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The Life That Now Is

"For bodily exercise profiteth for a little time: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." - 1 Tim. 4:8, marginal reading.

TO APPRECIATE fully the beauty of the Apostle's statement regarding the profitableness of godliness in the life that now is, it would seem necessary to take a retrospective survey of his unusual experiences prior to the writing of his two very personal letters to his beloved son Timothy. He might of course have written these same words at a very much earlier date in his ministry, and they would have been no less true. They might have been written long before he could write his life's story of repeated imprisonments, of stripes, of hunger and nakedness, of impoverishment and rejections, and they would have been words just as full of truth. But when they were written, as they could be, with a background of suffering such as Paul had hitherto experienced, how much greater weight attaches to his affirmation that even for "the life that now is," the pursuit of godliness is unquestionably profitable.

ST. PAUL IN PERILS MANY

It was not in any spirit of boasting that this noble Apostle recounted his hardships. He understood perfectly well that only when suffering for well-doing is borne patiently, is it acceptable with God; therefore it is quite possible that we are really indebted to his enemies for the one or two detailed accounts of his special tribulations. Had he not been placed in a position where it seemed necessary to defend his brethren against the false claims of self-appointed leaders, we might never have had a record of sufferings such as we find in his second letter to the brethren at Corinth. What a review of trial and adversity it is! "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep: in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." - 2 Cor. 11:23-28.

If after a life of such extraordinary privations and hardships, due to his faithful service and devotion to God, an old veteran covered with the scars of incessant warfare can yet write to a younger man and testify that for the present life, "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is," what inspiration there is in such a testimony. Paul is now an old man, broken in health, literally poured out in the service of brethren, loved the less by some the more he loved, and deserted by many of them. He writes, therefore, not as an ardent enthusiast just putting on his armor, but as one who has seen and experienced an unusual amount of the bitterness associated with a godly life, and who is even then waiting to be finally offered up in death itself. He had invested all he had to offer, and he had much that the world calls wealth, but in this his last inventory before the ledger of earthly life is closed, he does not hesitate to assure his dear son Timothy-and through a loving providence us also-that for "the life that now is," godliness pays wonderful dividends.

O TO GRACE HOW GREAT A DEBTOR!

Paul was able to look back over a life marvelously transformed by the grace of God. And whenever we find him going back in memory to those days of blindness and madness against the name of Jesus, invariably we find him overwhelmed with gratitude for the mercy that lifted him out of darkness into the light. As he contrasts what he has become by divine grace, with what he was before his bigoted, persecuting zeal was halted by that supernatural vision' on the Damascus road, his gratitude must be expressed. When he meditates on what he once considered as the acme of attainment and inheritance, contrasting the things once counted gain, with what he now possesses through faith in Christ, his gratitude rises to its highest expression, and we hear him say, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may win Christ." (Phil. 3:8.) How full of enrichment, happiness, joy, and gratitude, "the life that now is" became to the Apostle, can very easily be discovered in his various Epistles. Commentators are unanimous in the observation that throughout all the Pauline writings, the reader is frequently carried away from the main theme being discussed, because the Apostle's grateful soul has caught some fresh reminder of the favor shown to him, and he must break the thread of thought long enough to give expression to his own inward joy. In other Epistles this digression is frequently occupied with some subsidiary or connected truth, but in the letters to Timothy the departures from" the main line of advice and exhortation, it will be noticed, have to do with some personal experience which sets his heart glowing, stirring him to utterances which have been exceedingly precious to faithful saints all down the long period of Church history.

SUPREME OBJECTIVE IN THE DAILY LIFE

As a splendid illustration of this peculiar and pleasing habit we might turn to 1 Tim. 1:12-18. He has been giving Timothy a charge concerning errors which have crept into the Church, and which are out of line with "the glorious Gospel" committed to his trust. But the mention of "the glorious Gospel" is sufficient to momentarily erase its perverters from his mind. His feelings are immediately kindled with the remembrance of what the Gospel had done for him, and so he goes on to write of his own experience. And where, in all that Paul has written, can we find expressions of personal gratitude more dear to the Christian heart than here? Let us pause a moment and read them over again, those words so expressive of a joy flooding "the life that now is," wherever sin has been abandoned and the pursuit of godliness has become the supreme objective in the daily life: "According to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor,

and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief . . . Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor, and glory forever and ever. Amen."

What Christian could read such a testimony as this without feeling irresistibly drawn to his knees in humble, fervent gratitude? To know Christ crucified -- was Paul's supreme theme, and in this digression he brings his reader to the foot of the cross, there to see himself as the greatest of sinners, and the most undeserving of God's forgiving love. If we should attempt to sketch the meaning of these words to the hearts they have strengthened, the hopes they have enkindled, the gratitude they have produced, and the hours of communion they have sweetened, for numberless contrite souls who have felt themselves "the chief of sinners," Where indeed, would the glowing numbers end?

The profitableness of godliness as it pertains to the present life begins with a true conception of the sinful corruption from which we have been mercifully delivered. No argument is necessary to prove that unless the loathsomeness of the "horrible pit" and the "miry clay" is properly sensed, there can be no adequate appreciation of the grace and love that made our deliverance therefrom a possibility. Was this not the lesson that Jesus sought to bring home to the self-righteous Simon, at whose table he reclined while his feet were being bathed by the tears of a sin sick penitent woman? Simon had little conception of any needed forgiveness, hence little idea of the exhilarating, strengthening power which comes to those who realize that "where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound." The poor sin-conscious woman, whose sins were many, had a capacity for love and gratitude to, which the Pharisee was yet a stranger; and because of that commendable and much to be sought after sensitiveness to sin defilement possessed by her, she must of a certainty experience magnetic influences drawing her in the direction of godliness, possible only to such as really sense the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Since the pursuit of holiness, then, is the most important occupation of the life that now is, and to be "found in him, not having our own righteousness" the most fascinating, soul-inspiring, joy-producing, character-purifying influence of which sin-hating, grateful hearts are capable, who can measure the profitableness of godliness secured to us by God's abounding grace, and made blessedly operative in "the life that now is" by his almighty power. Praise his name for the deliverance he has wrought out for us, and for the -joys of his salvation lavishly showered upon us in every hour of the present life.

GODLINESS MAKES THE PRESENT LIFE WORTH LIVING

To a spiritual mind there is no real paradoxical meaning in the words of Jesus when he said, "Let the dead bury their dead. Neither is there any difficulty in understanding the actualities present in Paul's statement, "To be carnally minded *is death*, but to be spiritually minded *is life* and peace." (Rom. 8:6.) These distinctions between what constitutes life And death can not be known by the unregenerate, worldly mind, neither can they be known in any experimental way by those of God's professing people whose lives are even yet lived largely on the thin boundary line that may lie between carnal, flesh satisfying pleasures and pursuits, and the *life that is life indeed*. Lot would leave Sodom and its exceeding wickedness, but prefers a location not so far removed therefrom. Pharaoh will let Israel worship their God, but why not do so "in the land." Failing in this, he will let them go out of the land, but "not very far away." When "three days' journey" must be granted, surely they will "leave the children be hind," and because the children too must go, then "only let your flocks and your herds be stayed." Compromise was ever the Devil's most successful argument, and only those who persist in putting the Red Sea of baptismal death as an

effectual barrier between themselves and the things of the world, are safely separated and settled on resurrection ground. These alone are living as having "passed from death unto life."

Only in a true Christian experience is there fulness of joy. The Bible promises no such joy to the double-minded man, unstable in all his ways, and no such joys of salvation can be known by the lukewarm and half-hearted souls whose conception of Christian life seems to be largely a matter of escaping the penalty of sin. More than that, no general faith in the atoning power of our Lord's shed blood can secure to us the fulness of joy our Lord promised to his own. There must be something much more personal than that to bring our hearts into a living consciousness of the quickening power of his love. True Christian life is that state of mind in which old things have really passed away, and a new vision, new aspirations, new determinations, have so completely flooded the life that "the Kingdom of God and his righteousness" has become the consuming desire of the soul. In this attitude of mind, godliness is earnestly sought, for in it alone can the present life be made worth while. Only then does this "so great salvation" unfold in multiplied joys and gladness. Here may be known the true joy of forgiveness, for here will be found a correct understanding of what our redemption has cost our Father and our Redeemer. Here there is real companionship with God, and that fellowship of spirit with Jesus that causes our "hearts to burn within us" while he talks to us by the way. Here obedience to all his will becomes the delight and joy of our hearts, leading to a diligent searching of his Word, to the end that out of its inexhaustible storehouse we may gather wisdom and strength, and increasing transformation into his own likeness. Here the "joy of the Lord is our strength," giving reality to our confidence that "all things work together for good" to the honored class that God hath chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. O rich, even in "the life that now is," are those strong in faith and mature in spiritual vision, to whom "all things" are really recognized as contributing a wealth of blessing, secured through faith. Such are made increasingly independent of external circumstances, in the confidence that the pursuit of godliness is profitable under *any circumstance*, and particularly so, if seeking first the Kingdom of heaven has brought them into difficult situations, financial or otherwise. Happy those who can say, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." (Hab. 3:17, 18.) How rich are such trusting hearts compared to those who have no such faith and who must therefore turn to broken cisterns that can hold no water. Surely, then, godliness is profitable for the life that now is.

CHERISHING A NOBLE DISCONTENT

From the same Apostle by whom we are urged to remember the profitableness of godliness in the present life, there come other and very frequent assurances that the full measure of profit has not yet been realized. As an illustration of this we may consider his reference to his own noble discontent. Notwithstanding all that had already been attained by him in a knowledge of the Lord Jesus, he is far from contented to remain limited to present levels. Hearken to his words: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:12.) The profit attainable through godliness is a boon for which we may well be overwhelmed with gratitude, but unless we have also this same intense desire as the Apostle, for greater and yet greater knowledge and likeness to Christ, we have not the attitude of mind favorable to attainments essential for the life "which is to come." The touchstone of real Christian experience after all, is found in this confession of Paul.

If we may take his viewpoint as a safe guide in this matter, are we not forced to conclude that to be satisfied with present profit and attainment, is to reveal ourselves regrettably deficient in one

of the most important indications of both love and gratitude? To feel ourselves "rich and increased in goods and having need of nothing," will most certainly find us ere long left "poor and blind and naked." Only those who continually "hunger and thirst" are blessed. And those who are most fervent in the longing for greater attainments are the ones who are most likely to be conscious of imperfection, and most earnest and eager in the effort to apprehend that which is perfect. The Lord assures us that there is no limit to what we can receive from him even in "the life that now is." "From grace to grace and from glory to glory" is his will for us. Why, then, should there be any disposition to place limits on what may be experienced of closeness of fellowship with him, or of the fulness of his power in us, or of the beauty of godliness that can pass from him into our characters and irradiate our lives. Rather, let us too display this noble discontent with all that we at present know of the profitableness of godliness, however great our present attainments may be. Let our spirits reach out for the full measure of advantage possible of enjoyment in "the life that now is," that we may attain the fullest possible measure of "that which is to come."

HE WILL REVEAL TO THE LOWLY SOUL

And if such attainments for both the present and the future seem too remote for us, what consolation we may find in the promise that the good work begun in us by the Lord, will be completed by him also. We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, and our oneness of spirit with him in the desire to be made like him, will assure a heart condition always acquiescent and lovingly obedient to his will. Our hope is not in ourselves. Jesus, in, his prayer, asks that we be kept through the Father's name, and in that name is our only basis of assurance. But a blessed assurance it is of his unchanging purpose in our redemption, and of his inexhaustible resources to work it out in hearts wholly committed to him. His love can never fail, and his strength is made perfect in weakness. He will strengthen with might by his spirit in the inner man. "By the discipline of daily life, by the ministry of sorrow and joy, by merciful chastisements dogging our steps when we stray, by duties and cares, by the teaching of his Word coming even closer to our hearts and quickening our consciences to discern evil where we had seen none, as well as kindling in us desires after higher and rarer goodness, by the reward of enlarged perceptions of duty and greater love towards it, with which he recompenses lowly obedience to the duty as yet seen, by the secret influences of his spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind breathed into our waiting spirits, by the touch of his own 'sustaining hand and glance of his own guiding eye, he will reveal to the lowly soul all that is yet wanting in its knowledge, and communicate all that is lacking in character."

So for us, the great question is that of our desire to grow up into Christ. If our heart's deepest longing is for all that is attainable in God's will for "the life that now is," and we desire this primarily that we may live to please and glorify him here and hereafter, we may look forward with confidence to greater things than yet have been. God's revealed intention is that every child of his shall live here on earth a life sustained by supernatural powers; and realizing this, may we not take all his promises as "yea and amen"? O may our lives be such as will bear testimony to the fact that "godliness *is profitable*," rewarding those who put "the Kingdom of God and his righteousness" first and foremost, with an abiding joy, a settled peace, a soul inspiring vision of things not yet attained, a "noble discontent," making "the life that now is" a continuous upward progression, until that which is perfect has come.

- J. J. Blackburn.

Convention Echoes - 1948

"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." - Psa. 122:1.

THE PSALM in which this text appears is one of a little cluster of fifteen entitled, "Songs of Degrees," or "Songs of Ascents," meaning "Songs of the Goings-up." While there is some difference of opinion amongst the scholars, the prevailing viewpoint is that these Psalms were sung by the Hebrew pilgrims who annually went up to Jerusalem to worship the Lord in connection with the three great festivals of their ecclesiastical year.

Of course, this is not to say that they were never sung at other times. Doubtless they were used on many other occasions, but some of them seem quite evidently to have been designed for the use of the pilgrims, and therefore could never have been so appropriately sung as when the caravans were on their way to the feasts or were returning from them.

There is little doubt that the first Psalm in the collection (number 120) would be that of the start from home, as the last (number 134) is undoubtedly that of the final service in Jerusalem. The second (number 121) would exactly express the emotions of the pilgrims as they came in sight of the mountains that stood round about Jerusalem, while the third (number 122) is doubtless the song they sang on their arrival, when they passed through the gates of the Holy City and trod its streets. But while these songs had a special meaning and value to the Hebrew pilgrims, how much more must they have for us! The Apostle Peter reminds us that we, too, are pilgrims. (1 Pet. 2:11.) As such, surely we too need songs with which to start *our* journey, and songs to sing *during the journey*; yes, and songs to sing even *as we arrive at the journey's end!* From these Psalms, therefore, we should derive much edification and comfort, written as they were under the guidance of the same spirit which dwells within us, and containing, as they do, the heart sentiment, thought and emotion of a people of God whose experiences, the Apostle tells us, were typical of ours, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. - 1 Cor. 10:10.

In the verse cited at the commencement of these remarks, the Psalmist draws a theme from his personal experience. He recalls the day on which, dwelling in his home far distant from Jerusalem, his friends and neighbors came to him with the invitation: "Let us go up to the house of the Lord," and how he rejoiced in them, and in the message they brought. He was glad to see them and still more glad when he learned what their errand was. That gladness fills his heart now, as he and they stand within the gates of Jerusalem, and heightens the joy with which he gazes on the stately buildings therein. How happy he is! At long last "Our feet are standing within thy gates, O Jerusalem." - Psa. 122:2, A.R.V.

"THY KINGDOM COME"

It was with similar sentiments that those privileged to do so gathered in the several conventions held in different parts of the country during 1948. In addition to a number of the smaller monthly, and Fifth Sunday gatherings, our Institute was requested to send brethren to participate in the more general conventions held in Agawam and Boston, Mass.; Brooklyn, Buffalo, and Rochester, N. Y.; Atlantic City, N. J.; Minneapolis, Minn.; Milwaukee, Wis.; Chicago and Cicero, Ill.; St. Louis, Mo.; and Toronto, Ont., Canada. We were privileged also to send a brother to Great Britain, Ireland and Denmark.

Included in the programs, in addition to the seven members of our Board of Directors, each of whom, took part in one or more of the conventions, we noted the names of other brethren, as follows: C. Czohara, W. C. Douglas, F. A. Essler, A. Duppel, C. M. Glass, E. W. Hinz, W. J. Hollister, W. Lankheim, C. Loucky, O. Magnuson, J. A. Meggison, E. Murray, A. J. Negley, A. B. Newell, H. M. Nosby, W. H. Peck, F. Petran, C. I. Stratton, T. P. Tillema, and J. B. Webster.

The discourses of the brethren are reported, by those who heard them, to have all been delivered in an endeavor to expound the truth of God's Word in a manner that would edify and encourage to continued confidence, increased zeal and renewed diligence to make one's calling and election sure, and to assist others in the same narrow way.

Discourses designed to be of special interest to the public, and to friends newly interested, stressed the proximity of the Kingdom -- that Kingdom of God for which, for so long, Christians have prayed. Attendance ranged from 30 to 200.

A text that has been properly emphasized in our midst in recent years was once again in evidence: "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." (Matt. 23:8, 10.) Some of the conventioners have learned, by bitter experience, the unhappy state of affairs which obtains when this injunction of the Lord is lost sight of, and they are determined, by his grace, to do all in their power to promote the spirit of true Christian liberty -- liberty, not so much for oneself, but for the other brother; especially when he is in the minority.

BURIED WITH HIM

There were a few candidates for immersion. Our congratulations are extended once again to these. We welcome them to the joys of the life of consecration (and to its trials also) to the path in which they are now traveling, which their water immersion symbolizes. To such our Master's word still stands true: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. 2:10.) Our congratulations go also to Brother and Sister Petran, whose joy it was to witness the immersion of their son.

ONE BY ONE WE'RE GATHERING HOME

This sweetly solemn thought was sung to us at more than one of the conventions by the Chicago Trio, reminding us, if such reminder were needed, that ere long our own course on earth will have ended. We were reminded especially of those but recently taken from us. In St. Louis a much loved brother, J. B. Bernoudy, for many years the Class Secretary, had gone to his reward.* In Chicago, Sister Jones, whose loving hospitality, especially in the "old days, will long be remembered, had finished her course just before the Chicago convention dates arrived, thus joining her husband who had been called home only two years before. Brothers Kipp of Saginaw and White of Waukesha, whose presence used to cheer us at Chicago, Detroit, and Milwaukee conventions, had gone, as had also Brother F. H. Johnson who, despite poor health, was such a tower of strength to the Minneapolis Class. Many another, too, came to mind, whose death had been precious in the sight of the Lord (Psa. 116:15), and whose names, whenever they have been furnished us, have been listed in this journal.

* Brother Bernoudy left his "Testimony to Faith" which is now in print in the form of an eight page booklet available free on request. Address Mrs. J. B. Bernoudy, 7033 Lindell Blvd., St. Louis, Mo.

BLEST BE THE TIE THAT BINDS

It was a pleasure to renew fellowship with others of "like precious faith," to listen to the testimonies of old friends, some of whom we had not seen for more than a quarter of a century. It was good, too, to make new ones. A goodly number of messages in the form of telegrams, and letters attested the interest of some unable to be present in person.

The special music selections by Brother John T. Read, as usual, were very welcome to us all. So also were the convention theme songs. One of these, sent from England, used in Chicago, had a great appeal: "I Know He's Mine." Toronto and Atlantic City both graced their programs with Luther's "Mighty Fortress" which we reproduce at the close of these "echoes." At Chicago Brother Siekman gave us an hour of recorded music arranged to trace the progress of the Divine Plan to the end of the Millennial Age.

Fellowship luncheons and room accommodations spoke eloquently of the labor of love on the part of those who had these features in charge.

Visits to the shut-ins always prove to be time well spent. One plans to go to strengthen, to speak a word of cheer, to encourage a lonely heart, to give a little of one's own strength and courage, to lift another's burden. But how often it happens -- nay, is it not always the case, that the giver is blessed in his deed; that *he* comes away stronger, with his own heart cheered, his own burden lighter. "He that watereth shall be watered also himself." Thus it is written. (Prov. 11:25.) Why do we ever doubt it? Has this particular word of our God ever failed? It certainly did not when, with his wife, this writer visited old Brother McLearn in Boston last May, or Sister Sargent in Chicago this fall.

WE ARE APPROACHING MOUNT ZION

These conventions are foretastes of the "General Assembly." Our remarks concerning them began with a reference to the Hebrew pilgrims on their annual trips to Jerusalem. There is, however, one important difference between their experiences and ours. We may realize what they could not -- when once our pilgrimage has ended there will be no long, tedious journey back again. When the Hebrew pilgrims had reached the Holy City and had performed the services of the sanctuary for which they had come, they must needs start back again. But with us, this will not be so. We are journeying, not to the typical, but to the antitypical Jerusalem. As the Apostle declares, we are approaching Mount Zion, the city of the living God -- that city which those of other days saw afar off-the heavenly Jerusalem. We are approaching also an innumerable company of angels, doubtless those faithful ones who have encamped round about us so often and delivered us. Some of our number have already entered in and made their acquaintance, and soon we too, if faithful, will join the happy throng. Yes -- we are approaching the general assembly, the Church of the Firstborn, who are enrolled (whose names- are written) in heaven. We are approaching God, the judge of all, and the spirits of just men made perfect, (Heb. 12:22, 23). And as we look up and listen in the pauses of our journey, we may (with the eye of faith) catch glimpses of the glory of that City and hear (if our ears are rightly attuned) some faint echoes of its songs. Let us then lift up our heads and our hearts. And if any ask, "Whence cometh your help?" Let us, from our highly privileged position as new creatures in Christ Jesus, with deep conviction, and with lives in harmony with our words, make answer and say: Our help cometh not from the hills but from their Maker; from the great Jehovah, Maker not of the hills only, but of heaven and earth. He it is in whom we trust. He will keep us from all evil. He will keep our lives. Think you that He who orders the universe cannot order our steps? If he holds the sun and moon in their courses, can he not charge them not to smite *us* by day or by night? If he setteth fast the mountains and does not

permit *them* to be moved, he will not suffer *our* feet to be moved, either. *Jehovah will* keep our going out and our coming in (we will be under his protection in the whole business and occupation of life, in all the labor to which we go forth in the morning and from which we return at evening) from this time forth, even for evermore.

"A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing;
Our, helper He, amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing,
For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and pow'r are great,
And, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.

"Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing,
Were not the right Man on our side,
The Man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth is His name,
From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.

"The Word above all earthly pow'rs --
No thanks to them -- abideth;
The spirit and the gifts are ours
Thro' Him who with us sideth.
Let goods and kindred go,
This mortal life also;
The body they may kill;
God's truth abideth still,
His Kingdom is forever."

- P. L. Read

Abraham and Lot-- A Contrast

"So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." - Gal. 3:9.

ABRAHAM, THAT grand character of Old Testament times, has been a never-failing source of inspiration to the true Christian, who sees in this man of faith his own spiritual experiences exemplified. In his call, his journeys, his mistakes, his obedience, it has pleased the Lord to show forth the life of each follower of Christ. Well has Abraham been called the file-leader of a great spiritual host. The study of his life is of great importance to all who have grasped the full significance of the "exceeding great and precious promises" and who are endeavoring to "so run as to obtain." And since divine wisdom has seen fit to record in juxtaposition the experiences of Abraham and his nephew Lot, this study is devoted to the beautiful spiritual lessons obtained from contrasting these two characters, who reveal two types of minds or dispositions which have been markedly manifest in the two great spiritual classes of the Gospel Age. These two classes are shown in type by the priests and Levites, and in the New Testament are referred to as the "little flock" and the "great company." In 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 we find a more particularized description of both these builders on the true foundation; which, together with other references in Scripture, are sufficient to reveal that two classes of believers grow side by side, of which only one will become the "overcomers."

Abram's Call and Separation

"Now the Lord had said to Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." - Gen. 12:1-3.

Thus begins the life of faith. As Abrams (that is, in the walk of faith) we leave the land of Great Babylon, the ground of false and perverted worship and self-exaltation. The spirit of faith awakes in this land of confusion. God speaks, and, as at creation, great results follow. Babels may grow from men's words to one another, saying, "Go to, and let us make." The walk of faith begins not from man: the Word is its author and finisher.

The call was, and is yet, personal. God says, "Get thee out, and I will bless thee." And so we read in Isaiah 51:2: "I called him alone, and blessed him." Others may note something of the glory of this manifestation and may witness some of the outward circumstances accompanying the call, as did those who went with Paul to Damascus: but as Paul says, "They heard not the voice of Him that spoke to me." (Acts 22:9.) For the natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit and cannot heed the call of God but continues to abide on the ground of sense; while the spirit of faith goes forth, it knows not where, to finally stand in the strength of the Lord on the ground of promise, a "land of milk and honey."

The call contains both grace and truth; grace, in the promise, "I will shew thee a land, I will make thee fruitful, I will bless thee"; truth, in the separating word, "Get thee out," obedience to which is the proof of faith in the "I will." This promise is the gospel which was preached to Abram. (Gal. 3:8.) This promise concerning future glory and inheritance is based on God's unfailing "I will," for the Scriptures with one voice testify it is the Lord Himself who saves, through faith, the

simple and blessed means of salvation. Men are slow to apprehend this truth, and often feelings or works, or something in us is looked for as the ground of future blessing and salvation.

But the call is not only of promise but also to separation. God purposes to separate His saved ones to Himself, so the word of truth comes, commanding sanctification. Men often preach God's "I will" without the accompanying "Get thee out," and the results will always reveal their error. Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, said to the fishermen, "Follow Me" -- here is separation -- "and I will make you fishers of men" -- here is the never failing "I will." So again, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor"-here is separation, for He was "separate"-then follows the promise, "I will give you rest." And so elsewhere, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people; wherefore come out and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." (Matt. 4:19; 11:28; 2 Cor. 6:17, 18.) But at first, though "the spirit is willing, yet the flesh is weak." Even faith may shrink from all that the separating word claims from it. We are slow to believe that apostate things are to be forsaken and not improved and would fain mend them rather than leave them. So let us note the way the call was obeyed, for it reveals our steps also. The word was: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy **kindred**, and from thy father's **house**." Abram gat him out from his country, and even from his kindred, but not from his father's house. He obeys, but not wholly, and thus reveals how the spirit of faith in us, while able to leave the more outward things, the natural pleasures and affections, cannot at once leave the more inward things. Nature yet is strong, and so, like Abram of old, the spirit of faith in us endeavors to take with it into the land of promise the "old man," which has never truly known the call of God. Yes, it is written not that Abram took Terah but "Terah took Abram" (Gen. 11:31), thus showing that the grand promises of God at first stir up to activity even the old life in us. But Terah can never pass the Jordan; his pilgrimage wearies him, and he can but reach Haran, and so "he dwells there." "They went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and they came to Haran and dwelt there." And there they are stopped until this "old man" dies. Then Abram starts again, and now nothing stops him, for now "they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came." Stephen specially marks this in Acts 7:2-4. We are slow to learn this lesson, but it must be learned. Even faith cannot take the "old man" into the place of promise. It has often been tried; a new bond draws us heavenward, but the old one as yet has claims on us, and so we start with both, only to settle down short of the promised land. Eventually we are freed; the "old man" is buried out of sight, the meaning of our baptism dawns upon us the call is recollected, and we become once more pilgrims.

Abraham in the Promised Land

Having passed Jordan, the land of promise, the "higher ground" is reached. And here the spirit of faith, as shown in Abram, is introduced to new trials, which stumble some, who, though on the right way through grace, yet find this "higher ground" so unlike that which flesh and blood would have chosen.

True faith has now brought the believer the long journey to the land of Canaan, and now the chief marks are pilgrimage and difficulty and want, yet of communion with God and happy worship. Abram dwells in tents to the end, possessing nothing abiding here save a burial place. He moves from place to place, with "no certain dwellingplace." Others can dwell snugly in some "city of the nations," but the Abrams of God go, not knowing whither. They are what some call changeable, a common charge against the walk of faith. Men can dwell in refuges of their own manufacture. We can tell where to find them even to the end, because they take no forward steps, are never changed. But he who has heard the call of God cannot be trusted with the care of this world's cities. The world has long judged such as madmen, nor is its judgment wholly wrong. A madman is one who sees, or thinks he sees, what others see not. The called of God see what others see not,

and they walk accordingly. Their pathway is ever unintelligible to the men of this world. Nevertheless, the Lord knoweth them that are His; He knoweth the path of humiliation that His elect trod, and when He hath tried them, they shall come forth as gold. How beautifully have all these truths been exemplified in the life of our blessed Master, our forerunner!

Abram's Altar and Trials

But Abram has not only a tent, a temporary abiding-place while he waits for that "city which hath foundations," but he now has also an altar, in worship receiving fresh revelations. "The Lord appeared to Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord." (Gen. 12:7, 8.) In Ur, God had said, "A land which I will shew thee." Now He says, "A land which I will give thee." We now observe also that here "the Lord appeared." Before this He had "called" and "spoken." The Lord now shows Himself, for faith has brought Abram to new trials which need special revelations, and these are not withheld. And thus it has ever been. As has been well said, "Angels' visits are only few and far between, because we so seldom are in the place really to require them."

The special trials of this stage are first "the Canaanite" and then "a grievous famine" in the land. (Gen. 12:6, 10.) Canaan, the son of Ham, may figure the mere outward religiousness which has ever been a trial to the true child of God. This and a period of seeming neglect by the Lord in things necessary, leads to failure in trial. The Canaanite and the famine drive Abram down to Egypt. The faith which led to the ground of promise at first has not strength to be steadfast there. It is ever thus. Peter had faith to step out on the waters but not enough to walk far when there; he had faith to follow Jesus into the High Priest's palace, but he lacked faith while there to witness faithfully. Every act of faith brings us, into greater trials, where greater faith will be needed. Thus it is that many who walk by faith have failures, which those know not who do not attempt so much.

Abram's trial leads him to Egypt, and then Egypt leads him to deny his wife. One wrong step, if not immediately retraced, requires another. A step was taken to avoid trial without asking the Lord's counsel. Then, the Lord and His counsel and care being for the time forgotten, His promise respecting the seed is forgotten also. And but for the Lord, those affections or principles of spiritual truth figured in Sarah (which the spirit of faith ought to defend and cherish most carefully, for from them must spring the promised fruit) would be defiled by contact with earthly things, the human wisdom or reasonings figured in Egypt.

And thus are we warned that our spiritual nourishment can never be obtained from the wisdom of this world (Egypt), but that if we find ourselves while on holy ground (the place of separation) in a condition of spiritual famine in the sense that we seem to lack, let us abide close to our altar; the Lord is near. The cloud that hides His sunshine is there to test our faith and obedience, and we dare not leave this ground to lean on any arm of flesh. And having once made the mistake, let us immediately, like Abram, return back to higher ground, "to the place where his tent was at the first." (Gen. 13:3.) Still more trials await. The long-looked-for fruitage must appear; yea, we shall have to climb Moriah and there offer that which is most precious to us, yea, that which God Himself has said would be the very means to accomplish His great promise to us; and yet we shall go forth as did Abram to offer our Isaac in fulness of faith. Victory in small trials will but lead to greater and greater trials, till God shall say, "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me." - Gen. 22:12

All this and more is the experience of every true Abraham of God, though not always is it visible to our understanding, neither is it always necessary that it should be.

Abram and Lot Separated

It is at this stage in Abram's experience, when, having returned again to the place to which God had originally called him (places to us would represent states of mind), he is now brought into direct contrast with his nephew Lot. Hitherto they had walked together. "Abram walks with God," but "Lot walks with Abram." Time and again this is brought to our attention. (Gen. 12:4; 13:1, 5.) Lot represents those who live in religious outward things, striving to please God and also man, and succeeding in doing neither. They take right steps because others take them, and make sacrifices because others do so. They are righteous souls but wholly unable to walk where the men of faith walk, leaving them as soon as they resolutely press on to the best things. Only after Abram returns again to his altar and his dwelling in tents does Lot find occasion for leaving him. "Flocks and herds," various gifts, now become an occasion for manifesting the tastes and thus of separating the inward and spiritual from the righteous outward man. The real cause is that the one seeks heaven, while the other still lingers after the things of this world. One looks ever on the hills of promise; the other has an eye turned toward the plain of Jordan. For we read: "Lot lifted up his eyes, and saw the plain of Jordan, that it was like the land of Egypt." (Gen. 13:10.) In this lay its attractiveness to him. The excuse is found in the "herds" and "flocks," and he at once separates himself and goes **down** Jordan-ward.

How often there have been strifes about flocks! Neither numbers, nor an abundance of gifts can make brethren dwell together in unity. Often gifts may be an occasion for strife, for schism is the growth, not of spiritual poverty but of spiritual wealth. Even so, at Corinth, where "they lacked no gift," there was strife among the herdsmen, the more because the gifts abounded, while they were "yet carnal." (1 Cor. 1:7; 3:1.) Lot did not depart from Abram in Egypt. It is when Egypt is left behind and the men of faith seek resolutely to go up to the higher ground that brethren are thrown together in a way previously unknown. The lack of outward things stirs up the outward men, who will always choose the lower ground where their natural tastes find more that is in accordance with them. The things of time and sense keep their, from discovering what they really are within, and outward things prevent them from coming to themselves. For it is only when we are stripped of things around that we really learn what spirit dwells within. The one fears to search out the evil within and ever seeks to hide it from self and others; the other is content to learn itself, if it may learn God, preferring to be weak with Him than strong without Him.

Unlike souls sooner or later must separate. No bond or arrangement can long keep men together if there be not one spirit. Few things search us more than collision with our brethren, and though for a while the path of faith becomes more lonely, it draws the true believer ever closer to his God. As outward men drop away from us, the Lord more and more reveals Himself.

Let us note the steps of Lot, which are ever the same in all ages; the gradual degrees of decline have their lesson for the spiritual man who will take heed thereto. First "Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld"; then "he chose"; then "Lot **journeyed** east, the direction he originally came from; next "he dwelled in the cities of the plain then he "pitched his tent **toward** Sodom"; then he "dwelt in Sodom" and finally he "sat in the gate of Sodom," the official position of an elder and judge of the city. (Gen. 13:10-12; 14:12; 19:1, 9.) Here we finally find him trying to serve two masters, God and Mammon; still a righteous man, still endeavoring to be pleasing to the Lord and yet dwelling in the place of his own choice. Well does Lot picture those who though righteous and saved and holding the truth yet never seem to apprehend the inward spirit of it. True believers dwell apart with God, while the Lots, dwelling in Sodom (the world of the senses) strive by efforts to improve it. And as they labor in the fire, they comfort themselves that while the Abrams are useless to the world, they are doing something for it. But Sodom cannot be helped, much less

saved, by unchastened, outward men. Lot has yet to learn this; while therefore Abraham is at Mamre, Lot is in the gate of Sodom, calling its sinners "brethren." - Gen. 19:7.

Three Forms of the World

Our attention has now been directed, in the study of these two characters who reveal the inward and outward religious Christians, to their contacts with three forms of the world, Babylon, Egypt, and Sodom. These have ever been recognized as used of the Lord to show forth spiritual truths. Abraham abides separate from all; Lot is finally delivered from Sodom. Space precludes a lengthy discussion of all the meanings embodied in these three places: but briefly, Babylon figures the ground of religious confusion; Egypt, the ground of worldly wisdom; and Sodom, the ground of the senses. None should have difficulty in discerning these meanings in the records of the Bible. In the Book of Revelation, these three forms are set before us in their relation to the experience of the true Church. In Revelation 11:8 the great city is seen as "Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." In chapters 17 and 18 the same great city is seen as Babylon. In chapter 16 we find the plagues of each of these cities. The "noisome sore" (ver. 2), the "waters turned to blood" (ver. 4), the "kingdom full of darkness" (ver. 10) -- these are the plagues of Egypt. (Exod. 9:8-11; 7:17-20; 10:21-23.) The "drying up of the Euphrates, and the invasion of the kings of the East" (ver. 12)-this is the judgment of Babylon. (Jer. 51:13, 36; 50:38; Isa. 44:27, 28.) The "voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and great hail" (ver. 18)-this is the destruction of Sodom. (Gen. 19:24, 25.) In all of this there is food for "him who discerneth all things, but is himself discerned of no man."

Abraham ever abides separate, on the higher ground of true religious faith. His are the great promises of God; his is the blessing of Melchisedec; his is the trial of Isaac; and to him alone God reveals His purpose as regards the destruction of Sodom.

Lot, dwelling in the place of his ill-choice, is caught in the strifes of Babylon and Sodom, yea, is even taken captive, only to be delivered by Abraham, who leaves the quiet life of promise only to rescue a brother out of Babylonian captivity. Thus is Abraham brought into collision with Babylon, that is, the religious world. He fights not with Sodom. His place is separation from and intercession for it, not war against it. And strange as it appears that true believers will not join in the strifes of Sodom or Babylon, it seems yet stranger that, if either is assailed, the religious world should be that which is fought against. But so it has been from Christ's days to these; Pharisees are judged, while open sinners are pitied. This is indeed a mystery, and the motives of the men of faith are seldom understood.

Thus is Lot freed by Abraham. As one has well said: "The pilgrim brother is the means through whom deliverance comes. The man who has been alone with God is the man who can break the chains of Babylon for his unfaithful brethren. And many a gift yet comes to failing souls through brethren with whom they hold no communion, whom they judge as extreme in their views, and to whom they practically prefer the company of such as know not God. Sooner or later, however, God vindicates His own. The pilgrim brother is the helper in time of need."

We now approach the final chapter in the destruction of Sodom and the deliverance of Lot. Many spiritual truths are revealed in the manner of divine revelation of this judgment, in the record of God's dealings with Abraham and Lot in connection with it. And the contrast is so manifest that clearer than ever it is revealed that the man of faith alone can please the Lord whereas the "friendship of the world is enmity with God." A double-minded man is ever unstable in all his ways. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father' is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the

eyes, and pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." (John 2:15-17.) Lot finds no peace in Sodom, "for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds." (2 Pet. 2:8.) Its judgment has now drawn nigh.

Let us contrast the appearance of the divine messengers to Abraham and to Lot. The details are full of significance to all who will spiritually consider them, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

First, in the manifestations of the heavenly visitors. Concerning Abraham we read, "The Lord appeared to him at midday, and lo, **three** men stood by him." (Gen. 18:1.) Concerning Lot, we read, "there came two angels to Sodom at even." (Gen. 19:1.) Abraham receives three visitors, one of them the Logos, the spokesman of God. He receives them in the light of full favor. Lot receives but two, and that in a time of declining light.

Second, the ground they stand on is distinct. Abraham is "in the plains of Mamre, in his tent-door"; not only having given up the world, but content to be given up by it, which is far harder. His place is the ground of promise, in marked separation from outward things. Lot is "sitting in the gate of Sodom," taking a place of power, hoping to correct the faults of others who are living in self love, and calling them "brethren."

Third, the contrast is shown in the reception of their guests. Abraham "**ran** to meet them"; his desire for communion is at once granted and is undisturbed, for by the self mortified pilgrim, communion is easily obtained. Also having but the one master to serve, he stands before Him in peace. Not so with Lot. Of him we read, "he **rose** up, and though welcoming, shows not the same alacrity as his kinsman. For communion, he must needs strongly importune, for his request is at first denied in the words, "Nay; but we will abide in the street all night." Again the communion is marred by the intrusion of the men of Sodom. He is forced away from his guests by those among whom he dwells Lot, with two masters, the Lord and the world, can satisfy neither nor is himself satisfied. The communion of saints is unknown in such a state.

Fourth, the feast prepared by each shows a difference. By Abraham "a calf" is slain; there is the pouring out of life. "Fine meal" is added, for true saints can grasp the highest aspects of Christ's death, apprehending Him as the "ox" and the "fine flour" in which was no unevenness. Of Lot, we read (Gen. 19:1): "Lot made a feast and did bake unleavened bread." The word here translated "feast" is elsewhere more correctly rendered "a banquet of wine." (Esth. 5:6; 7:7; Isa. 25:6.) The Septuagint here renders it "a drinking," an acceptable service, yet not so costly as that of Abraham and well picturing a lower view of the same offering to those who see it only as the "unleavened bread and wine."

The fifth contrast is in the state of the respective families. Abraham to the question, "Where is thy wife?" can reply in the words he could not have used in Egypt, "She is in the tent." And thus if we walk with God, we are in no danger of having our affections and principles defiled by the world's rough handling. Poor Lot's case is otherwise. The women of his household are in jeopardy, offered to the men of Sodom, in hopes of staying worse abominations. If our dwelling is in the world, our purest principles are in danger of being abused; nay, often they are abused, for the world, if it touches, cannot but dishonor them. The Lots press liberty and peace and other fruits of righteousness on the world, hoping that in embracing these it may be somewhat bettered. But the principles are periled or defiled, the world mean while being made not a whit the better. But the Lots do not believe this until bitter experience proves it.

The sixth contrast is in the attention paid the guests. Abraham waiting on his guests "stood by them" in calm communion. Thus do men of faith ever speak with the Lord and in this communion receive fresh promises, as did Abraham. Not so with Lot, who "went out," anxious for his children. Not one word is recorded as addressed by him to his guests while they are in his home. The Lots can but speak to their children or the world and repeat the warnings they have received, to flee lest they be destroyed. And even here Lot reveals himself. The Lord said, "**Bring** them out"; Lot says, "**Get** you out." He warns others but himself remains. How many righteous Lots in Sodom are yet attempting thus to bear the Lord's message. Even while they preach, "This world is condemned," they linger in it until eventually the Lord in mercy forcibly removes them.

In the seventh contrast we note the words addressed to each. In declaring the fate of Sodom to Abraham, the Lord speaks as a friend, saying, "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I will do?" To the faithful souls the Holy Spirit "takes of the things of Christ." "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." (John 15:15.) But to Lot the message is, "We will destroy this place escape for thy life, lest thou also be consumed." To the world, the Spirit speaks only "of sin, and righteousness, and judgment." And though worldly Christians speak with assurance, yet so long as they remain in the world, they will hear God's voice warning and alarming them.

In the eighth contrast we see also how unlike are the prayers of these two men. Abraham, with confessions that he is "but dust and ashes," importunes for his kinsman, finally yielding his will to God's will. Lot, on the contrary, styling himself God's "servant," prays for self in a prayer which throughout is a struggle to obtain his own will. The Lord had said, "Stay not in all this plain."

Lot answers, "Oh, not so, my Lord"; that is, not Thy will but mine be done, to justify which he speaks of grace "Not so, my Lord, for Thy servant hath found grace in Thy sight." This is ever so. Christians in the world plead grace as a reason for self-indulgence and for obtaining their own will. Then again, what confusion is in Lot's prayer. He speaks of the mercy shown in saving his life (for while he yet "lingered," the angels forcibly brought him without the city - see Gen. 19:16) and yet of "some evil" (he knows not what) taking him. He acknowledges divine power in the sparing of his life and yet fears to heed the divine injunction. He says, "I cannot escape to the mountains, lest I die." Thus he pleads for his own way to the end, his last request being for Zoar, a little matter -- "is it not a little one?" And in this he is heard, the gracious answer being one of the unnumbered proofs that as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is the Lord's mercy to all that fear Him.

The ninth and final contrast is their conduct after the judgment of Sodom. Abraham gets up early to the place where he stood before the Lord, as though yet waiting on Him. In safety from his secure vantage ground, he beholds the destruction in the plain.

Unfortunate Lot, unsatisfied with his self-chosen refuge, gets up to the mountains, without a command, only to fall there grievously. First wine and then his daughters cast him down. As another has well expressed it, "When outward men, through mere alarm of judgment, attempt without command to walk where faith walks, their very gifts will cause their fall. The higher the ground the harder for them to occupy it. There the cup of blessing, misused by Lot's daughters, that is, by the evil working of those principles which have been produced and are most cherished by outward men, will give occasion for those very principles first to corrupt, and then to be themselves corrupted by, those who cherished them. Thus will righteous Lots unintentionally produce out of their own self defiled principles a seed to their own shame."

There is thus presented to the Christian in panoramic form the lives of these two patriarchs to illustrate the proper and improper steps of those who draw nigh the Lord. The Abrahams, hearing the call in a far-off land, go, "not knowing whither," and after many trials reach the condition of separation from Babylon, Egypt, and Sodom, dwelling in tents to the end, strong in faith even unto Moriah, abiding by their altar in communion with the Lord, in all things doing God's will and not their own, and finally attaining unto the promise.

The Lots walk well for a while, and then their steps of self-will assert themselves gradually until finally they are found in a condition of bondage from which they are unable to free themselves. The testing time comes, their works are burned, and they suffer loss, but are themselves saved through the boundless mercy of the Lord. But their own wills are revealed even unto the end, and the clinging to the things of this world results in painful loss. "Remember Lot's wife." The Lots are memorials to the truth of our Master's words, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God." - Luke 9:62.

Of the Abrahams, God says, "Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." - Psa. 50:5.

- *W. J. Siekman.*

The Question Box

Question:

"The hour is coming," said our Lord, "in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice; and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the' resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." (John 5:28, 29.) In these verses two resurrections are mentioned. Who has part in the resurrection of life, and who in that of judgment?

Answer:

In this passage our Lord divides the races of mankind into two general classes: First, they that have done good and, second, they that have done evil. St. Paul, in his defense before Felix did the same. .In Acts 24:15 he tells us that "he had hope towards God ... that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust."

From other Scriptures we learn that in these expressions, "the just" or "they that have done good" are included three classes, namely (1) The Church which is His body (Eph. 1:23) ; (2) the rest of the Church of the First-born, sometimes referred to as the Great Multitude or Great Company (Heb. 12:23; Rev. 7:9); and (3) the Ancient Worthies. (Heb. 11; Luke 7:28.) It is our understanding that none of these three will experience a resurrection of judgment.

The Church which is His Body has part in the "first" resurrection. (Rev. 20:5,6.) This, surely, is a resurrection "of life." It is "His" resurrection. (Phil. 3:10, 11.) None will have part in this resurrection save those who "shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

Next we see another class, experiencing the resurrection "of life." "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." They serve God "day and night in his temple." (Rev. 7:14, 15.) Their trial time, too is completed in this life.

The Ancient Worthies have a "better resurrection" awaiting them. (Heb. 11:35.) Not better than the "first" resurrection in which only our Lord and the "Little Flock" have part; not better than that experienced by the "Great Company" (the rest of the Church of the First-born); but better than the resurrection "of judgment" which awaits the remainder of mankind. The resurrection "of judgment" is a resurrection by trial-by painstaking, step-by-step attempts to regain the divine likeness. The resurrection of the Ancient Worthies will be better than this in that they will come forth to *instantaneous* perfection. They have already successfully stood their trial time, under conditions of utmost severity, and won God's approval.

These three classes, then, according to our understanding of the Scriptures, will come forth unto the resurrection of life -- the "Little Flock" to the divine nature; the "Great Company" to a spirit nature lower than the divine, although highly exalted; and the "Ancient Worthies" to human perfection -- "princes in all the earth." - Psa. 45:16.

The remainder of mankind will come forth to a resurrection "of judgment" -- a resurrection, not of "damnation" or of "condemnation," but of "judgment" -- the thought in the word being that of a trial followed by a sentence. The trial time will be one of large opportunities -- all the stumbling stones being removed (Isa. 62:10), and every assistance being rendered them under the

Mediatorial Kingdom of Christ Jesus and his Bride, until they attain perfection of being on the human plane.

One other point may be appropriately mentioned: The word "resurrection," twice used here by our Lord in John 5:29 (as also by St. Paul in Acts 24:15), is from the Greek "*anastasis*," which, according to Strong, signifies "a standing up again"; (Young: "a standing or rising *up*") *Anastasis* signifies much more than a mere awakening from the sleep of death, such as was experienced by the daughter of Jairus (Luke 8:54,55); by the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:15); or by Lazarus, the friend of Jesus. (John 11:11, 43, 44.) These were merely awakened for a brief season, only to fall asleep in death again. *Anastasis* implies complete recovery from all the effects of the death sentence -- from all the imperfections of mind and body which have afflicted mankind since the fall of Adam. In point of time the awakening experience of Lazarus and the other two mentioned took place before our Lord's resurrection. Nevertheless the Scriptures truly speak of him as being *the first* to rise from the dead. (Acts 26:23.) He was not the first to be awakened from the sleep of death, but he was the first to experience *anastasis*.

They who have done good will come forth to an instantaneous *anastasis*, as we have above noted. They that have done evil will also come forth to *anastasis* -- *but* it will be by the judgment process. As Isaiah has foretold: "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." - Isa. 26:9.

- P. L. Read

Pilgrimage Overseas

Dear Brethren:

Warmest love and greetings in our Master's name.

I am somewhat late in giving you a report *of* my four month's pilgrimage to the British Isles and Denmark, but trust that being pressed for time since my return will explain the delay.

When I parted from the friends who were at LaGuardia Field to bid me Godspeed on my journey, I boarded a (plane that had been superheated by the hot sun of that very warm day of June 29th, and it was not until we were nearing Gander, Newfoundland, that it cooled off enough to be comfortable.

I was met at the London air-field by Brothers Hudson, Lodge, and Jennings, who took me by car to my first appointment. The Committee of English brethren who were in charge of my itinerary had arranged a circular tour of about a month, beginning with several Glasses in the London area, thence to Rugby, Oxford, Stroud, and towns in the Cotswold district; Cardiff and cities in South Wales; Bristol, Yeovil and cities in the south of England, bringing me back to London for the Bank Holiday convention the first week in August. The convention lasted three days and there was an estimated attendance of fully four hundred. The Sunday evening session was a well advertised public meeting at which fifty-seven handed in their names in token of further interest. The Classes sponsoring the convention had made ample provision for taking care of all who name, and in spite of rationing restrictions had managed to provide for the noon meals and the 4:30 tea for each of the three days.

The discourses were all very helpful, and though it was not prearranged, they were all designed to set forth the vital aspects of our salvation and perfecting in the image of our Lord. To my personal knowledge there were many present who held differing views on some of the less essential items of Truth, but I feel sure that all went away feeling that they had profited by their attendance and fellowship with those of like precious faith in the worship of the Lord.

Following the convention, the Committee had arranged my itinerary to include nearly all the Classes in Central and North England, Scotland, and Ireland that I had visited in the six and a half months I was there in 1947, and in addition several not visited then. This portion of the trip included several Home gatherings and one day conventions, and was a joyful experience in that I was privileged to renew acquaintance with many whom I had learned to know and love on my former trip. It is a blessed privilege to come into the home life and experiences of God's people: to be able in memory to visualize them in their every-day surroundings and assemblies; to know something of their daily lives and experiences in both joy and sorrow. It gives one a much greater appreciation of their strivings and patient endurance, and so brings a much closer sympathy with them in their Christian walk.

I visited most of the friends in Ireland, and the greater portion of them gathered for a one day convention the Sunday I was at Port Rush, a resort town located on the extreme north coast. Several were present who very seldom have the privilege of. fellowship, and the only known sister in Dublin was attending her first meeting where the Truth was being set forth. I returned by boat to Glasgow, from which I made side trips to Edinburgh and Dundee, returning to Glasgow for two meetings on Sunday in which the three Classes joined.

My trip back to London was through the north central and eastern cities of England. From London I went to Harwich where -I embarked for Denmark. Arriving at Esbjerg, I took the train for Copenhagen where I was met by a group of brethren, including Brother Luttiohau, who had arranged for my coming to Den mark, and who accompanied me and acted as "*som tolk*" (interpreter) at the twenty one meetings held there in the two weeks of my stay. There are not many friends in Denmark, Copenhagen being the largest Class, 35 to 40 in number, but they have the same zeal for the Lord and his Truth and manifest the same warm hearted spirit that is found among true brethren wherever they are met.

The return from Denmark to Harwich was very rough and most of the passengers were sick. I took the precaution of retiring to my bunk early and remaining there all the next day. We reached Harwich four hours late, after time for the last train, and so had to remain aboard that night. The ten days that still remained *of* my sojourn with our British brethren was occupied in visiting Classes in the London area. The official farewell meeting was on Saturday evening, October 23rd. A very nice hall had been secured for the purpose, and about 120 friends from London and vicinity were there to bid me Goodbye. The meeting consisted largely of my report and time spent in fellowship, and closed with "God be with you till we meet again."

My trip home was uneventful. We left the London airport at 4:45 p.m., came down at Shannon, Ireland, for dinner and refueling, landed again at Gander, and arrived at the New York airport at 4:00 a.m., having traveled over 13,000 miles, visited fifty eight Classes, and spoken at 100 meetings.

My experience throughout has been one I shall be happy to remember, and as I said to the brethren at the Farewell meeting, every possible arrangement was made for my comfort and ease of travel. I was given books of tickets which had been purchased through Cook's Agency, and schedule sheets showing the times *of* trains leaving and arriving, the changes necessary, the names of friends who would meet me and the places I would be entertained. The consideration and kindness shown me made my efforts much less than they would have been, and the trip instead of seeming long seemed short, and if those whom I endeavored to serve received even a portion of the blessing that came to me, the time and effort were well spent.

Your brother by His grace,
John T. Read.

Encouraging Messages

Dear Brethren:

Greetings in the name of -our' Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Another year, by God's grace, we have been privileged to glorify his holy name by yielding ourselves to let his holiness fill our lives and shine forth from us. The work of our blessed Redeemer while on earth was to glorify the Father, to reveal what a glorious God he is; and, our work is like Christ's.

In retrospection we can truly say, "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness," and as we enter a new year may we seek to know and do his will that we may be led into a closer fellowship with our glorified Head and the members of his Body.

It is only by the holy spirit's ministry that we are able to become channels of blessing to others. In this respect "'The Herald of Christ's Kingdom" has ministered to the need of those who are hungering and thirsting after the spiritual food that cometh down from the God of all mercies and grace.

May the spirit of God in the coming days graciously unfold to our hearts more and more our privileges and responsibilities. May we ever be mindful of his loving ministry, his tender care, binding our hearts in affectionate devotion to him and to those whom he is not ashamed to call brethren.

In the words of Sit. Paul, "We do not cease to pray for you and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." May God continue to bless your ministry in behalf of his saints.

"Though pressed, we will not yield,
But shall prevail at length;
Christ is our sun and shield,
Our righteousness and strength."

With Christian love in which Sister Smith and her mother join, I am
Your brother by His grace,
T. G. Smith -- Maine.

Dear Brethren in Christ:

I received your dear letter of October 18 in which you asked if we have need of food or clothes. Food is scarce here in blocked Berlin, because it is almost impossible to buy some additional food, and if one had the chance, food is so expensive that we are not able to pay for it. But we do not want to become burdensome to you.

As to clothes -- we have the, most necessary, things for the moment. Of course we have no linen for our thirteen-year-old daughter; and if you could send some worn clothes, we would give these to needy brethren and sisters in our assembly who do not speak in their modesty about their need and who would never ask for anything.

The conditions of daily life become more and more difficult here. We have electric current only during two hours in the day and two hours in the night. The tramways and underground railways run only until 6 o'clock.

We are allowed to burn only a little gas. We have no fuel for the winter, but perhaps we shall get one-fourth hundredweight of coal and three hundredweight of firewood. Because of this limited supply, trees are cut in the streets of the Western section of Berlin, in the parks and nearby woods.

But trusting in the Lord we shall endure coming afflictions, having only the one desire that the "times of refreshing" may come soon. We thank you for your love, and greet you heartily,

Your brother,
A. S. - Germany.

Dear Brethren in the Lord:

We enjoy the "Herald" so much, and knowing how those dear ones in Germany who are suffering can enjoy it, we are enclosing one dollar for a year's subscription to the brother whose letter appeared in the last "Herald". We should be very pleased to have his address. We now correspond with three, and send packages to them, which is a great joy to us. . .

Your brethren in Christ,
C. and E. C. -- Oregon.

Many of us could take to heart the lesson in zeal for service manifested by a brother in his late seventies, in the following letter:

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Dear Brethren:

I have used up all the enclosed cards, and if you have anything, that I can use to insert in my follow-up work, will be glad to have it. Will also be glad to have 500 of "Why Does God Permit Evil?" for putting in the autos. I cannot go often on account of my feet, but at other times I manage to distribute 100 without it hurting me, and it does not take long to do that... .

Christian love,
Your brother by His grace,
J. W. -- Texas,

Recently Deceased

Mr. W. T. Bailey, Rochester, Minn. - (December).
Dr. J. H. Cahoon, Middletown,, Del. - (December).
Mrs. Maude Carlyle, San. Bernardino, Calif. - (November).
Mrs. A. N. Dougherty, Utica, N. Y. - (January).
Mrs. W. H. Gross, Elmer, N., J. - (January).
Mr. Wm. Hiller, Tacoma, Wash. - (November),
Mr. E. Holmgren, Niles, Mich. - (December).
Mr. C. W. Morris, Roanoke, Va. - (December).
Mrs. Pauline Raffel, Dayton, Ohio - (December).