the tomb. He had even told them that the length of time to elapse between entering the grave and returning therefrom, would be a period corresponding to Jonah's three days in the belly of the great fish. Yet, notwithstanding these preparatory statements, made for the purpose of, strengthening their faith, and giving them a basis for marking that third day with special interest, the statement of our text reveals how idle and fantastic the report of His resurrection appeared to them. Two of the Marys frequently mentioned in the Gospels had been to the sepulchre, found it empty, with two angels standing by. From these they received the message, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: *remember how* He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee, saying, the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered His words." - Luke 24:5-8.

How strange that this message could be an idle tale to men who should have been waiting for such a word on that very day. Had they *remembered* the words -of Jesus spoken beforehand, surely the message of the women would have been greeted with unbounded joy. But perhaps stranger still was the reaction of Thomas. Even when the other disciples had added their testimony to that of the women, this doubting disciple refused to accept the gladsome report. To him it was too incredible a tale to be believed. Because he himself had not seen Jesus and experienced the thrill of joy the others reported, in his attitude of mind no number of testimonies from others could have any weight with him.

In all of this there is much food for thought. Today, as then, little faith or greater faith in the sublimest aspects of our acceptance of the words of Jesus, will be manifested in our reactions. We do well to ponder over the words of Jesus to Thomas *after he had seen* the evidence he demanded. 'Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen,

and yet believed." (John 20:29.) Such faith is the kind we are called upon to manifest in many features of God's way with His people. There is danger that we too may make the mistake of Thomas, and be disposed to discredit much of genuine testimony, because we ourselves have not had a similar experience. The possibilities open to faith are great indeed, but always resting on the same principle, "According to your faith be it unto you." The greatest of faith's possibilities can be to one a glorious heritage among "the things not seen, but eternal," and too another naught but an idle tale. But the fact that great things are made possible to faith, should be sufficient basis for a full assurance that what God has promised He is abundantly able to bring to pass in our experience. "He is faithful that promised." He is faithful also in providing us every assistance needed in acting out our faith in His unbreakable Word. Has He not been "willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs -of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it with an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a *strong consolation*, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." (Heb. 6:17, 18.) As heirs of the great things the promise made to Abraham holds for us, and heirs also of many other, "exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature," What readiness of faith we should possess, and what rich blessings await the faith simple enough to take God at His word. May the measure of our faith be more and more equal to the sublime verities waiting to be experienced according to our faith in the words Jesus has spoken, and which He would have us very particularly *remember*.

In all the realm of faith's possibilities in what God has promised, He has not left Himself without witnesses bearing testimony to His delight in rewarding the faith that trusts, the faith that seeks to know all His will, and the faith that appropriates all His gifts of love. This is as we should expect to find it. Since great promises have been made concerning the power of faith -- that it will remove mountains, and concerning the many rich blessings awaiting those, who, like Abraham, are ready to believe the seemingly impossible, just because God has spoken, it follows that God will raise up men and women possessed of such faith, that through them He may verify His Word wherein it is said, "What He has promised, He is able also to perform, and through such, prove that, *"all the promises of God in Him, are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."* - Rom. 4:21; 2 Cor. 1:20.

"HE KNOWS AND LOVES AND CARES"

To believe -that God notes the sparrow's fall, or that the hairs of our head are numbered in some way unknown to us, is no idle or fantastic dream. The world about us is too full of infinitesimal wonders to leave any room for doubting the literalness of how a sparrow cannot fall to the ground unnoticed. What "a cloud of witnesses" can testify that they have experienced the intimate touch of God's hand on theirs in the trials and griefs of life, and found how intimate was His knowledge of present needs, and how His love and care were not imaginary, but wonderfully real. Those who could not see the reason for the trial, but yet believed, have been able to sing,

"O yes, He cares; I know He cares,
His heart is touched with my grief
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,
I know my Savior cares."

As an example of faith through sunshine and shadow, and of faith in its trusting, seeking, and appropriating aspects, the Apostle Paul seems among the best. Few experiences were more diversified than his, and yet aside from a few extraordinary features, such as being "caught up into the third heaven," he lived his life of faith on the same level as that given to all of us. He was a man of like passions with ourselves, therefore in his life of perfect balance in the three aspects

we have mentioned, we see possibilities open to us if we will but believe his testimony, follow his example, and live as near to the Lord as he did. Such is the tenor of all of his epistles. Nowhere does he even remotely suggest that he or any Apostle could attain to greater things in any of faith's operations, than can the humblest of believers. Are we not made glad when we realize that what Paul attained to, we may also attain to? He comes to us as one who had seen the Lord Jesus in verity, and he bears testimony to us that there is possible a life of response to the love of Christ too deep for adequate expression. He comes to us as from "heavenly places in Christ Jesus" to bear witness to the fact that mere intellectual knowledge and true spiritual discernment are poles apart. Because of these things written deep in his own experience of Christ, he assures us that it is no idle tale, but a sublime reality that a life of love, Christ-centered, a life in which great faith and ardent love can blend the emotional and the practical., is the only real life of joy and peace *in believing*. *Such* he would have us know is the life of faith in which joys do not exalt beyond a true equilibrium, nor trials depress beyond their intended profit.

It has been said, "He who lives in -the abiding realization of the eternal realities beyond the veil, is neither dazzled, distracted, nor overcome by the visible things around him." Will some one say that, such a statement is mere rhetoric, too extravagant to be accepted as fact? The answer is that it contains nothing more than what is meant by the oft-repeated promise of Romans 8:28: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His Purpose." If our faith does not react in a practical manner to this "carry-all" promise, then it will be evidenced by our being overcome, upset, *and* distracted by the very things God intended for our good. Such is not the display of faith by which God is glorified. We plead for "a faith that will not shrink," "that seas of trouble cannot drown," "in darkness feels no doubt." Paul comes to us to show us that such a faith can be our experience. He comes to us from his "seat in the heavenlies" (Eph. 2:6) whence personal experience gives weight and- verification to his words, and thus speaks to us: "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not *only* so, but we also rejoice in our tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh steadfastness; and steadfastness worketh approvedness; and approvedness, hope; and hope putteth not to shame; because the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit." Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." - Rom. 5:2-5; 2 Cor. 4:16, 17, A. R. V.

Our prayer should be for an attitude of mind that will never -consider such faith a mere idle tale, but on the contrary lead us to more earnestly seek to possess it for ourselves, and thus be more ;in line with God's objectives in developing us through faith, "according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies." - Eph. 1:19.

THE POSSIBILITIES OF FERVENT PRAYER

In order to have the faith we have been discussing thus far, it is vitally important to, know by experience the power of prayer. Yet as in the matter of faith, so also in regard to the Scriptural teaching on prayer, the great verities can be considered too fantastic to be looked for in every-day life. But the place of prayer in our experience as God intends it to be, is vitally important. This may be seen when a few of Jesus' statements are carefully considered. It is quite possible to pray without *praying* in God's meaning of that exercise. It is possible to be content with praying in a sort of general way, and then vaguely hope that answers will come in the same general way. This is not praying as Paul presents it in Ephesians 6:18. It is not "Praying always with all prayer and.

supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." If our petitions are lacking in definiteness, having no specific aim in the direction of blessings really desired, how can they be effective?

Let us consider a few statements of Jesus in which there is a note of certainty not to be lightly brushed aside. He says, "*Whatsoever ye ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in My name, I will do it.*" Again He said, "*Whatsoever things ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.*" (John 14:13, 14; Mark 11:24.) At another time He taught that particularly great things may be accomplished by prayer, but of such results He said, "This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting." (Mark 9:29.) These are great statements, encouraging great expectations. Are they not treated much as idle tales when some earnest inquirer yearning to understand their depth receives such a reply as this: "Why yes, the Lord always answers our prayers, sometimes saying, Yes, and sometimes saying, No"? How could Jesus mean so little as such a reply contains? Of Himself He could say in gratitude, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me, and I knew that Thou hearest Me always." (John 11:41, 42.) Would He want us to be *thankful* for less than this in the matter of our own prayers? Has He not said, "Thy Father which seeth in secret shall *reward thee openly*"? (Matt. 6:18.) We do well to remember the words of another Apostle in this connection, "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall *receive any thing of the Lord.*" - James 1:6, 7.

The whole tenor of the Bible is, Ask great things, expect great things. Our Lord's insistence on the supreme importance of persistent prayer, and the cultivation of the spirit of holiness, quietness, and watching thereunto, establishes the fact that only those who make a careful study of this feature of Scriptural teaching can hope to experience that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man *availeth much.*" Such access to the throne of God has enabled men and women in different lands and in varied settings to be God's witnesses to His delight in rewarding the prayer of faith. Two disciples long ago asked Jesus, "Where dwellest Thou?" He replied, "Come and see." If we are interested enough to know if His words on prayer such as we have been considering, are to be taken at face value, in fancy we may hear Him say, "Come and see." "Come and hear some witnesses to the verity of My word. He can then point to such notable characters as George Mueller and others. Yes, and He could take us to some of His hidden ones known to Him even now, who plead His promises in faith, as those of whom the Prophet Isaiah wrote: "Remembrancers of the Eternal never rest, *never let the Eternal rest, till it is done,* until He makes Jerusalem renowned on earth." - Isa. 62:7. See Moffatt and Jewish translations.

Let us have the faith that trusts, and seeks, and appropriates; keep our hearts pure in motives and desires; make love the controlling incentive, the glory of God our great consideration, and being, "not faithless, but believing," prayer will come to mean more and more to us, and God's willingness to give, and give, and give again, will be realized. A prayerful Christian can never be a failure if he prays with the heart, and with the understanding of what the will of the Lord is. Service performed can never be unfruitful if the service be preceded by prayer for the wisdom promised liberally to those who ask for it. A succession of witnesses bear testimony to the fact that it is no idle tale or fantastic dream to believe that in *all* branches of our Christian life, our God is still willing, and "able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us," *if we pray; in faith unwavering.*

THE HOLY GROUND OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

In the properly balanced view of Christian life there is the realm of personal fellowship with the Lord, and the field of service in which life is, to be laid down for the Lord and His people. The last of these two aspects is very generally recognized, but not so the first. That we keep the vineyards of others and neglect our own, has been one of God's complaints against His people all along. Unfortunate is it that the meditative spirit, the spirit by which certain individuals are drawn into a very close intimacy with the Lord, is often misjudged, as mere daydreaming; something peculiar, it is thought, to an inactive and self-centered character. How very wrong this judgment is can be seen by reference to the habits of Jesus Himself. How He loved to be alone with God! Communion with His Father was sweet indeed to our Lord, recognized by Him as being necessary to His perfect understanding of His Father's will, and necessary to His encouragement amid the daily requirements of His mission among men. Nowhere in our precious Bible do we find any support for the thought that one can gather up the rudiments of truth, and then, supposedly fully equipped, rush into a round of activity assumed to be of the Lord's will. The old hymn with its theme, "Take time to be holy" is true in thought. The divine order is presented in the first Psalm. There the "blessed man" is described as follows: "His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night... And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper", (Psalm 1:2, 3.) The order is perfect. Fruitage in due season, the fadeless leaf, and the prosperous labor follow the day and night meditations on the law of the Lord. No substitute for this order can ever produce like results. And the perfect Exemplar followed this rule, thereby, teaching that the quiet sanctuary of meditation and communion must be a familiar rendezvous to us also.

There is a place of holy ground in personal experience possible to each believer. Within the confines of this retreat each responsive and loving heart is at liberty, to act unrestrained by forms or expressions right enough in collective worship. Do we not feel a sense of pleasure when in reading Galatians 2:20 we find the Apostle dropping the usual collective phrase and taking up the very personal form of words -- "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*." Mary at the Master's feet eagerly drinking in 'His words of grace, knew " this sacred retreat, caring not for the mistaken attitude of the busy Martha. With her box of costly spikenard, age-lasting in its sweetness, she was again on this holy ground, and what mattered the unsympathetic judgment of her act. The woman "who was a sinner" stepped into this same unrestrained atmosphere of love, bathing ' the Savior's feet with her tears, unmindful of the rules by which she would be barred from a touch of His purity. And of how many others a similar story might be, told, if their experiences were not sealed away from our view as completely as the secret of Peter's time alone with his risen Lord. Doubting Thomases there may be even yet, to whom testimony of similar experiences in this our own time, will appear as idle tales. It matters not. Those who have recognized the beauty and the universality of God's law of diversity, both in creation and in grace, need no other proof than personal experience to know of a surety that there are "gates of heaven" opening into that realm where "heaven comes down our 'souls to greet," and in the solitude like that which was Jacob's, they too can say, "Surely the Lord is in this place; this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." - Gen. 28:16, 17.

SHALL WE SEEK THE VERITIES?

We have considered but three features of Christian experience in connection with which there is much of opportunity for the skepticism suggested in our opening text: First, the life of great faith proved by witnesses to be a possibility beyond that reached by many; second, the life of prayer with all its unlimited reservoir of blessing beyond "all we ask or think," proved so by those who have tested its power; then third; the life of intimate communion with the Lord, the outcome of the faith that trusts, seeks, and appropriates all the resources of faith and prayer. All three are seen

as important. All are such as Paul would have in mind in urging us to seek the best: gifts. No one possessed of a desire to live up to all the privileges of God's children can be indifferent to these things, but must covet them as personal attainments.

What then can be done to reach larger attainments in these things? First, believe in them as possibilities; second, seek them with all the heart; third, be generously disposed to examine the testimony of those who like the Marys of our text, have reached the place of knowing all *as true* because of personal experience.

Do I hear the testimony of one whose faith in God has reached the plane where nothing distracts, disturbs or overcomes him, or destroys his peace? Do I see in his testimony all too plainly my own lack of that kind of faith? If so, let me, pray with the yearning of sincerity: "Lord increase my faith." "Lead *me* to a faith like this, through trial though it be." Do I hear testimonies of how prayer has prevailed beyond anything I have yet known? Let me be willing to test the possibility of possessing that power by which those promises of Jesus will mean a hundredfold more perhaps than heretofore. Do I hear of one who has known the deeper depths and higher heights of intimate fellowship with, the Lord? Let me not hastily conclude that the testimony is lacking in credibility, but rather, let me remember that I cannot understand the language until I have had the experience. By so doing I may discover that the testimony was not illusionary, but the words of truth and soberness. Rather than question the testimony, let me pray, "Lord, teach me how to pray the prayer that availeth much." Let me seek with greater earnestness the quiet sanctuary of meditation, where alone -- "My Lord and I" -- He will grant the same inward sense of nearness to Him, and be in me the *unrestrainable joy* all may know who can truly say, "I am His and He is mine."

J. J. Blackburn.

The Infinite Compassion

O living presence filling all the worlds we see,
Give us to know the measure of Thy sympathy;
For life's lone way is dark with clouds and overcast,
And hope's dim light is flickering in the windy blast.
Yet art Thou near in every inward pang of heart
Compassionate to share each, sorrow's bitter part.
The grief that waked within our soul's deep sigh,
At first, O Christ, did touch the apple of Thine eye::
Most patient One, with whom a thousand years of time
Seem but a single day, make all this present
Thine! Let Love prevail, and in her victory complete
Help us to find Thy, perfect will with peace replete.

- J. F. L. M.

God Hath Spoken

"God . . . hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son." - Hebrews 1:1, 2, A.R.V.

THE WORLD presses about us with insistent annoyance, distracting our thoughts, and would wear us out if we did not insist on taking time out for meditation on higher things. So now let-us shut out the world, and be "for one sweet hour, shut in with Thee." A meditation on the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews will deepen our reverence and love for our Master, and increase our wonder and admiration of Him.

In this Epistle God is speaking to those who have become His people. Herein He gives insight into the hidden things, the deeper plans and purposes which He talks over with those who love to dwell in His presence. It is the Epistle of "better" things. Thirteen times in it the Author uses the Greek word *kreitton*, meaning better: it concerns a better spokesman of God than the angels (Heb. 1:4), and it tells of better things (Heb. 12:24), better promises (Heb. 8:6), and better hopes (Heb. 7:19), founded on a better testament (Heb. 7:22) or covenant (Heb. 8:6), having a better mediator (Heb. 9:12-14); a better priesthood (Heb. 7:23,24) serving a better altar (Heb. 13:10) in a better tabernacle (Heb. 9:11), upon which are offered better sacrifices (Heb. 9:23). It is a better ministry (Heb. 8:6) leading to a better country (Heb. 11:6). Even so; the fulfilment, the complete work, is better than the blueprints.

Heb. 1:1 *"At sundry times"* -- on various occasions as the proper time came for the sending of His message - *"In divers manners,"* or, literally, in many parts (as of morsels or parts given out) *"God spake in times past unto the fathers by the Prophets."* These scattered bits or portions were given in various visions, types, and prophecies to Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Daniel, and others, the "fathers" of the Jewish people. In Hosea 12:10 we read: "I have spoken by the Prophets, I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes [types, etc.] by the ministry of the Prophets." In Amos 3:7: "Surely the Lord will do nothing but He revealeth His secret unto His servants, the Prophets." In Job 33:14-17: "For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then He openeth the ears of men and sealeth their instruction, that He may withdraw man from His purpose, and hide pride from man."

Heb. 1:2: *"In these latter days"* -- the closing days of the Jewish Age. Two ages are here overlapping, one ending, the other beginning. The old methods are no longer to be used; a New Creation is to be begun. So all the messages and partial statements of the past are "gathered into one, even in Christ." In these latter days He hath *"spoken to us"* -- to the same Jewish people to whom had been "given the oracles of God, to whom pertaineth the promises. "To the Jew first, and also to the Gentile," is the order. - Romans 2:6-10; 3:2; 9:4, 5.

He now Hath spoken "by His Son." What a world of condescension and loving thoughtfulness is here shown. All God's works speak volumes about Him, but in His Son is the most complete revelation of Himself in every sense. This Son is He *"whom He hath appointed heir of all things."* By divine decree, the Father's will, He was to be His heir -- the possessor of an inheritance by law. The inheritance was to be "of all things" -- the whole universe. The Logos thus obtained by obedience, submission, and patient waiting (like David, who though promised the throne, would not take it till the Lord's due time) the very things which Lucifer, tried to grasp, by force for himself, thus, proving his unworthiness.

"By whom He created the worlds" - more correctly "For whom He created the ages" - the *aionas*, the periods of time in which He would accomplish all His promises. Any wise worker, plans his work; not only its order, but the time in which each part is to be done. It was by the Father and for His own satisfaction that all this wonderful Plan of the Ages for the public testing and exaltation of His Son, was formed and carried out.

Heb. 1:3: Two reasons are now advanced in explanation of the preferment of this Son over all other creatures of God, spirit and human: "*Being the brightness, of His glory, and the express, image of His person.*" The word translated "brightness (*apaugasma*)" literally means off-shining, or reflected light. "Glory" translates the Greek word *doxa*, from the, root *doke*, to think. This introduces a very interesting study in Greek metaphors.

St. Paul defines light in Ephesians 5:13: "Whatsoever doth make manifest is light. This might be justly paraphrased:.. Anything that illuminates a subject, is light. It may be clear thinking, or clear speech, or a just judicial decision -- all these discriminate between right and wrong, between truth and error, hence are "light." In fact; the Greek word the Apostle uses, *phaneros*, which is translated "make manifest," is derived from *phos*, which is translated "light." So also is *phemi*, meaning to show or make known one's thoughts, that is, to affirm or say. From this word *phemi* comes the English word fame, which is synonymous with glory.

From this will be seen the close association of, the ideas of light, glory, mental acumen, and clear speech. It was in these things that the Son, before He became a man, was the reflection of the Father's glory. He had been the sole Agent of the Father in the creation of Lucifer, of the angels, and of mankind, as well as of the physical universe. He had long, been the Logos, the perfect Spokesman of the Father, ever saying and doing exactly what the Father thought and willed. - Prov. 8:30; Col. 1:15-17.

We might ask, How could two such separate beings exist, and yet be one *in* mind, thought, and will? But we remember how through all the ages of the past our Lord Jesus, then the Logos, as the Agent of the Father had watched Him, studied His ways and their results, and found in their wonder, their wisdom, and their beauty, a supreme delight. He was trained and brought *up* in the presence of Jehovah. When Lucifer started to carry out his selfish ambition, Jesus was there and saw the rebellion. When the angels fell and sinned, He was there and watched it all, and saw that keeping close to the Father, obeying Him and practising His ways, brought happiness and peace and security and *long* life. Thus He learned to *love* righteousness.

Not only was the Son the perfect outward manifestation of the Father: He was "the express image of His person." The Greek word translated "express image" is *character* -- the impression of a die or seal, as being the exact counterpart of the original in every detail; "of His person" -- *hypostasis* -- literally, nature, or personality. Its root meaning is a setting under, essence, essential being, a foundation, firmness, reality. The Psalmist (Psa. 89:13, 14) attempts to define in human language the inherent qualities of Jehovah's personality: "Thou halt a mighty arm; strong is Thy hand and high is Thy right hand. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Thy throne: Loving kindness and truth go before Thy face. We have shortened this conception into the four attributes of Wisdom, Justice, Love and Power.

These qualities -- this "charakter" -- the Son has *acquired* in perfection. From Him shines forth every glorious beauty of the Creator; in, Jesus *is* seen each grace of character in perfection -- humility, meekness, loving-kindness, patience, self-denial -- all those endearing qualities which draw us to Him and delight our hearts as the manifestations of *the* attributes of His Father and ours. For all the promises of God "are yea and amen in Him." - 2 Cor. 1:20.

The glory of His office as Logos, and the confidence and responsibility reposed *in* Him by the Father, is further emphasized in the next statement: "*Upholding all things by the word of His, power.*" He sustained (from *phero-to* carry,, bear) all life as the provider of food and energy, distributing to each and all as needed. This was by the word or express command (*rhema*, not *logos*) given Him by the Father. Such was the Son's exalted position above all beings and things, when, "existing in the form *of* God, [He] counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, -being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death *of* the cross." - Phil. 2:6-8.

Thus He "*Himself purged our sins*" -- made a purification for our sins, or better, *of sin*. It was *Himself* that was offered in order to effect the purification.

He gave Himself as a sin-offering, as the beginning of the great work of eradicating sin from the universe. The word translated "purged" is *katharismos*, and means a washing off, as of filth or dirt. This *is* a reference to the purification of sin by the typical ceremonies of the Jewish Law, as fulfilled in Christ; and this Epistle was written to show how it was accomplished. The use of the adverb "when" shows that this purification had first to be assured by the sacrifice of Himself, before the blessing could be begun, or Jesus could *be* glorified.

Now, the reflection of the Father's glory which had previously characterized Him was enhanced by a glory of achievement all His own-the glory of having made possible eternal salvation, at so terrible a cost to Himself. For this reason in His Revelation He is presented as "The Lamb that had been slain" -- the most glorious title that can be given Him. And so, having purged our sins, He "*sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.*" He thus assumed the place and authority to carry out the application *of* His sacrifice and effect the salvation and deliverance of man. It was "on the right hand" -- His promised exalted position as co-ruler with the Father -- "Even as I overcame and am sat down with My Father in His throne." (Rev. 3:21.) It was "next to the Majesty, on high" -- the supreme source of all power and law and life, literally "the greatness in high places," meaning the One greatest of all. "The heaven is God's throne."

Heb. 1:4: "*Being made so much better than the angels*" -- through the work thus done, and the character and ability developed by it-higher than all other spirit beings. Lucifer desired this position and tried vainly to grasp it, "but Jesus earned it through obedience and self-denial. "*As He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.*" He had an inheritance from God as His "only begotten Son." He had an inheritance from Father Adam, which He obtained through paying the price on Calvary. He had won all of earth and all of heaven. So by nature, by position, by 'the attainment of every grace, by association and through suffering, by wisdom and knowledge, He "obtained a more excellent name than" the angels.

Heb. 1:5, 6: Yet another reason is advanced, showing the superiority of Jesus' position: "*To which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son.*" This statement was prophetically made in 1 Chron. 22:10, of King Solomon, but Solomon was a type of Christ. Here attention is called to the fact that this statement was not made to any angel at any time, showing that while the angels are all sons of God, they do *not* have the honor of special creation by the Father Himself, as has His First-begotten Son. The writer quotes Scripture to prove that these statements in the Psalms, which were familiar to every Jew, *could* have reference to but one being, and that one the real Anointed of God. (Psalm 2:7; 80:26, 27.) Then a crowning evidence of superiority is given, in that all other angels and beings are commanded to worship the Son, when "*again He bringeth the firstborn into the world.*" In this case the word translated "world" is the Greek

word meaning the habitable -- the habitable earth. This statement refers to Jesus' second advent, when He shall receive the Kingdom, to reign until all things are subdued under Him. *"This day have I begotten Thee"* is a quotation from Psalm 2:7. The word translated "begotten" in both Hebrew and Greek also means born, or brought forth. It evidently has reference to Jesus' birth from the dead by the power of the Father, on the resurrection morning. He is referred to as the first-born from the dead; in Romans 8:29 and Revelation 1:5.

Heb. 1:7: The Son is indeed far superior to the angels, but this is not a disparagement of those glorious servants of God. They have the honor of being the special agents and messengers to accomplish His work. *"Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire."* So they had appeared to Abraham, to Moses, to Daniel, and other Prophets and Patriarchs. They had controlled the winds so that the Israelites could cross the Red Sea, and the Jordan in time of flood; they had 'been the ones to slay the firstborns of Egypt, to defeat Sennacherib and his host, and the Midianites through Gideon; and in many other situations it was the glorious privilege of the angels to work the wonders of the Lord. This high privilege and honor would be accorded only to those who could be trusted.

Heb. 1:8, 9 But to the Son is given the supreme assurance of glory: *"Thy throne O God is forever and ever."* No wonder Jesus endured the cross and His suffering for "the joy that was set before Him" -- the privilege of blessing others and distributing the favors of the Creator to them, which would win their undying love and gratitude. But none are so fit and so worthy as He; none have so fairly earned it by such self-abnegation and loss of all, and such trust of the Father and love of Him. He is now exalted to share the -throne with the Father; hence a God, a mighty One (which is the meaning of the word God) ; mighty to save, because He has been mighty to endure. All are now commanded to honor the Son even as they honor the Father. (John 5:23.) His throne is to endure "forever and ever" -- literally, unto the ages of the ages, beyond the Millennium: The thousand-year reign will be the consummation of all the previous ages; but in the ages beyond, Christ will still be the chief One next to the Father; very precious in the hearts of every one of the restored human race, and held in reverence by the angels. The work -of creating other worlds and preparing them for habitation will go on.

His sceptre, or authority to rule, is a "right" (straight or true) sceptre, one of righteousness and truth, and the people will say of Him: "Lo, this is' our God, we have waited for Him, and He will save us." He will be the deliverer whom the human race longed for, and prayed for, and waited for seemingly in vain, throughout the long years of oppression and cruelty, The people will have "confidence in Him, because of His record.

"Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity" -He not only practised it, but He learned to love the right, true way to do a thing, abominating a subterfuge; just as every good workman enjoys doing the work correctly, and in the right way; not merely because of the good results, but to do a thing the wrong way willingly, puts a twist in the mind and begets a tendency for evil and mischief. Jesus rejoiced in the right and true way in everything. He hated-literally, detested-iniquity: Every fibre of His being was made uncomfortable by the presence of evil. He hated careless, slipshod ways. The word translated "iniquity" literally means lawlessness-without restraint' or control. God's way is the way of selfmastery. "He that ruleth his own spirit is greater than he that taketh a city"; "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls." (Prov. 16:32; 25:28.) Jesus loved God's way in all things, loving His laws and regulations, and taking delight in them. Jesus brings out a very important point along this line as recorded in Matt; 5:37: "Let your communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay;, for whatsoever is more than these *cometh of evil.*" Straightforward, direct, truthful words avoid mistakes, are easily understood; but crooked speech, insinuations, shady talk, cometh of evil, and

is poisonous. Therefore let our words be straight, true words, "as the oracles of God," that we may not disgrace Him by a careless tongue, for all our powers belong to Him. How careful we should be to get this training' if we are to be with Him throughout eternity.

"Therefore" -- because such an one can be trusted with anything in any place -- "O God [mighty one] *Thy God [Jehovah] hath anointed Thee*" - *hath* set Thee apart to do a very great work, that carries much responsibility, and will require every quality and grace You have been trained to possess. This anointing is *"with the oil of gladness"* -- God's Holy Spirit in full measure, as pictured by the holy anointing oil upon Prophet, Priest, and King.. The word translated "gladness" is from a root meaning "much," and "to jump" or "leap"; hence pictures a rejoicing that fills the being with delight. And this anointing is His *"above His fellows."* In this expression is the first hint in the Epistle of an *association, of which He is to be the Head.* The word translated "fellows" is defined by Strong as meaning *sharers, participants,* by implication, associates. It is elsewhere translated partaker and partner.

Heb. 1:10: *"And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands."* A further evidence of His prehuman preferment as an agent of the Father, dating from the very beginning of God's dealings with man and his home, when Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden. This passage refers not to the literal, but to the symbolic, earth and heavens There were arranged His relations with the angel and with His Creator, an arrangement of perfection and peace, of sweet fellowship in beauty of thought and word and deed, through which doorways of ever deeper delights could open up, as Adam continued to heed and obey the instruction given him. The foundations of human society were also laid there, in family and fraternal relationships, on the basis of love and justice, on which the human race could have built up a social structure as fine and as sweet as that of heaven; and, in perfect joy with each other, delight in the unfolding wonders with which then Creator had filled the earth. But Solomon said: "This *only* have I found, that God hath made man upright; *but* they have sought out *many* inventions." (Eccl. 7:29.) "Evil things in robes of sorrow assailed the monarch's high estate." Selfishness and sin crept in suggestions from the Father of Lies and Prince of Darkness twisted and distorted every one of those gracious arrangements, until all that is now left is a pitiful mockery of what might have been.

Heb. 1:11, 12 Of these originally glorious, but now sadly corrupted arrangements and relationships, the Writer continues:, *"They shall perish"* - because unfit for the glorious things of the future; full of unspeakable iniquity, they have no place in the pure and true things of the coming Kingdom.. Paul describes the corruption of human society -- "the foundations of, the earth" - in Romans 1:21-32. *"They all shall wax old as loth a' garment"* -- *becoming* worn out and useless; moral, like physical, decay eventually brings its own discard and destruction. *"As a vesture Thou shalt fold them up and, they shall be changed"* - *the* arrangements, like a garment, "were" good when new, but when they shall have become unfit for further use, the new King will "make all things new" and clean' and beautiful once more. For *"Thou remainest . Thou art the same."* Thou art, as Thou shalt one day declare Thyself, "The Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last." Literally, "Thou art He"remaining through all the changes, Lord and Master in all times, ages and creations.

Heb. 1:13, 14 Again the Writer reverts to the angels, those mysterious and powerful beings of a superior order to man, long known to, the Hebrews as direct agents of God. *"But to which of the angels said He at any time, Sit on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool?"* This extra ordinary, -- this astonishing statement had been addressed prophetically to the Son! (Psalm 110:1.) Thus His superiority to all other servants of, God is obvious. "Thy enemies are My enemies; wait Thou in the position of greatest honor until -the due time, and I will exercise My

almighty, power to bring Thy enemies and Mine to Thy feet, conquered and helpless." What a magnificent future for the One, who had died, rejected of men, the miserable death of the cross, on Calvary!

But, meanwhile, the angels have a high and honorable service to perform. *"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them' who shall be heirs of salvation?"* "Those being about to inherit salvation," is a more exact, rendering. Again we see a reference to the "fellows" of Heb. 1:9. Can it be that in the divine Plan there are to be others who will share the inheritance and the exalted office and station of the Son, and who are so important in that Plan that the holy angels are "sent forth to minister" -- to serve them? Ah, yes; we know that marvel of marvels! -- there is to be such a Body: hinted at in this chapter, described and counseled in the remainder of the Epistle next to the Song the theme of the New Testament. And we know that those who, possessed of a measure of the mind and spirit of the Son, have heard the Call to joint-heirship with Him have, like His great Apostle. Paul, eagerly and joyfully grasped the opportunity and followed on, "if so be they might lay hold on that for which they also were laid hold upon by Christ." (Phil. 3:12.) And despite all fleshly Weakness, all opposition and all hindrances, there yet shall be seen standing upon the mount Zion, with the Son, "the Lamb that had been slain, a hundred and forty and four thousand, of whom it shall be said: "These are they that follow the Lamb *whithersoever He goeth*" -- here, and throughout Eternity. - Rev. 14:1-5.

- J. A. Meggison and H. E. Hollister.

The Letter to the Colossians

"All my affairs shall Tychicus. make known unto you, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord: whom I have sent unto you for this very purpose, that ye may know our estate, and that he may comfort your hearts; together with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one; of you. They shall make known unto you all things that are done here:" - Col, 4:7-9.

THE FEW verses that remain of this Epistle to be considered have to do with Paul's personal friends, and the verses we are now to examine introduce us to the two brothers who were the bearers of this letter and the one to Philemon. Dr. Wordworth's rendering of 2 Tim. 4:12 makes Tychicus also the messenger who delivered- the first letter to Timothy, probably at the time of this mission to Colosse. The route Tychicus took in this journey was probably across Italy, then by sea to Greece, across Greece, and by sea from there to Asia, the Asia Minor of today. It is probable that one more' letter may have been delivered at this time, the letter to the Ephesians (Eph. 6:21, 22), for the seaport at which he landed was Ephesus, from which, , probably after a much needed rest and the 'spiritual refreshment the brethren there would be to him, he must travel through rough passes to the upland valley where lay Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis. This final stage was, however, perhaps the easiest part of the journey for him, for here he was treading the soil of his homeland. We are not told what his native city was, but apparently it was not Colosse, since if that had been the case Paul would undoubtedly have mentioned that fact when giving it as the home of Onesimus.

In five books of the New Testament Tychicus is referred to, and in four of these he is explicitly mentioned as an Asiatic. According to Acts 20:4, he was one. of the number, perhaps seven, who traveled with Paul on his return journey from the third missionary .pilgrimage; but he did not complete that trip, being left behind, probably at Miletus. (Acts 20:15, 38; 21:29.) The other mentions of him are in Titus 3:12 and Ephesians 6:21. This last is of special interest as Tychicus is the only brother honored by mention in this Epistle. It is thought probable that he is also the brother alluded to in 2 Corinthians 8:18 as an associate of Titus in the service of collections for the poor. He stands as a representative of the many unheralded though faithful servants, from whose number a few were selected by divine inspira. tion to give us a glimpse into the shadowy beginnings of the "Mystery hid from ages and generations," "in God." (Col. 1:26; Eph. 3:9.) His name is but a shadow that appears for only a moment, but long enough to assure us of the greatness and sacredness of secular service done for Christ, however small it may be.

He does not appear in the inspired record until near then conclusion of Paul's missionary work, and it seems probable was a fruit of -the Apostle's long residence in Ephesus, terminated by the first recorded trade union violence. There was a short stay in Europe for Paul, and then began his last fateful journey to Jerusalem in which he was joined at different places and times by that interesting group of friends, three from Europe, four from "Asia," and two of these from the wilder inland country of Lycaonia. Tychicus and Trophimus were from Western Asia. (Acts 20:4; 21:29.) Only the litter is definitely mentioned as continuing with Paul to Jerusalem, but it is natural to infer that the purpose of all these brethren in joining his company was to be with him at t the journey's end. Aristarchus; of Thessalonica, is mentioned as having sailed with him on his return from Palestine, implying that he alone was left to minister to the Apostle's needs. - Acts 27:2.

PAUL, A WISE AND FAITHFUL STEWARD

From the letter to the Corinthians we learn that the Apostle was too sagacious-and too conscious of the danger of brethren seizing on slight pretexts for criticism, not to have with him some one to, share in the responsibility the funds. for the poor involved. If this was his purpose in selecting brethren from widely separated sections of his mission field to attend him, we can see the wisdom, in the course; and in it we can see a good example for those who have the responsibility of administering the financial affairs of others either before or after their death.

It is supposed the journey of Tychicus and Onesimus occurred about 62 or 63 A. D., four, or five years " after Paul's last pilgrimage to the beloved Jewish capital. The two brothers were to supply for the Colossian brethren the details regarding the Apostolic mission which were omitted from the Epistle, some of which it would doubtless have been indiscreet to commit to writing, particularly facts regarding "those of Caesar's household." They would be eager to hear what was the subject matter of the discourses delivered by Paul in this journey, the arguments he had presented in personal contacts with Jew and Gentile, and the many precious hours he and Tychicus had spent alone, whether in the prison cell or the cottage hired later.

It is now generally believed that the letter to the Ephesians, as it is usually designated, was really, a circular letter. That being the case, and this being the occasion of its delivery, we can imagine Tychicus rehearsing the many details of the Apostle's service to each of the little groups of Bible students in western "Asia." As a native of this territory, he was the logical one for that mission. How these little groups, in their quiet upper rooms or, at some secluded point on a river's brink, must have hung on every word of his narrative. With each telling the scenes and words recounted would become more precious to the reporter as well as to the audience; and we may be confident many tears of joy and of sympathy fell during those sacred occasions of heart fellowship.

There were some sad hearts in that company to be comforted, for there were some of their brethren who were being led away with strange doctrines. Tychicus could tell them of many such that Paul had sought to help, confidently, however, leaving the results to the Lord. There was a hope, too, that the ministry of Tychicus might inspire some of these faltering ones to return to their first love. Nothing is more powerful in influencing people to believe the truth than a knowledge of its power in a life. Of all "living epistles" there was none that would better repay study of it than Paul's own, nor any that Tychicus would rather dwell upon. This is not the last we hear of Paul's "faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord." Once more the Apostle at least plans to send him on a mission, this time to Brother Titus in the island of Crete. - Titus 3:12.

PAUL AND TYCHICUS PART

Not until Paul was confident that the time of his departure was at hand did, *he* dispense with the ministrations of this faithful servant. (2 Tim. 4:12.) We have only our untrustworthy imaginations to guide us as regards that parting. The joy of a return to his old home, and the friends old and new awaiting him there, could not lessen even in a slight degree the sadness of Tychicus in that moment. There was no intimation of a mission to the churches in connection with this final journey, but one who had long devoted himself to others could not so suddenly change. Doubtless in him the Lord found one just suited to the needs of Western Asia Minor and its many little groups of believers. Ten years of faithful service with the wise Apostle would well prepare him for the handling of many a difficult situation as it arose in later years. The one who would brave the dangerous journey from Rome to Colosse to deliver two or more letters was ready for the final journey and anything he would find awaiting him at its end.

Our reason for confidence in Tychicus is not based on these surmisings, however, but on the Apostle's commendation of him, calling him a "beloved brother," a "faithful minister." In this last phrase Paul is speaking of the personal attendance of Tychicus upon the Apostle, as secretary and general helper to take care of many little details that otherwise would have robbed the more capable brother of precious privileges of service for which he alone was suited. An honest, loving, and zealous soul, though he is no orator, no organizer, nor a great thinker, if he does not shrink from menial tasks and is willing to perform them with no thought of the plaudits of the multitude, will find the Lord ready with tasks suited for his abilities.

If Tychicus exercised any of the prevalent "gifts of the spirit" that fact was not mentioned. He had a more important mission, to fulfil. He "ran errands" faithfully. "Well done, good and *faithful* servant" will sound just as sweet to the one who has busied

himself in doing little things for the Lord as it will to an Apostle or an orator. Even the greatest of the Apostles could not hope for the final divine approval until he had proved himself "faithful in that which is least" -- such trifles as tent-making and dictating letters for slaves.

Tychicus was not only a faithful servant, or deacon, to Paul in his personal needs, but had the yet higher distinction of being a "fellow slave in the Lord." In this expression the writer and the deliverer of the letters are brought to the same level. Tychicus rejoiced to be the servant of the Apostle, who refused the title of master of the slave, recognizing that "One [and only One] is our Master, even Christ." True Christian love and fellowship prompted Paul to use this phrase, which reveals something of the motive that prompted such devotion in the heart of Tychicus. The phrase not only shows to us something of the Apostle's character, but tells us of the value of small things done as unto the Lord. It demonstrates to us the divine recognition of the ones who are used in holding up the hands of more talented but no more appreciated servants. "In the Lord" all service and all brethren are great and should be so appraised by those who have the mind of the Lord. It takes a Paul to write the letters, and a Tychicus for their delivery. Each is deserving of our warm gratitude, and our failure to show it cannot but count against us.

GOD'S ORGANIZATION,

The distinction between sacred and secular occupations disappears, too, when they are done as unto the Lord and under His direction. Efficiency in His service demands organization of effort just as any secular activity demands it, and, if promoted for His glory and conducted under His direction, will have His reward, without regard to the number of "talents" available. Every individual, as well as every little assembly of the Lord's people, has the privilege of demonstrating this principle. The building of the fires, the sweeping and the dusting, are exact counterparts of the tasks performed in the adjoining house; but here, done for the Lord, are as certain of His reward as the most carefully thought out discourse ever delivered. It is not the nobility of the task but the motive back of it that determines its greatness.

During all the weeks of his trip to Colosse, it could hardly once have entered the mind of Tychicus that his name was to be known wherever the Gospel was preached; and that thousands were to be encouraged to faithfulness by his devotion -- that others were to be spurred to faithfulness in the doing of trivial things and thus unsuspected by themselves, perhaps be gaining immortality for their names. For a few centuries the pomp of the "eternal city" has continued, but when men have learned the emptiness of its vanity and boasting, little Colosse, made famous because Tychicus took a letter there, will still have a hallowed place in the divine "Hall of Fame." Nero will rise to "lasting shame and contempt," Tychicus to eternal glory. All things done for Christ are eternal, whether or not they are known and acclaimed by men. But note that no one serves alone in the courts of our temple, except the High Priest. We are acceptable only as members of His Body and as joint participators in His grace,

the grace accorded *every member of* that Body. This is an equally blessed partnership whether our nearest neighbor in it is a Tychicus or a Paul.

The soil that was fruitful for Christ in Paul's day is now overrun with the weeds of Mohammedanism. The labor of Paul and Tychicus to human eyes seems wasted, obliterated by time. Paul however was no writing for the little handful at Colosse only, but for a world of disciples. Tychicus was not only carrying his letters across the seas, but across the centuries. Using the opportunities at hand, they were performing more wisely than they knew, for they were cooperating in an organization whose all wise Head was making all the plans. They had no knowledge as to where their labor was to end. Their only responsibility was with its beginning, in their own hearts. God has directed the flow of the stream that has sent its refreshment into thousands of gardens.

It is not what we see of results that counts, but what God plans; and what God sees are the heart motives. It is not our, planning, but His blessing that brings the worthwhile results. When the heart is right, the blessing is given. Our wisdom is no less foolishness with Him than, is the world's. So far as results are concerned none of the 144,000 will have much to show when compared with the great total of our Heavenly Father's purpose, but how inestimable will .be their reward. "*Greater* works than these shall ye do." If no task He assigns is too small for us, if we are "faithful in that which is least," greater works than our Head and Master performed here on earth will be assigned to us-those who are prepared unto *every* good work (2 Tim. 2:21); and that will be only one little feature of the great reward of those who are "faithful unto death." Not alone the on: that thinks of great things to do, will receive that reward; but every one whose rule of life is, "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," remembering that "Neither is he, that planteth anything, nor he that watereth -- but, God who causeth to grow. Moreover he that planteth and he that watereth are one: howbeit each one his own reward shall receive -- according to his own labor. For we are God's fellowworkmen: Ye are God's farm, God's building." 1 Cor. 3:7-9, Rotherham.

ONESIMUS

It seems that Paul is combining with this mission to the Colossian Ecclesia the personal service to Philemon and Onesimus of reuniting them, this time not only as master and slave but as brethren in Christ. There is no reason to suppose that Onesimus, the run away slave of Philemon, had not formerly the usual faults and vices of his class, but Onesimus, the thief, returns, "the faithful and beloved brother." He had seen Jesus, for he had seen one in whom Christ dwelt. An appropriate time for us to become better acquainted with Onesimus would be in connection with a study of the letter to Philemon. This may sometime be our privilege.

In the King James Version the explanation of the purpose of Brother Tychicus' mission is "that he might know your estate." Other manuscripts than those used for this version give the reading of the Revised Versions: "that ye may know our estate." Most translators follow the latter, which seems the sensible thing to do since this gives a meaning more in agreement with the rest of the passage.

With a graciousness worthy of emulation, the Apostle includes the returning slave in the mission of making "known all things that are done" among the brethren in Rome, making him equally an authority and alike trustworthy with Tychicus of the untarnished record. Onesimus, too, was to be accepted as a comforter of the brethren.

In Paul, in Tychicus, in Onesimus, Christ is manifested as each of their fellow slaves would like Him to be revealed in them, that all who "narrowly observe" us, however slight the contact, may discover that we too have been with Jesus and have learned of Him.

- P. E. Thomson.

A Request

Lord, give me tact to speak for Thee,
For hearts are hurt so easily,
And sometimes, too, we thoughtless are,
And hasty words may leave a scar --
Lord, make me wise to be more kind,
That love alone may fill my mind.

Lord, give me strength to work for Thee,
That all the tasks Thou givest me,
Done in Thy power, may yet seem light,
And each succeeding day more bright;
For in Thy service hearts grow strong
In helping weary ones along,
The climbing way that leads to Thee --
Lord, give me strength to work for Thee.

Lord, give me grace to live for Thee --
To live in faith, in purity,
In joy that deeper is than woe,
In love that cannot but o'erflow,
That others, knowing me, may see
Not self-but Christ, abides in me,
Lord, give me grace to live for Thee.

- *Monica R. Lambert.*

The Father of the Faithful

THE CONCLUSION -- "BY WORKS WAS FAITH MADE PERFECT."

"Then Abraham, gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old, man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people." - Gen. 25:8.

OUR LAST lesson on the life of Abraham dealt with the choosing of a bride for Isaac. After the marriage of Isaac, the history of Abraham's seed by a new marriage is recorded, which is not without interest to those who have been blessed with a knowledge of the Divine Plan. By Sarah he had the one seed, Isaac, which St. Paul explains represents Christ and the Church. Abraham therefore represented God; the Father; and Sarah, the mother, represented the covenant under which the seed was brought forth—the Covenant of Grace. (See Isa. 51:1-3; Gal. chapters 3 and 4.) After the marriage of Isaac, which represented the marriage of Christ and the Church, another seed is developed—not by Sarah (or the Grace Covenant), she having died, representing the death of the Covenant which brings forth the promised seed, but by a *new* wife or covenant, which brings forth many sons. Very fitting it seems that Keturah, Abraham's third wife, should represent the New Covenant, through which the whole house of Israel is to be blessed, as well as all the families of the earth. As Sarah brought forth only the one seed, Isaac, we could not say she represented a covenant that would bring forth many. A quotation here from Brother Russell we believe will be of interest.

"THE ORIGINAL ABRAHAMIC COVENANT"

"Abraham had three wives; Sarah, his original spouse; then later, Hagar, Sarah's maid, whom she urged upon him as a supposed assistance to God in the carrying out of the Covenant, after a long delay and waiting; and third, after Sarah's death, Abraham took Keturah to wife, and by her had many children, whereas by the primary wife and by the maid, but one each. The Apostle's language justifies us in considering this matter allegorical or typical. The Holy Spirit, through St. Paul, tells us that Sarah represented the essence of the original Covenant and that Hagar represented the Law Covenant. He explains that the Jewish people were in bondage under their Law Covenant and therefore the antitypes of Ishmael, Hagar's son, and that these were cast out from divine favor, even as Hagar and her son were cast off from Abraham's family by divine instruction, and to make the type complete. The Apostle introduces this lesson to show us that the Covenant of Grace, under which the Gospel Church is developed, has nothing whatever to do with the Covenant of the Law; that the two were separate and distinct.

"Hagar's child might indeed appear to be the child of Sarah for a time, but it was not; even as Sarah's child, Isaac, (was in no sense Hagar's son. The Apostle's argument is, 'So, then, brethren, we, as Isaac was, are the children of the promise' -- the original Covenant, and not children of the Law Covenant." (R4365-R4368, *Apr. 1*, 1909.) And just so, we are children of the promise or Sarah Covenant and not children of the Keturah Covenant.

Some one has remarked that the Book of Genesis is "full of the seeds of things," and we find it teeming with the fundamental principles of the Truth, which are more elaborately taught in the New Testament. In Genesis they are set forth illustratively, typically, while in the New Testament we see their fulfilment in antitype. Quoting again from Brother Russell with regard to the Covenants:

"Let us briefly review these covenants as they are illustrated in a type or allegory. (Gal. 4:22-31.) Paul explained that Abraham's wife, Sarah, was a type of the covenant made with Abraham, referring to 'the Seed.' As years rolled by, and no child came, they began to look for a fulfilment in some other way, and Hagar takes the place of a wife and bears a son, who apparently is to be the *heir*. So the original promise of God meant Christ, but He was not born until 'due time,' and in the meantime 'the Law' was given from Sinai, apparently taking the place of *the* Covenant, and under the Law Covenant *a fleshly seed* was developed -- fleshly Israel. But the Abrahamic Covenant had not failed, and after the Hagar Covenant had borne fleshly Israel (typified by Ishmael), the true seed of Abraham and heir is born, under the *first* (or Sarah) Covenant; i.e., Christ Jesus and the members of His Body -- spiritual Israel.

This is as far as Paul carries the type, because speaking only of the two *seeds*, natural and spiritual, and the two Covenants under which they come into existence. But as we find that God is to, make 'a New Covenant,' 'after those days,' we naturally inquire: Why was not this *New* Covenant typified by a wife as well as the other two? And upon examination we find it was so illustrated. Turning to Genesis 24:67, we read how Isaac receives Rebecca into Sarah's tent, and she becomes his married wife, etc., illustrating how our heavenly Bridegroom will receive His Bride at the end of her journey, and bring her into, and associate her with Himself in the enjoyment of all things promised in the first (or Sarah) Covenant. Then we read: '*Then, again, Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah,*' illustrating, as plainly as a type can, the New Covenant.

"Each of the first two Covenants, bore but *one* offspring: The first, the 'heir of all things' (Isaac -- the spiritual Israel) , and the second, fleshly Israel, beloved for the fathers' sake. But the New Covenant (Keturah) bears six sons, which, taken with the one of Hagar would be *seven* -- a complete number representing that all the fleshly children would be developed under the Hagar and Keturah or 'Law' and 'New' Covenants. The name Sarah means *Princess*; Hagar means *flight* or *cast out*; Keturah means *incense* or *sweet*; all of which are significant.

"Oh, how our Covenant-the Royal-looms up above all the others! Let us not forget that we must *die* with Jesus, if we would *live* and share in the glorious work of sprinkling and cleansing the world in the next Age. 'That by means of *death* . . . they which are called might receive the promise, of eternal inheritance.' - Heb. 9:15." - R4371, April 1, 1909.

"And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac." Again we see the type carried further. Isaac, the child of promise, inherited all, in which Rebecca shared. Christ is the heir of all things, in heaven and in earth, and the Church is His joint-heir. The other seeds, the child of Hagar and the children of Keturah, had no part in the inheritance. Abraham gave them "gifts" -- even so will the heavenly Father give Israel and the world of mankind blessings, but they shall not be heirs with the Son. How minutely and how beautifully God's Plan is here illustrated!

A MIGHTY FAITH, THE BASIS OF ABRAHAM'S CHARACTER

"And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years. Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years; and was gathered to his people." We have reached the end of a noble life. It was his nobility and the sincerity and faithfulness of his religious life that won for him the veneration of all generations of mankind. At the basis of his character was a mighty faith. Faith is that which links us with God-the channel which connects us with Almighty Power and Infinite Wisdom. "Abraham believed God." That faith led him .to leave his native land "knowing not whither he went." It has been said that "the key to Abraham's life is the word 'separation.' He was from first

to last a separated man." Separated he was *from his* kinsfolk and the rest of the world and separated *to* God and to high and lofty fellowship with Him.

In that faith he was able to allow Lot to choose the best of the land for himself, because he knew Lot could not rob him of what God had assured him would be his inheritance, and that God was able to care for the one who trusted Him. Faith is perfectly safe, as well as beautifully disinterested, in allowing Lot first choice. That faith gave him assurance through long years of waiting for the promised seed. That faith caused him to "sojourn in the land of promise as in a strange land," because he believed God was able to "give" it to him according to His promise, in His due time, and he rocked "for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God." The trials of God's people are similar and they have a tendency to make manifest 'to what extent the heart has found its all in God. "It is a difficult matter -- a rare attainment -- so to walk in sweet communion with God as to be rendered thereby entirely independent of things and people here."

And his faith brought forth fruit, He added fortitude to his faith, and to fortitude knowledge. He was in God's college of divinity, and year after year he had fresh revelations of the character and attributes of God. The years brought him into closer fellowship with God. To knowledge he added temperance or, self-control. On numerous occasions he manifested the control and mastery he had over himself, as when he repelled' the offer of the king of Sodom, remembering that it was the "Possessor of heaven and earth" whom he served, and he did not need to look elsewhere for his possessions. A clear vision of God will dim to nothingness the glories of all "the goods" of the kings of the earth. Then again he showed his self-mastery when he controlled his spirit in the irritations caused by Lot's herdsmen, and said: "Let there be no strife I pray thee between me and thee ... for we are brethren." The strongest characters are those who control their own spirits. The man who is master of himself is the highest type. He can rule others because he can rule himself.

To self control he added patience. We read (Heb. 6:15) that he "patiently endured." It was no ordinary patience that waited for years without murmuring or complaining, prepared to abide God's time. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able also to perform." During this waiting period God said to him, "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward" -- not "I will be," but "I am." "It was not written for his sake alone, but for us also." Let us not fail to take this home to ourselves. When we have learned to think of God as our exceeding great reward, a reward above everything earth can offer, then there will be no danger that any gift will usurp the affection due to the Giver. Our present peace, our present joy, and all our hope; to be eternal, must be *in* the Eternal. The cutting of every tie, the loosing of every earthly treasure, may be necessary for us to learn 'to set our affections there; but "to have God is to have all, though bereft of everything. To be destitute of God is to be bereft of everything though having all."

To his patience Abraham added godliness. His piety was one of his chief characteristics. There was a constant sense of God's presence in his life, and a loving devotion to Him. Wherever he pitched his tent, there he built an altar. Shechem, Hebron, Beersheba -- all had these tokens of his reverence and love. The altar and the tent speak to us of two outstanding features of Abraham's life: The tent life is the detached life. The altar means not only worship, but sacrifice, self denial. He had nothing on earth -- "not so much as to set his foot on"; *but he had all in God*. In any trouble he turned to God just as a child turns to its father, and there was a holy intimacy between him and His God. He provided refreshment *for* the Lord; enjoyed full communion *with* the Lord; and interceded for others *before* the Lord. So close was he to the Lord that God said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?"

To his godliness he added brotherly kindness. Many who are devoted to God lack the tender qualities and fail to manifest these toward those of the family circle. This was not so of Abraham. His was a warm and affectionate heart. Hear him: "Oh, that Ishmael might live before Thee!" God recognized the tenderness that was in his heart when He said, "Thy son, thine only son whom thou lovest."

To his brotherly kindness he added charity or love. In his dealings with men he was destitute of all smallness or pettiness, and was generous and open hearted -- insisting on paying a large price for the Cave of Machpelah. He was always affable and courteous, having a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man. Being right with God he was always at rest and his influence was that of a genial, restful, noble heart. Is it any wonder he is spoken of as the "friend of God"?

ABRAHAM'S NOBILITY ATTAINED THROUGH TRIAL

But let none suppose that this nobility of character, this obedient faith, and this devotion to God was Abraham's by nature. No! it was attained through trial, testing, sorrow. As it is "through much tribulation that we enter the Kingdom," so it was through fiery trials that Abraham reached the summit of faith supreme faith. If we pay the price, the same reward is ours. Brethren, shall we not more diligently seek to be the "children of Abraham" -- "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

"Abraham gave up the ghost." This would seem to say that he did not cling to life. He was glad to go. when the summons came. His sons, Isaac and Ishmael, buried him in the Cave of Machpelah. There was Abraham buried by the side of his faithful wife -- "not having received the promises but having seen them afar off" -- and "having received a good report through faith."

- *Contributed.*

Words of Encouragement

Dear Brethren:

Enclosed is remittance for the coming year's subscription to the "Herald of Christ's Kingdom." Its arrival every month is a source of joy and profit. We pray for you often and need your prayers. The December issue was especially helpful to me, and I wondered if it would bring you any encouragement or help in making your selection of articles to appear there if I mentioned how very much Brother I. I. Margeson's "Blessings Derived from Continuance in Prayer" encouraged me. I've found it so -- even as "He" said. It bespeaks a familiarity with his subject. only possible to one whose experience had taught him valuable lessons.

Those of us who knew our Brother and loved him, ever felt his deep reverence,' devotional life, and pastoral care of the Church. God bless his memory. When November 1st brought us again to "All Saints' Day," we were glad to honor in our hearts many "saints" we have known, both dead and alive, whose ministry has been blessed of God though canonized by no church organization. Our dear brother was one of these.

Your sister in our glorious Hope, and in deep thankfulness at this season for His Unspeakable Gift,

O. A. -- ,Mass.

Dear Brethren:

Please send me "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" Volume I, and also send me "Daniel the Beloved of Jehovah." I enjoyed reading and was blessed by reading your book, "What Say the Scriptures Concerning Hell?" and the book, "Our Lord's Return." Received some new light. They are up to the minute and easy to understand, and hope that many seeking the truth will be privileged to receive them.

With Christian love,
W. L. L. -- Ohio.