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Christian Fellowships

"Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." - 1 John 1:3, 7.

IN THE opening verses of his First Epistle, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," has told us the tremendous importance of fellowship-that by it we may in a measure determine not only our relationship with Him who is the light, but also how well we are living "in the light," and therefore the sanctifying power light is having in our lives-the progress we are making toward the heavenly goal. The chapter opens with the statement that his Gospel was written that we might have "fellowship, one with another," as well as have "fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." In order to have this fellowship we must "love one another as" He loves us. (1 John 3:23; John 15:12.) This is not merely a suggestion, but a commandment as left us by Jesus. No one can claim himself guiltless regarding the keeping of this command, but "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." His forgiveness guarantees also the assistance necessary to acquire the love that makes fellowship not a thing of difficulty and constraint but the natural outworking of and spontaneous expression of the Christian principle, "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Both the Father and the Son are spirit beings, unapproachable by fallen fleshly senses; and it is also said of our brethren with whom we fellowship that they "are not in the flesh but in the spirit if so be that the spirit of God dwell in" them. Manifestly, then, the fellowship of which the Apostle speaks must be that of the spirit-the spirit of holiness. We must have of God's spirit to fellowship with Him, "His spirit bearing witness with our spirit." That fellowship, if confined to the limited portion of our day that is given to prayer and study of His Word, will be meager indeed. Larger possibilities are pointed out however in many Scriptures. The fellowship with the Father and with the Son is intended to be so complete that it will include "whatsoever we do," even to the bringing of "every *thought* into captivity to the obedience of Christ." Then we can say with Jesus: "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." (John 14:10, 24.) The Christian who attains the high ideal of this text will glorify God in thought, word, and deed. The One who said that not a word He spoke nor a deed He performed was His own, but the Father's, when praying for us, raised the high standard of a oneness with each other, comparable

to the oneness of the Father and the .Son. "By one Spirit" we have "access" unto the Father," even Jew and Gentile, bond and free, being brought nigh to each other as they are brought nigh to Him. In no less degree must the New Creatures' fellowship with each other be looked for along spiritual lines, their spirits bearing witness with each other.

FELLOWSHIP IN CONVERSATION

The details of the fellowships we have with fellow Christians will correspond with the fellowship we have with our heavenly Father and heavenly Bridegroom. We would of course bring nothing of evil into our conversations with the Father; nor would one who knows the joy of dwelling in the Father's presence, "where there is fullness of joy," lessen that joy for one moment, by bringing into his conversation, either with the brethren or the world, even the mildest form of evil; and much less would he permit grosser forms, such as evil surmising and evil speaking to enter into that conversation. Rather, the one who is really dwelling in the Father's presence is jealous of that privilege, because he finds there "fulness of joy," and gives evidence of this -by always having his conversation in harmony with the laws of holiness. Association with such a Christian becomes a powerful means of sanctification. His conversation will add materially to the treasury of those things which are true, just, honest,, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, praise-worthy things -- things of truly sanctifying power to meditate on.

FELLOWSHIP OF WORKS

There will be also a similarity of motive in our activities. While each one in the spiritual family will have his specific duties, there will be an absolute fellowship, regardless of how different these activities may be. All will be fitted in as part of the one great household, each member planning every act carefully that it may do its part in accomplishing the great aim of that household -- glorifying God and "doing good unto all men, especially unto the household of faith." The nature of our business and recreation, yea all our temporal affairs, will be determined by our fellowship with the Father, the Son, and our brethren.

As Jesus had His beloved John, it is not surprising to find similar discriminations in the fellowships which we enjoy -- a tendency to spend most of our time in the company of those who are most spiritually minded, those whose conversation and activities are most holy. Not to have it so would indicate a lack of the "mind of Christ." The Apostle Paul however warns us that to allow these preferences to lead to our withdrawing from less developed brethren to such an extent that it would become either a cutting off from or even a faction in the Body of Christ, would be not a demonstration of our appreciation of spiritual fellowship but a demonstration of the spirit of selfishness and of a lack of love and consideration, as well as of actual carnality. Note the yet more severe denunciation, the harsher description of those "who separate themselves," in Jude 16-19: "These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;, how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be *they who separate themselves*, sensual, having not the Spirit." This danger is not to be feared by those who are living daily, hourly, moment by moment in the presence of our heavenly Associates. If we can be truly described as "in Christ Jesus," then we have the assurance that "the law of the spirit of life *in Christ Jesus* has made us free from the law of sin and death." - Rom. 8:2.

FELLOWSHIP IN ALL THINGS

To be thoroughly satisfactory Christians, our fellowship must be as complete as is the fellowship of the Father and the Son. Note John 16:14, 15: "The Holy Spirit shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. *All things that the Father hath are Mine*, therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you." We would say, Surely this

fellowship does not include "all power in heaven and in earth." But when each of us has the faith to lay hold on it, may we not be "strengthened with *all might*, according to *His* glorious power"? (Col. 1:11.) So also, not some little sample of His grace, but "My grace [available in its entirety] is sufficient for thee." Such fellowship is not instantly realized upon consecration. The Holy Spirit is there received, but must be maintained, and our proportion of it increased, that we may finally know "the fulness of joy" which continually dwelling in His presence may impart. An adult whom we know well may be welcomed to the home with the assurance, "The house is yours"; but the small child must reach years of discretion before our welcome can take that form. The reason for the difference is that the adult will not attempt to use the various appliances he does not understand, but will wait to have them explained to him. Gradually our heavenly Father is imparting to us the wisdom that will some day use aright the powers of the divine nature, and the character that will always operate for the accomplishing of His eternal purpose.

No doubt by far the greater portion of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are still "hid" in our Father and our Elder Brother. Appreciation of the truths which His wisdom has revealed will evidence itself in an increased joy in exercising our senses to discern both good and evil -- not by dwelling on errors, however cunningly conceived, but by reveling in the truth. Transforming truths have been the heritage of the Church throughout the Age, and love of the truth has always been a test as to the Christian's worthiness of the fellowship of the great Author.

Greater things can probably be accomplished by the exercising of the senses than any one as yet realizes. A feeble illustration of this might be found in an experience in a certain school for the blind. The yearly Easter hunt for candy eggs was in preparation. One of the newer teachers, assisting in the blindfolding of the children who had partial sight, started to tie a handkerchief over the eyes of a boy with whom he had had contact several hours each week for some months. The boy remonstrated. Upon inquiry as to why, he told the teacher that he did not even have eyeballs. So well had he learned to use the remaining senses that this teacher was unaware of his handicap. The following days seldom disclosed any eggs that had been overlooked. The advantage of senses well exercised was also demonstrated in that those who were totally blind found more eggs than the ones blessed with partial sight. Another teacher in the same institution noting the habit of one of the boys of stopping at a certain point in the hallway each time in going from one class to another, investigated and found that one pair of feet must pass that point each day before the boy was content to leave. His sense of hearing had become so acute that he was able to discern the sound of that one pair of feet in the midst of many others passing. "Giving all diligence" in the use of our senses probably would reveal to each of us much more than we already enjoy of the wisdom and knowledge hid in Christ. More of Christ *in us*, not merely an anointing *on us*, would undoubtedly result in a shining forth of a larger measure of His Spirit *from us*. A hope of glory shining more brightly in the heart would result in a more abundant living of the fellowship that would unconsciously, as well as consciously, "do good unto all men as we have opportunity." "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:10), His life having become our life, the spirit of life in us having become the power of God through us for the ministering of righteousness in the little sphere we are permitted to influence. Though the world will see Jesus no more" (John 14:19), He did not leave them without hope. The Church is commissioned to be a "light" in the world. "Because I live, ye shall live also." "In that day ye shall know [in all its transforming power, the fact] that I am in the Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." There must therefore be a shining forth of His life from us. - Matt. 5:14, 16; Phil. 2:15; John 14:20.

UNITY OF SPIRIT

Under the phrase, "unity of the spirit," the Apostle Paul describes the happy relationship of the spiritbegotten ones, urging that an earnest endeavor be made to maintain it by "walking worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, with all *lowliness* and *meekness*, with *long-suffering*, *forbearing* one another in love." The means is simple, but difficult even to the spirit-begotten, and impossible to the flesh. Forbearing one another in love, with meekness, however, is absolutely necessary. Otherwise the flesh would rob every fellowship of its joy. If God had called mostly the noble ones, and not many unwise or base, a fair showing might have been made in the flesh. It is not to be supposed that those who do not eventually have the Spirit of our God without measure, will ever be entrusted with the powers of the divine nature. The dire result of possessing His power while lacking His Spirit, in any degree, is beyond our imagination. In this sense, then, the Spirit is of greater importance than the divine powers themselves. Since we are invited to be "partakers of the divine nature" ["by birth": Liddell & Scott], it is not surprising to read that "God giveth not the Spirit by measure" -- a spirit equal to "all powers" (the words "to Him" are in italics, meaning they are not in the Greek manuscripts). (John 3:34.) We are not invited to bring vessels capable of receiving but a small portion of that Spirit, God measuring it out to us, but are encouraged to prepare our capacity to its utmost. It is God Himself who says, "I will open the windows of heaven, and pour out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive . it." (Mal. 3:10.) This promise is not for those who have the "spirit of the world," but for those who have the "Spirit which is of God" (1 Cor. 2:12), for those who have brought "all the tithes into the storehouse." Perhaps in a desire that we might know whether we are receiving that Spirit, Jesus in John 3:31 describes the opposite spirit, saying: "He that is of the earth is earthly, *and speaketh of the earth.*" The Jew could not have the full blessing unless he would bring a full "tenth." We who have covenanted "all" must bring "all" into our Father's storehouse if we would be "filled with all the fulness of God." Our lives must not "speak of earth" while claiming to be of heaven.

"Through the knowledge of God," the Apostle Peter assures us there "are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be made *partakers* of the divine nature." (2 Peter 1:4.) Here is an ultimate fellowship, crowning all our hopes; but is it possible that Peter's impetuosity has run away with him, causing him to covet a station too high, and by means too simple? Is it possible that after all there is to be no cross for each of us to take up?-that the very highest goal in the universe is to be attained through the simple and comfortable process of "promises"? Peter spoke under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and his words are in full harmony with all the Holy Spirit has revealed regarding the future of the Church. This ultimate of fellowship, the "crown of life," will be attained only by those who have known fellowship in His sufferings (2 Cor. 1:7; Phil. 3:10), a fellowship pictured in the bread and the wine of "the Lord's supper." Paul calls this, "fellowship of the blood of the Christ," and "fellowship of the Body of the Christ." (1 Cor. 10:16-18, 21.) Apparently the partakers of the glory (1 Peter 5:1), those who will have common-union with the Father and the Son on their own plane, fellowship in the divine nature, will have been no common sacrificers; but willing, joyful sacrificers. (Acts 5:41; 16:25; Heb. 10:34; 1 Peter 4:13; 1 John 5:2, 3.) For them, all crosses are of -gold, blessings given by the divine hand; and they will, as the Apostle Paul, learn to call them all "graces." - Phil. 1:7.

In the texts just noted, and in the text of our article, the Greek word for "communion," "fellowship," and "partakers," is the same. The thought of the word is a "joint participation" (Thayer). Our English word "partnership" is suggested as coming nearer than any other single word to expressing the full thought. (See Prof. Strong's Lexicon.) Every Christian may enjoy an unrestricted partnership in the Apostle Paul's exuberant Joy in tribulation, calling such hideous and painful things as manacles, "graces," if he will but receive Paul's clearer vision of the "glories to follow." Like Paul, his longing for that glorious, new body, the divine one, will so overwhelm

him that all his groaning will be that he, may be clothed with it, not that he may be "unclothed." When Paul does mention the old body and his desire to be rid of it, it is not its insufficiencies that are burdening him, but the sin, that reigns, there. - 2 Cor. 5:2-4; Rom. 7:24.

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." (1 John 1:6.) Paul, like John, finds the life of fellowship possible only, by complete separation from the things of the world, exhorting us not even to "touch the unclean thing," then the God of Israel will be always with us. (2 Cor. 6:17, 18.) He is quoting a precious promise from Isaiah 52:11, one of the myriads of inspiring voices behind him that were his daily portion, the sanctifying power of which worked in him to his cleansing "from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the reverence of God." Lifted in vision to the very courts of heaven, he found the most expressive of all languages too feeble to describe his joy in the tribulation in which he was at that very time having fellowship; for he recognized that it is "through much tribulation we enter the Kingdom." To quote very literally his word coined for the occasion, we find him saying: "I super-abound-over in tribulation." - 2 Cor. 7:4.

KNOWLEDGE NECESSARY TO FELLOWSHIP

Courage to walk in a way so narrow as the one opened to us can be gained only by unusual means. The beginning, the perseverance in that way, and the victorious end, are all dependent upon strength gained through "exceeding great and precious promises." Over God's own signature, these promises are given. He enters into a contract not only to begin, but to finish the good work still going on in those who walk in close and unrestricted fellowship with Him and one with the other in this narrow way.

"Of His own will begat He us with the *Word* of Truth." (James 1:18.) We are "begotten again not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the *Word* of God, which liveth and abideth forever," and which will overpower all opposing forces. Our fellowship is therefore one in which knowledge has its place. Without knowledge there can be no sanctification, no new creature, and no final victory. If we would "put on the new man which is renewed in *knowledge* after the image of Him which created him in righteousness and true holiness," there must be the faith to accept the knowledge which His "exceeding great and precious" Word gives. Each faithful one can therefore say with David that "his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he *meditate day and night*. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season." In this we see a great difference between the Little Flock and the Great Company, the latter bringing in their fruit after the season. Partnership, fellowship with the Father and with the Son is necessary for fruit-bearing, for "He giveth the increase." Unrestricted fellowship is necessary for the fruit to be "in its season." Our partnership is to continue to the point of our being in His image. A transformation so tremendous can be accomplished by no insignificant means. But those who "keep" themselves in the love of God have no reason to fear that His power will not be used on their behalf, employing every means necessary. Bear in mind that He who gives the sunshine and the rain gives also wind and storm. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."

Having fellowship with Him, living moment by moment in His presence, results in walking, acting, talking daily more like Him. "If [therefore] we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but [it is equally true that] if we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we have fellowship *one with another*" not "we *may* have," but "we *have* fellowship one with another." How simple He has made it to know whether we are really, fellowshiping Him, whether we are really "walking in the light." "If we say, we have partnership with Him,' when we are passing our life in the darkness, we are lying and are not doing the truth.

But if we are passing our life in the light, as He is in the light, we ever have partnership with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ is cleansing us from every sin." - 1 John 1:6, 7, Centenary Translation.

Note well the astounding association of "fellowship one with another" and the cleansing of the blood of Jesus Christ. This is reasonable, however, for it is evident that one so unappreciative of our heavenly Father as not to rejoice in fellowship with "the least of these" who has *any* measure of likeness to Him, would be one who would not guard well that likeness throughout eternity. Hence the sinfulness of carnal schisms. He who would wilfully cut himself off from any member of the Body of Christ, thus cutting himself off from that much of god-likeness, as represented in that fellow member, would by this evidence of carnality be proving himself unworthy of the participation he has been enjoying in the cleansing blood of Christ. Surely one who loves the Lord, will make certain that even a temporary separation from any member of His Body is on direct orders from the Head of that Body.

Truth begets and sanctifies, but fellowship keeps us under the blood. May we be able to say with the Psalmist: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His temple." Joyful fellowship in that temple here is necessary that we may have our partnership in it in the great beyond; necessary that we may know how true it is that "in Thy presence there is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness."

"O glorious hope of heavenly love!
It lifts me up to things above;
It bears on eagle wings;
It gives my joyful soul a taste,
And makes me, even here, to feast
With Jesus' priests and kings.

"O that I might at once go up
No more on this side Jordan stop,
But now the land possess!
There dwells the Lord, our righteousness,
He'll keep His own in perfect peace
And everlasting rest."

- P. E. Thomson.

Drawn Together by the Bonds of Love

The Brooklyn Convention

The unity manifest in the Brooklyn Convention, June 2 and 3, could not but remind one of the Psalmist's words: 'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. The bonds that draw God's people together and make their fellowship profitable are enumerated by the great Apostle: "One Body, one Spirit, one Hope of our calling; one Lord., one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all." This is the only complete and perfect basis of unity of Christ's Church; and where it prevails, there will be found the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of liberty. Members of one Body, united to the one Head, drawn together by the bonds of love, for fellowship with the Father and His blessed Son-this describes our happy gathering. The Lord was present and poured out His blessing to the encouragement and refreshing of all.

A number who had expected to be present found circumstances prevented. There were however about the usual number in attendance. Lack of space forbids an attempt to more than refer to the various excellent discourses delivered, the joyful testimony and praise services, Brother J. T. Read's rendering of a number of selections, as well as the occasions for profitable fellowship. Briefly we make mention of a few outstanding thoughts:

Those things that lie near to the hearts of God's children were given special attention-Justification by Faith and by Works-not works as pertains to service or of preaching the Word, which of course should follow, but by "works of righteousness," "works of faith" - a work in the heart and life, transforming it into the likeness of Christ. When our "works" are "works of faith," our "labors" "labors of love," and our "patience" that which is inspired by "hope," there is not the irksomeness connected therewith that the words, "work," "labor," and "patience" would imply, but rather a "rest in the Lord," such as the Apostle exhorted that we "labor" to enter into. "This is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." - -John 6:29.

The transformation that takes us from the first stages of Christian experience where we know little beyond the Golden Rule-the standard of a perfect man, leads us to the next higher step where we "suffer the evil," instead of seeking to justify ourselves. Next we learn to "rejoice in suffering," and continuing to progress, we "return good for evil." Further -on we are able to "pray for those that persecute us, and at last to "patiently endure" -- "having done all to stand." But one step remains -- the call to "come up higher." This transformation is gradual and requires a "good fight of faith," which is a fight that continues throughout the Christian's earthly life. It does not end until he can say with the Apostle, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." The fact that all are called "according to the foreknowledge of God," gives courage through consciousness of this proof that final victory is a possibility for every individual so called, and that He who foreknew our weakness has also made in advance abundant provision for "grace sufficient for every time of need."

It was refreshing to hear the discussion of the "Two Resurrections." The story of God's love as revealed in His gracious Plan for all the families of the earth, is most consoling especially in these days of sorrow and affliction, and it seems each time we hear it, "more wonderfully sweet." Maturity of Christian character was emphasized -- character that is built on the One Foundation. An excerpt from Hannah Whitall Smith as quoted by Brother Russell (Z-June 15, 1916) was given as follows:

"Wherever there has been a faithful following of the Lord in a consecrated heart, several things have, sooner or later, inevitably followed. Meekness and quietness of spirit become in time the

characteristics of the daily life. A submissive acceptance of the will of God, as it comes in the hourly events of each day, is manifested; pliability in the hands of God to do or to suffer all the good pleasure of His will; sweetness under provocation; calmness in the midst of turmoil and bustle; a yielding to the wishes of others [where there is no conflicting principle involved], and an insensibility to slights and affronts; absence of worry or anxiety; deliverance from care and fear -- all these, and many other similar graces, are invariably found to be the natural outward development of that inward life which is hid with Christ in God."

Such an attainment requires oneness of purpose "This one thing I do." It requires humility, resolve, *concentration*, perseverance.

The precious hours of fellowship had but united our hearts more closely in the bonds of peace and love, and the friends tarried long after the close of the convention in fellowship, "commending one another to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

- *Contributed.*

God's Grace and the Song of the Lord

SCRIPTURE READING: 2 CHRON. 28 AND 29.

"And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also." - 2 Chron. 29:27.

FOR SIXTEEN years there had been no song in the temple of the Lord in Israel. And then one day a wonderful change took place. "Early in the morning the king and the rulers of the city went up to the temple; the Levites came with their harps, and the priests were there with their trumpets, and there was a great chorus of trained singers." And suddenly it says, "When the burnt offering began" -the trumpets blew, and the harpers began to play with mighty volume on their strings, and then, like the sound of many waters came the voices of the temple singers, and the house of the Lord was filled with songs of praise to God. So beautiful is the scene that it brings to our minds that scene recorded in the fourteenth chapter of Revelation where, looking down into the future, John saw one hundred and forty-four thousand standing on Mount Zion with the Lamb, and heard as the voice of many waters, and as the sound of harpers playing on their harps, and they sang as it were a new song before the throne; and no man could learn that song but the one hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.

THE HEART'S EXPRESSION BY SONG

Song is an expression of joy in the heart. Whenever men have occasion to express great joy, they do so by song. The Jewish people spent seventy years in captivity at Babylon, while their land lay desolate to keep its Sabbaths. They had no song in their hearts then. Of that time one of their poets has written:

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth; saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the *Lord's* song in a strange land?" - Psa. 137:1-4.

There can be no true joy in the heart that feels the frown of God's displeasure. But when God permitted them to return to their own land, and to build again the wall of Jerusalem, under Nehemiah the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, they dedicated the wall "with gladness, both with thanks givings and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps," and with two great companies of singers. - Neh. 12:27.

In prophecy the absence of joy is expressed by the absence of singing (as in Isa. 16:10) ; but of the time when God's favor shall have been restored to His people and all Israel shall be saved, the Prophet says: "Sing, oh ye heavens: for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel." - Isa. 44:23.

THE CHRISTIAN'S SONG OF JOY AND PRAISE

And prophesying of the time when God's spirit shall be poured out upon *all* flesh, the same Prophet further says (Isa. 35:2), the desert "shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and *singing*"; and, Isa. 51:11: "The redeemed of the Lord shall return [i.e. from the grave], and come *with singing* unto Zion [Christ ruling with His Church in the Kingdom of God]; and

everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away."

Who has not heard of the song of the angels when Jesus was' born? The song celebrating the good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people, which joy is to come through Him who was "anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows"! - Heb. 1:9; Psa. 45:7.

Jesus said to His disciples: "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." (John 15:11.) No other people on the face of the earth have so much to rejoice and sing over as do Christians. Nothing else that we can conceive of a man possessing in this life could mean as much as the knowledge that we have the favor of Almighty God, and that "no man is able to pluck us out of our Father's hand." It is therefore natural for a Christian to rejoice and sing. Wherefore the Apostle, in Col. 3:16, says: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Again, in Eph. 5:18-20, he says: "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the *Spirit*; speaking to yourselves in- psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making' melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Also in Phil. 4:4 he says: "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice."

If we are living up to our privileges in the Lord we will be constantly rejoicing, and songs of praise to God will constantly well up in our hearts.

"Singing for Jesus, our life and our light;
Singing for Him as we press to the mark;
Singing for Him when the morning is bright
Singing, still singing, for Him in the dark."

ISRAEL'S LOST SONG

Now let us see why Israel lost her song. In the chapter preceding that from which our text is taken we find that Ahaz, the king, had no use for the worship of God, so he drove out of the temple the singers and the priests. He cut in pieces the gold and silver vessels; he hewed down the altars, and put out the lights, and locked the doors, and the house of God was filled with dust and dirt, and became the abode of the birds of the air that built their nests in its neglected courts and filled it with their uncleanness. And he built altars and sacrificed to the gods of the heathen nations and caused the people of Israel to transgress. For sixteen years this lasted; and the judgment of God fell upon the nation, and - many of them were taken captives or slain by the surrounding nations.

The judgment of God will fall upon all men and all nations that, having known God, choose to turn from, His service and forget Him. Wherefore the Psalmist has said (Psa. 9:17) : "The wicked shall be returned* into the grave, and all the nations that forget God."

* Rotherham and Leeser.

It was closing the doors of the house of the Lord and forgetting God that robbed Israel of her song. And if the song has ever gone out of your life, it is for exactly the same reason -- the temple of your heart has been closed against its rightful Lord. Of course you didn't close the door with a slam. You would not be rude to your Lord. You just neglected to read your Bible; earnest prayer became too much of a task; the worship of God began to lose its attraction, and the old pleasures began to fascinate you and without actually saying, "These be your gods, Israel," you gave yourself to them and closed the door of your life against God. No wonder the song was gone, and conscience pointed an accusing finger at you.

SONG RETURNS WITH THE BURNT OFFERING

How can such a one get the song back? How get again the Christian experience which is joyful and victorious? Look at the verse from which we have taken our text. It says, "And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also."

You know God ordained various sacrifices for Israel. For example, there were the trespass offering, the peace offering, the meat offering and the whole burnt offering. Each of these is symbolic, and teaches a lesson concerning the Christian experience. But the highest type of all these offerings was the whole burnt offering. In the other offerings either the whole or a portion of that offered became the property of the officiating priest, and in some a portion was returned to the offerer; but in the case of the whole burnt offering- the entire sacrifice was devoted to the Lord, and consumed by the fire upon the altar. It was typical of the kind of sacrifice God invites you and me to make of our wills and our all to Him. It is not completed by merely giving our selves to Him as a definite act in consecration-consecration is but the placing of the sacrifice upon the altar. The offering of the whole burnt offering is a life work -- keeping the offering upon the altar while Jesus, our High Priest, sees that it is all consumed.

When we first gave ourselves to God in consecration, what joy filled our hearts! What songs of joy rose to our lips as we sought to praise Him for the blessed privilege of being counted dead with Christ, yet rising to walk with Him in newness of life! But after a while, little by little, perhaps we failed to keep our sacrifice as fully upon the altar as we had done at first; a little self will began to find a place in our life, and correspondingly some of the joy began to go out of our life, until one day we awoke to the fact that we no longer possessed that great joy in the Lord we had once known. Perhaps we found ourselves in the condition described in Cowper's hymn:

"Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His Word?"

"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill."

The way back, as we have said, is that pointed out by our text. "When the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also." When we begin again to bind our offering to the altar, resolving to see to it that all we have consecrated to the Lord is fully devoted to Him, that there is no withholding of anything, and when the fire begins to consume the sacrifice, then let us "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try us, as though some strange thing were happening to us," for this is what we are to expect; "but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of

Christ's sufferings; that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." (1 Pet. 4:12, 13.) For self in us must be fully consumed before our whole burnt offering will be fully completed. And as the fire of those testings begins to come upon us and consume self, then the song of the Lord will begin again in our heart, and we shall, as the Apostle Peter says, be able to rejoice inasmuch as we are made partakers of Christ's sufferings, and to rejoice with the Apostle Paul that in all things we may be more than conquerors through Him who loved us. - Rom. 8:37.

The time came when King Ahaz had to die. He had been so vicious and wicked that the people loathed him; they refused him a sepulchre among the kings of Israel, so he had to sleep in a dishonored grave.

THE INFLUENCE OF A GODLY MOTHER

Hezekiah, his son, then became king. He was one of the noblest princes that ever adorned the throne of David. He had everything against him on his father's side. But we have every reason to believe that Abijah, his mother, the daughter of the Prophet Zachariah, was a good woman; and no doubt in the midst of the profligacy and idolatry of her wicked husband's reign she took the lad under her own control, and inspired him for the noble part he was to play when he took the throne of his father.

One of the best gifts God can give in this world is a godly, sensible, praying, Christian mother. If we had more such mothers today, we would find more Hezekiahs among the youths of the land. Abraham Lincoln said, "All that I am, or ever hope to be, I owe to my mother." And many a man and woman is serving God today only because he or she had a Christian mother who taught him to reverence spiritual things. The influence of mother's life has restrained many a young man and young woman from entering into sinful pleasures during the dangerous years of the formative period of their life, so that when they came to more mature years and began to appreciate the really worth-while things in life, mother's teaching has brought forth fruit in a determination to turn to God and serve Him. And often when the fiery trials of experience have come to a Christian, the memory and influence of a saintly mother has given the courage and strength to go through that testing victoriously. May all reverence, then, be paid to Christian mothers, the extent of whose influence has been far, far beyond what *they* can ever know until He in whom they placed their faith rewards them with the privilege of knowing fully, even as they have been fully known of Him. The love of such a mother is more like the love of God, in its mercy and compassion, than any other earthly love. Often has the Christian mother's love continued to pour forth its wealth of affection when all other earthly loves have failed. Of the love of such a Christian mother one has written (George Griffith Fetter)

"The noblest thoughts my soul can claim, The holiest words my tongue can frame, Unworthy are to praise the name More sacred than all other. An infant when her love first came; A man, I find it just the same; Reverently I breathe her name, The blessed name of mother."

JESUS HONORS HIS MOTHER

As we understand the matter, Jesus paid a *wonderful tribute* of loving respect to His *mother* when He performed His *first miracle* at her request. To paraphrase the matter, it would appear that the occurrence was about as follows: His mother knew that the wine had given out at the wedding feast to which they had been invited. She knew her son to be a prophet sent of God; and she knew the powers of a prophet as they had been exercised by that greatest of Old Testament prophets, Elijah, when for three and a half years, while a great famine was in the land, the measure of meal

and cruse of oil of the widow of Sarepta failed not. And so she said to Him, aside, "They have no wine." Applying to her that title which those in Palestine considered most honorable of all others, He seems to have replied substantially as follows: "Woman, what have I to do with thy private requests for the exercise of My power? You wish Me to perform a miracle before this noble company that they may behold, and believe on Me. Mine *hour* for manifesting My Father's glory to men is not yet come. Nevertheless, in obedience to thy wish, My honored mother, I will do what thou desirest Me to do." How must the emotions have been stirred of her who had pondered many strange things in her heart since His babyhood, and her eyes must have kindled with maternal pride and holy joy as she realized that she was about to behold her son display powers such as only come by the gift of God, and which were to seal Him as a prophet in the eyes of Jew and Gentile. With confidence, therefore, she said to the servants: "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." Thus was Jesus' first manifestation of divine power rendered in honor of His mother. What a lesson is *there* for all! O that all young men and women who have godly mothers would render to them such deference!

FAINT IS THE SONG OF THE LORD TODAY

"The first thing Hezekiah did when *he* came to the throne was to open the doors of the temple and start again the worship of Jehovah. He brought the priests and the Levites together and told them first to sanctify themselves, for they had been chosen to stand before the Lord and to minister unto the people. And then he told them to cleanse the temple, to carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place, and to restore the vessels of the Lord." And when this was done, he commanded that the sin offerings and the burnt offerings be made upon the altar. "And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also," and "they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshiped."

All too much has the song of the Lord died out in the ecclesias of today. In some ecclesias it has been because of a tendency to look to earthly leaders, and a failure to prove the interpretations of *such* leaders by a comparison of Scripture with Scripture. And so the dust and the dirt and the cobwebs of human philosophies and interpretations have been allowed to accumulate, and the ecclesias have become filled with members who give no evidence that they ever experienced the power of God's regenerating grace which fills the heart with compassionate love for all mankind. And the voice of the Levites and priests, the justified and the consecrated ones, in such ecclesias, sounds more like the shout of battle than the song of praise to the Giver of all good.

In other ecclesias of professing Christians there is no song because the members do not care to listen to the preaching of the pure, unadulterated Gospel, "once for all delivered to the saints" in the Bible; they consider themselves too modern, too intellectual, for that. And there can be no song of the Lord in the heart of either minister or congregation who preach from or accept a mutilated Bible, and contend for the God-dishonoring teaching of a brute ancestry for one who bears the image of God, and who remove the virgin birth and the supernatural in general from the revelation of God as we find it in the Bible.

Hezekiah told the priests to restore the vessels of the temple, which the wicked King Ahaz had carried away. And there are some things that ought to be restored to the ecclesias of God today. Let the Bible come back in its simplicity, and let men preach the truth as it is written therein. Let it be taught that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit; that He *was indeed* the Son of God; that He *did* on the *cross* bear the penalty of *our* sins, which is death, to remove us from death; that He was raised from the dead, assuring a resurrection to *all* men; that He was the Seed through whom blessings shall ultimately come to *all* the families of earth, both the quick and the dead, after His return from heaven to earth; that the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ is the great central doctrine

about which the whole plan of salvation revolves; and that it is only as men become like Jesus in character that they can ever hope to abide in His favor. And as these teachings are restored, let the people offer once more the sin offering for their transgressions, that is, plead before God a true faith in Jesus Christ as the one who bore the penalty for their sins, and through whose merit and work *alone* they can hope to stand before God, and let them follow the sin offering by the burnt offering, for the latter should always follow the former, that is, a complete surrender of the will to God, and the continued sacrifice of self upon the altar of consecration to God until "Christ be formed in them," and then the ecclesias will again be filled with men and women whose hearts are overflowing with the song of the Lord, and the spirit of gladness and worship will enable them to "offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of their lips giving thanks unto His name." (Heb. 13:15.) "And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also."

THE DIVINE REMEDY FOR SPIRITUAL DELINQUENTS

So full of the song of the Lord, of praise to God, were the hearts of the people, that when Hezekiah told them of their privilege of bringing sacrifices and thank offerings unto the Lord, the number of the burnt offerings brought was seventy bullocks, a hundred rams, and two hundred lambs; and of the consecrated things, six hundred oxen, and three thousand sheep. But before the burnt offerings could be offered they must be flayed-skinned-the covering with which nature provided the animal must be removed, well picturing the fact that in offering ourselves to God as burnt offerings, all that in man's sight might constitute a covering or excuse for our fallen natures must be taken away; for there is no creature that is not manifest in His sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. - Heb. 4:13.

This work of thus helping to prepare the burnt offerings was a part of the duty of the priests. But in verse 34 we are told: "But the priests were too few, so that they could not flay all the burnt offerings: wherefore their brethren the Levites did help them till the work was ended, and until the other priests had sanctified themselves; for the Levites were more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests."

And if any in the ecclesias of God today, whatever their standing *may have been* with the Lord as members of the antitypical *priesthood*, are neglecting the maintaining of their consecration, it may be that they too are missing some wonderful privileges which otherwise might be theirs, of assisting *others* to be divested of that covering in which they have hitherto trusted, that is, confidence in the works of the natural man, and of assisting in bringing them to that condition where they might present their bodies as a sacrifice to God. For God has ordained that the required number of antitypical burnt offerings shall be offered. It is the privilege of the priests, the consecrated, to assist in the preparation of those burnt offerings. And whenever the priests grow lax and are not awake to their privilege of service, God may grant that service to others who have been more diligent, though they be numbered only among the Levites -- the justified.

PRACTICAL LESSONS FOR THE CONSECRATED

A word further as to the application of the lesson and the text to the individual:

1. *The temple was opened.* Let us remind you that the Scripture teaches that every child of God is a temple of the Holy Spirit: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." - 1 Cor. 3:16, 17.

If the song of the Lord has in any measure gone out of your life, are you willing to open the temple of your life to the will of God again, to get it back? Jesus is saying to you today: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." (Rev. 3:20.) *Do* this; open the door of your heart fully to Him, and the song, the joy of the Lord, will fill your soul.

2. *And then they cleansed the temple.* You would not worship in a temple like the one that Hezekiah found, moldy and dirty, and festooned with cobwebs. And just so the Holy Spirit must have a clean temple in which to dwell. "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." (Isa. 52:11.) It may be in just *one* thing, and what seems to you *a very small* thing, in which you are failing to conform your life to the divine standard. But however small it may seem to you, if it is sin, it is taking the song, the joy of the Lord, measurably out of your life, and causing you to lack the power whereby you might be enabled *always* to have the victory through Christ Jesus. Not until every open and every secret *sin* has been cleansed from your life, everything that in any manner violates your well-trained Christian conscience, will there come complete peace, and power, and the song of the Lord in all its beauty and joy in your life.

3. *And then they restored the holy vessels that had been taken away:* And there are things that need to be restored in the *life* if the song of the Lord is to begin there. How often do you read the Bible, our "love letter from home"? The Prophet says: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." (Jer. 15:16.) Is the new creature within you being starved for lack of this spiritual food? Is this one of the vessels that needs to be restored?

And what about prayer? Perhaps this is another vessel that needs to be restored. For any neglect of this wonderful privilege of communion with the Heavenly Father we are bound to pay, the price by a decrease in our spiritual joys.

"Take time to be holy! Speak oft with thy Lord.
Abide in Him always And feed on His Word."

Possibly- another vessel that needs to be restored is attendance upon divine worship. The Psalmist expresses -the spirit of every one who is living up to his privileges of joy in the Lord when he says: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." (Psa. 122:1.) The admonition of the Apostle in Hebrews, 10:25, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another; and *so much the more* as ye see the day approaching," is more fully applicable today than at any prior time in the history of the Church, now that the day of the Lord is so near at hand.

Certainly all of *these* things must be restored if we wish the song of the Lord to begin.

4. *And then one last thing was done.* The rendering of the offerings: first the sin offering, and then the burnt offering. As for the sin offering, all you have to do is to exercise faith in the efficacy of the sacrifice of Him who became a sin offering for us, the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. You must *realize* that *no amount of work* which you could perform in the service of God can entitle you to any standing with Him; that when you have done all you can possibly do, you are still an unprofitable servant; and that all the Heavenly Father asks of you, in order that He may forgive your sins and remove them as far from you as the east is from the west is that you acknowledge your sin, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as the One who has made atonement therefor, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with His own precious blood. Realizing our constant mistakes and failures, we say, "What wondrous mercy, what amazing

grace, that He should still, wish to claim us as His children! and are "lost in wonder, love, and praise" until we cry --

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a tribute far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my life, my soul, my all!"

And then, in grateful appreciation, we would stretch ourselves upon the altar for the burnt offering and ask God to send the fire that shall utterly consume our sacrifice, utterly consume self-will within us, the while the song, the joy of the Lord fills our hearts.

There is a verse at the end of the chapter which says, "The thing was done suddenly." O, child of God! If *you* have been half-hearted, or faltering in sacrificing your- burnt offering, decide suddenly, *right now*, to make- that surrender full and complete. Decide today to live closer to God; to lay aside every weight and close-girding sin; to be indeed *dead* with Christ, putting to dearth self-will, that the life of Jesus may indeed be manifest in your body. (2 Cor. 4:10.) The world can never give you the song of the Lord in your heart; it is the life that is "filled with all the fulness of God," the life of the burnt' offering, the life of full surrender to the will of God, that gives that song. Then say *now* in your heart:

"O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee;
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be."

"And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also."

- *Contributed.*

Debtors to His Marvelous Grace

"By grace are ye saved through faith." - Eph. 2-8.

THE GREATEST exhibit of God's wonder working grace will be the glorified Church. No other manifestation of His loving-kindness has ever equaled the perfecting work accomplished in these saints of the Lord. Having in grace chosen not many wise, noble, or great according to the world's rule of values, no flesh may therefore glory in His sight however highly honored. And having chosen to work out the special marvels of His grace on material so imperfect, so prone to be otherwise than always pliable in His hands, how greatly God has needed to be an undiscouraged workman. So often the clay has broken on the wheel as He sought to make it into a vessel of usefulness and of beauty. But in loving-kindness it has been taken up again and made into yet another vessel. Again and again His patience has been manifested according to promise, "He shall not crush a broken reed, nor quench a wick that dimly burns. (Isa. 42:3, Moffatt.) Seven times the just man may fall, but through grace he "riseth up again," assisted by a hand mighty to save. Truly, "the Lord is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish." - 2 Peter 3:9.

In all His working the ways of God are marvelous in our eyes. The marvels of His grace are the proof that God is love. In the operation of His grace toward His people, He not only knows how to steal the bitterness out of life's woes, but He also knows how to discard the unworthy material we so often bring in word and deed, and to preserve the good and commendable. We are not under law, but under grace, and what debtors to that grace we are! In the Old Testament records, where faults and failings are impartially set forth, Moses leaves Egypt in fear for his life. But when the record appears in the spirit of New Testament grace, what beauty there is in having only his virtues brought to view in the words, "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king." His flight in fear is forgotten, and the triumph of faith alone remembered.

And we are under that marvelous grace wherein we are made the righteousness of God through Christ. Our imperfections are all provided for in the finished work of Christ for us. He took our place under condemnation, and we take His place now in the holy presence of God. He went to the cross, bearing our sin; we come from the cross, bearing His righteousness. With sins confessed, and cleansed from all unrighteousness, it is ours to know that we are now complete in Christ the beloved One. But to really believe this and by faith enter into the rest it should bring to us -- how many of us have learned to experience this promised rest? We have struggled and wrestled to gain it, while all the time the Word has been clear and simple, that such as have "believed do enter into rest." And what a rest is this! "For he that is entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His." - Heb. 4:3, 10.

But too often faith falls short of this possible rest and quietness of spirit. So life goes on in fluctuations between long periods of self-condemnation; and too few brief seasons of happiness when we cease to keep looking inward at self. The secret of perpetual joy and confidence eludes us, and we are ready to confess to ourselves that too often an unaccountable depression settles down over our spirit, making all expressions of professed happiness seem meaningless. We know we should be happy in our knowledge of, God's favor, always rejoicing even though outward circumstances be otherwise than calm. We know that our lives should reflect freedom from fear, and bear testimony that we know the One whom we have believed, and that we are therefore able to trust His word in all things. Yet failing to realize the peace and assurance we crave, how easily we can succumb to the Tempter's arguments, and say, "This sweet boon of rest is not for me." We see these possibilities of full assurance taught in the Scriptures, and now and again exemplified in the experience of some we meet; but we conclude that since temperaments differ, ours must be the unfortunate type; therefore to keep up the effort to reach the goal of our aspirations is all in vain.

Such conclusions are wrong, and it is well to remember the word of inspiration which says, "Let us earnestly endeavor, therefore, to enter into that rest, that no one may fall by the same example of unbelief" (Heb. 4:11, Diaglott) as did Israel of old. It must be remembered that we live in the realm of faith, and that our assurance, our joy and peace, depend not on anything we have done or could do, but on the finished redemption accomplished for us in Christ Jesus. It is from Jesus Himself we receive the primary principle of true faith, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." (John 6:29.) What is this but pointing out the great secret we want to know? To believe on Him in the sense intended in this statement is to believe in Him as our justification, appropriate Him as our righteousness, abiding in Him as our life, making Him our peace, and accepting through Him our victory. All we want we may find in Him if we will but seek everything through faith. Such faith will bring us into the fixed conviction that since all we need we have in Christ, we may be hourly victorious, daily victorious, and finally victorious.

What God has cleansed we are not to turn from as unclean, and what He has made simple we are to be careful not to mystify and becloud with multiplied words. The verbosity with which this life of rest in Christ is so often treated has hindered many from grasping its meaning. Simply stated it becomes beautifully practical, and surely inspirational. Theological discussions of such themes are likely to be wordy, while experimental discoveries of great truths can be presented in language understandable by all. Having this in mind, it affords a great pleasure to pass on the contents of a letter received quite recently from one . who has found the secret springs of this great boon of peace and rest. O how simple these wonderful possibilities are when the Lord can come in and speak as never man may speak. Let us, then, give ear to the testimony of the writer of this letter. Quoted in part, she says:

"I would like to mention here a line of thought I have been following for some time with great help and profit. It is that instead of spending so much time in looking into my own life to find there whether today I have climbed another rung of the ladder of grace, that I spend more time in thinking of our marvelous Lord and of His wonders of character. In Him we see the perfection of all beauty, grace, love, and mercy, the One to whom we may come, finding there One who is perfect in every respect. And I like to enumerate the qualities in which He is perfect -- not just to glibly skate over the word, giving it no particular thought, but to feel that He is, indeed, perfect in every wonderful quality I can name or understand -- and even then, still to know that we can never exhaust His grace and beauty of character. Why should I look at myself in the light of His glory? What do I expect to find in myself that will ever give me much ground for anything but humility and the feeling that it is Himself and not me at all. My puny little efforts pale into insignificance -- and more than that, I become so discouraged, looking inside my own heart too closely. But when I look at Him I see the Sun of all grace, the perfection of Hope and joy beyond us to probe to its depths. My heart expands and swells in love toward a God and His Son so worthy of all praise and adoration. I find true joy in forgetting self with its failures and its continual disappointments of development. But I feel strong and mighty when it comes to singing His praise, when it comes to thanking God for the evidence we have of His care and our sonship with Him. I become a giant when I attempt to enumerate His blessings, spiritual and material in our daily lives and to thank Him for these things which are never-ending.

"But what shall we say when we realize that we have only touched the fringe of all these blessings? What a breathless view we obtain at times of the future in the presence of such a God! How much time is spent by some of us in simple thanksgiving for these matchless blessings? Here I do not need to 'keep my feet on the ground.' We can soar to the heavenlies, feeling that we have fellowship of the rarest with the true Christians of all ages, be they living or gone from this world. I feel, too, that this is not an impractical thing, a thing illusory and intangible, but a definite reality in which we can forget this life with its failures and troubles, its few friends who understand or who, perhaps, are so stultified by the restrictions of the human spirit, by our clumsy efforts to express ourselves, by fear of being misunderstood and laughed at by a multitude of human shortcomings and limitations. Surely this is where we meet God in true fellowship and worship. This is the place where we find true strength: knowing we have a God who never fails, who never weakens or grows weary of us and our coming to

Him. What a God we have! May our thanks ascend like incense daily and our worship grow to full stature. But even in that we shall never reach the end. So once more, my God is an inexhaustible storehouse of grace and glory. Thanks be to His holy name."

In the foregoing letter the writer could express an assurance that in her experience this happier frame of mind was "not an impractical thing, a thing illusory and intangible, but a definite reality in which we can forget this life with its failures and troubles." In this assurance thus expressed there is reality indeed. Such experiences may be new discoveries to any of us when a loving providence finds us ready to be led, but others have known a similar joy before us. Others have testified to being lifted up out of the fluctuating conditions of doubt and depression alternating with times when faith triumphed and rested. Proof of this comes to our attention in another letter received by a friend, the writer having passed on some time ago. We are glad to append this testimonial to the above, and quote in part as follows:

"I was so pleased to get your nice letter, and feel I should reply to it, even although in pencil. I have not your letter at hand to refer to, but I noticed that you mentioned 'our covenant by sacrifice' several times, and I just wonder what it all means to you. I used to think of that as meaning what I was doing, and many an unhappy hour I had thinking how constantly I failed in doing and in not doing. Many a time I surrendered myself to God, but now I think I was always thinking of the 'I' in the surrender (what I would now do or say), and that went on for a long time.

"Many a lesson God gave me, and I always laid hold of something, but I can now see, it was always in connection with something on my part. I could fill a book, dear, with all the gracious things the Lord showed me, and I thought I understood it all, but now 'I have entered the valley of blessing so sweet,' and there is no more 'I' in the business.

"About eighteen months ago I was reading and studying Colossians a lot, and saw that Jesus was everything. In Him everything in heaven and in earth was centered -- God's will for us the Church, and His Plan for the world, and that He was always well-pleasing to the Father. While thinking about that, it came to me how pure and perfect, how lovely and all-satisfying to God our dear Savior was, and I thought if I were hidden in Him, then I too would be always well-pleasing to our Heavenly Father. It was as if a door opened and that door was Christ our Lord, and I stepped in and was swallowed up in Him, lost in Him, and God found me in Him. What - a day I had! All the verses I used to delight in had a deeper, sweeter meaning to me. He had overcome and He counted me as also having overcome. Out of **His** fulness I am all that He was and is. 'By whom the world is crucified to me and I unto the world.'

"I see my own weaknesses and failings, but I seek to follow Paul, and glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me. The blood of Jesus Christ is always cleansing me, and He has taken me into the Holy of Holies, and made me to sit down with Him, and His banner over me is love. What a difference! I understand what it means to reckon myself dead in the old nature, in a way I never did before. I have entered the joy of the Lord, praise His name! and everything has a different look in a way I can hardly describe. The work is done, and all is finished, and I go on following in His footsteps, seeking ever to refer all things to Him, and to lay hold...."

In these testimonies we see illustrated the verities of feasting on Christ. This is the great truth of our standing in grace. If our vision can reach to the utmost of this wonderful provision made for us in Jesus Christ, the days of faltering faith should be over, and the garments of perpetual praise put on. Then will God's goodness bind grateful hearts to Him, and the habit of song will surely be, "Hear what the Lord has done for me."

- J. J. Blackburn.

Greetings From Abroad

The following is a letter from our Brother Couling of Rugby, England, who is at present on a business trip in the United States. The message contained in this letter has been delivered to the friends in the Eastern cities to which his business has taken him, but was intended for "all the American friends," so this method is used to reach the larger number.

Dear Brethren:

It has been my privilege to visit the United States and to carry with me from England messages of love to all the American friends. As is our usual custom, these expressions of sympathy and of oneness between the Body members were associated with Scripture texts. These Scriptures, to me, the messenger, were so eloquent of our gratitude for deliverance from war trials, that on my own responsibility I have related some of these experiences which the English brethren have had to go through. The Scriptures came from Coventry and London, names I suppose very much in the world news, and associated with Nazi Germany's frightfulness. From *Coventry* district came Psalm 18:1-6:

"I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: He heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry came before Him, even into His ears."

Those brethren Who lived through the night of November 14, 1940, were baptised with trials of faith, by fire. The German bombers came over from 6 p.m. approximately until 7 a.m. the next morning. From about 1 a.m. the enemy had everything to himself. The water services failed, electric lights were cut off by bomb damages, and the opposition from anti-aircraft, etc., had almost ceased. As the waves of bombers flew overhead, furniture, doors and windows in the houses vibrated from the throb of the aeroplane engines, and one naturally did not know how soon one of their missiles might destroy ourselves and our loved ones.

Under these circumstances, brethren, the fine doctrinal differences of this or that Scripture do not seem to matter. What does matter is, How close are we to God and to those "everlasting Arms"? That is why Psalm 18 is so eloquent. If the Lord were not our Rock, we should just perish. We are reminded of the Proverb Scripture: "The people without a vision perish." We have been forced by the weakness of our own flesh to literally *call* upon the Lord and He *has* heard. So this Scripture is a testimony of the faithfulness of God and our thankfulness for deliverance.

London, in addition to having the above experiences of the early bombing, had also the pilotless flying bombs and the rocket bombs. The latter travel faster than sound, and just arrive in one's midst without warning. It had to be experienced to be fully appreciated. Nevertheless, from London comes the expression of love to 'all American friends, and the Scripture, 2 Thess. 3:16:

"Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all."

Out of Infernal noises and chaos, as briefly described above, comes this still voice of peace -- the peace which passes understanding, and the peace which came to God's people when all around the world was tumbling down and crashing to destruction. So friends, when the prayer for you is that you might enjoy this kind of peace, it is because it can be commended to you by those who experienced its power in their own lives.

I asked my son, Peter, a young man of twenty-one, consecrated, and a Conscientious Objector, what message he would have me take to our American friends. After a moment's hesitation he replied, "Tell them, Daddy, that we are waiting for the Lord and the Kingdom." I was pleased with this reply, for it is the very thing that we and the whole world are waiting for, and with longing hearts praying, "Thy Kingdom come."

There were other Scriptures I was charged with: 2 Thess. 2:16, 17; Prov. 3:21-26; Acts 20:32; Heb. 13:20, 21. These all have the same thought of trials and difficulties overcome by the power of our Almighty Father, and express the truth that God's strength is made perfect in weakness. English brethren have been through the fire, but our Continental friends have probably suffered more. Yet I am sure that no harrowing tales will come from their lips only as it is to show that in the time of trouble the Lord's people are delivered and will yet be delivered. Whatever the future may hold for us and the world, we still can say with the Psalmist: "Praise the Lord!"

Yours by His grace, S. A. Couling.

Dear Brethren:

We wish once again to assure you of our love and prayers and to let you know how much we have felt and appreciated your prayers on our behalf which have ascended to our Father during the severe experiences

through which the Lord's people here have recently passed. Especially in Southern England and the London area, the past months have been fraught with severe physical and mental strain. The houses of many of our dear-brethren have been severely damaged by "fly bombs" and "rockets" and many have been the escapes from physical injury. Our meetings have been held in spite of sudden explosions about us, and with the sound of "flying bombs" passing overhead. Our meeting rooms have been severely damaged as we have passed from one place to another, but the Lord has always provided for us the means of fellowship together. How sweet has been that fellowship! and we have praised our loving Father for His watchful care over us, and for that peace which has filled the heart of each one. Yes, even this experience has been among those things which "work together for good," for we have been drawn closer to each other by the bonds of sympathy and love. We know that your prayers and the prayers of the Lord's people everywhere have availed much and we are grateful.

Hostilities on this side of the world have ceased, but as we look into the future we realize how great are the problems which confront the statesmen of the world. We know not what lies ahead, but we are conscious that a time of very severe testing will come to those who stand fast in their allegiance to the Lord and His Word. However, we also know that He-who has kept us through all past experiences will never leave nor forsake us and will grant the needed strength for each day as it comes. O, let us all redouble our efforts to "make our calling and election sure," for the "whole creation is groaning, and waiting-for *the manifestation of the sons of God*. Let us pray for one another that we may be found among that worthy company. God bless you all.

Once again we assure you of our warm love in the Lord, and pray that you may be guided in all wisdom, and strengthened with might in your loving service for the Lord and His dear ones.

Your brother and fellow-servant by His grace,

On behalf of Bible Students Committee, E. Allbon, Treasurer.

Dear Brethren:

I am happy to inform you that both Sister and myself have come safely through these five years of awful time of war and oppression by a cruel enemy. How severely our people in general have suffered! I need not tell you that. You know all about it. Indeed it was a time of trouble and distress, much as the Bible announced it long ago. And yet how glad we are that all the time we have felt the leading and protecting hand of a dear Father in heaven. How can we praise His name for all His benefits toward us, and His loving care we have experienced so abundantly.

The time was hard, as viewed from a bodily standpoint; but happy we are that the spiritual welfare has been maintained, and that we might stand fast in the faith and in the strength of the promises of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

We have greatly missed the communication with you brethren overseas, but as the glorious liberation by the Allies has made it possible now that the former ties of fellowship by letter and by the printed page may be reestablished, we write at once to you to let you know how we are doing. The comforting words of your last letter to us dated May 23, 1941, have been of much help. Indeed we have had definite evidences that we were safely resting on the Everlasting Arms.

And now you will understand that we are so anxious to know how you and all the brethren abroad are doing -what experiences you have had in general during the time of war; how matters have developed; and what the prospects are, viewed from the present point of time. We hope to have your correspondence again and the contact restored, the "Herald" again to be mailed to us so that we once more may enjoy its upbuilding spiritual food as in former days.

Later on we may have the opportunity to tell the brethren something more of our experiences and of the great thankfulness of our people toward the Allied countries for the tremendous victories they have achieved for the peoples of Europe and particularly for the Netherlands. The purpose of this letter is in the first place to try to restore communication, and I hope that it will succeed as soon as possible. In the meantime I remain with hearty Christian greetings, in which Sister joins,

Your brother in Christ,
G. van H. -- Holland.