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Life's Empty Victories

The following article, reprinted by request, was written, just prior to his death, by a regular contributor to a secular newspaper, namely "The Minneapolis Tribune" (December 19, 1932). It is commended to the thoughtful consideration of our readers as full of heavenly counsel.

AS A MAN grows older, yet has not reached extreme old age, when, presumably, all his past is mellowed and softened in the pleasant, tranquil light of sunset, and both mistakes and right acts are equally overspread by the thought that nothing has mattered much, since the whole thing will be soon over; when he arrives at the stage in life's journey where he reviews the past, not alone for the gentle pleasure of reminiscence, but also to seek guidance for his remaining future, and while he still imagines that it is possible for him to mold his character into the secret ideal which he has all along vainly struggled to perfect, there comes, at least to the man of the average temperament, in this pause of review, this moment of rest before he completes his destiny, the thought of how much happier, and better and altogether pleasanter his life might have been had he avoided, as he might easily have done, certain complications and conflicts which, at the time seemed to him mightily important.

When they occurred, he was absolutely certain that the triumph of his opinion was a matter of tremendous consequence; it was essential that he should override the opposition and impress upon his opponent the pre-eminent truth and right of his position; and so he went at him, hard and strong, and in the heat of the controversy, which ripened into a feud and perhaps ended in the permanent estrangement of one who might once have been counted a friend, he said or did things which were hard and bitter, and better left unsaid or undone.

Perhaps he gained his point; beat down his antagonist and sent him, humbled and mortified, from the contest, to nurse his grievance ever after, and nourish to the end of his days a smouldering hate of the man who got the better of him; or worse, to cherish the feeling that he had been hardly used.

Strange it should be that, in his later years, the outcome does not seem to have been of very great consequence. What remains permanently is the memory of the incident, and a regret that it should have occurred.

Looking back, he realizes the exact moment when he might have refrained from pressing his man to the limit, have perhaps sufficiently satisfied his self-respect and vindicated the justness of his contention without sacrificing a possible friend. Probably it would puzzle him now to state exactly what it was all about then, this famous victory, but he remembers it was a great fight and he was in it-and he is sorry.

Not sorry that he stood up stoutly in defense of his positive convictions; no man ever regrets that, but sorry that he should have esteemed it necessary to go to such lengths in pursuit of his ends that it put reconciliation and ultimate restoration of friendship beyond the bounds of the possible. He remembers these incidents with a vague discomfort. No matter which of the two was in the wrong, he holds himself responsible for the outcome.

Did he convince the other of his error? Scarcely. "He that complies against his will is of his own opinion still." Did the encounter seriously contribute to the upbuilding of his own character? Hardly, unless it was desirable to encourage in himself the love of fighting for the fight's sake. His later calm and deliberate conviction is that it was not worth while, and he grudges the vitality and energy he put into it, which might well have been conserved to later, more mature and far better use.

The thing the man remembers at this particular point in his life with the most satisfaction is not such a fruitless contest, but rather the time when, by conceding a point, by some exercise of forbearance in pressing an advantage, he made a friend of his opponent, although they differed irreconcilably. Touching these other encounters, which at the moment it seemed so necessary to win, but which in the end were so barren of real gain, he says, somewhat sorely, "Let them be forgotten and forgiven."

He recalls with secret gratification not his paltry and vainglorious victories, but his flabby and perhaps sentimental concessions: the small foolish, kindly things that he did, rare enough, he admits, but fruitful in pleasing memories. For, after all, we are men, tared with the same stick; more or less good, bad or indifferent, as the case may be, yet all capable of doing something kind for each other. He draws from his past the lesson of tolerance, for the future that is left to him, and resolves, perhaps vainly, but at least, for the moment, sincerely, that henceforth, while he may never falter in defense of a principle, he will try hard to so moderate his attacks upon the other man as to leave no sting past healing.

The assets he counts up with the most satisfaction are the friends he finds about him. What they may expect of him is the animus of his future. He will endeavor to be true to them and to his own convictions, but he will avoid the useless multiplication of enemies. This is his hope, as he takes stock of what lies before him.

Perhaps the writer could offer no suggestion to his readers, touching, the, form which good resolves, customary at this season of the year, should take, that would be better for ourselves and for the world we live in, than that we will lead kindlier lives; that we will be less sure and less harsh in our judgments; that we will refrain as far as in us lies from giving the other man "a piece of our minds;" that we will leave room for him to be convinced of his error, if he be wrong and we right, not through the might of our pounding, but rather through the gradual change in his own convictions; that we will finally try to proceed on the way that we esteem the right and only one with less friction, believing that which is true and right will prevail anyhow, and the surer and swifter if it be not enforced by contention.

In a word, to resolve to make friends, not at the sacrifice of conviction or principle,' but by conceding to others the simple right of learning the truth in their own time and in their own way, helped perhaps by our, of course, pre-eminently wise suggestion and example, if truly they be such, but at least not hindered by our over-emphatic dictum. . . .

"The ill-timed truth we might have kept --
Who knows how sharp it pierced and stung?
The word we had not sense to say
Who knows how grandly it had rung?"

Preach What?

Our Lord told his disciples that repentance and remission should be preached in his name. (Luke 24:47.) "Go -- make disciples -- teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (Matt. 28:18-20.) We read that the Apostles

Preached "Jesus, Christ." - Acts 3:20; 5:42; Rom. 16:25.
Preached "Jesus and the resurrection." - Acts 4:2; 17:18.
Preached "The Word." - Acts 8:4; 11:18; 14:25; 16:6; 2 Tim. 4:2.
Preached "Christ." - Acts 8:5; Phil. 1:18; 1 Tim. 3:16.
Preached "The Word of the Lord." - Acts 8:25.
Preached "The Gospel." - Acts 8:25; 1 Cor. 9:16; 2 Cor. 4:4, 5; Gal. 1:8; Heb. 4:2.
Preached "Jesus." - Acts 8:35; 19:13.
Preached "Jesus, the Son of God." - Acts 9:20.
Preached "Peace by Jesus Christ, Lord of all." - Acts 10:36.
Preached "The Lord Jesus." - Acts 11:20.
Preached "The Word of God." - Acts 13:5; 17:13.
Preached "Through this man -- remission of sins -- justification from all things." - Acts 13:38.
Preached "The Word of the Lord." - Acts 15:35.
Preached "God now commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent." - Acts 17:30.
Preached "The word of faith." - Rom. 10:8.
Preached "Christ died for our sins." - 1 Cor. 15:3.
Preached "Christ arose." - 1 Cor. 15:12.
Preached "The Cross." - 1 Cor. 1:18.
Preached "Christ crucified," - 1 Cor. 1:23.
Preached "The Son of God, Jesus Christ." - 2 Cor. 1:19.
Preached "The Gospel of Christ." - 2 Cor. 10:14.
Preached "The grace of Christ." - Gal. 1:6.
Preached "The faith he once destroyed." - Gal. 1:23.
Preached "Peace through the cross." - Eph. 2:16, 17.
Preached "The unsearchable riches of Christ." - Eph. 3:8.
Preached "The hope of the Gospel -- the mystery hid from ages -- which is, Christ in you,
the hope of glory, whom we preach." - Col. 1:23-28.

Paul "testified" "to the Gospel of the grace of God." - Acts 20:24.
Paul "testified" "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." - Acts 20:21.
Peter "testified" "the true grace of God." - 1 Pet. 5:12.
John "testified" "that God sent his Son to be the Savior of the world." - 1 John 4:14.

Avoid Type Making

We should carefully avoid the error of many well meaning people who run to the extreme of treating every Bible character and incident as typical and are thus led into error by mere curiosity and ingenuity-unsafe groundspeculating-building on mere conjecture.

Scripture Studies, Vol. II, page B173.

- E. K. Snyder.

Kept by the Power of God

To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ;ready to be revealed in the last time. - 1 Peter 1:4, 5.

HOW wonderfully sweet and assuring are the Master's repeated statements of his faithfulness toward those who are his own! And what a depth of interest in each individual is revealed in his words when he says: "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day." (John 6:39.) Here we see not only the greatness of his love for us in a personal way, but we are also given a vision of his deep sense of responsibility to God for the safe-keeping of all that has been entrusted to his care. As our Shepherd, he assumes this charge over us, counting every sheep precious to the Father, and through all the vicissitudes surrounding the life of each one he can never be unfaithful to the trust. What an assurance all this is to us who are being kept beneath this overshadowing solicitation! Think of the love that dwells in the heart of Jesus for his Father, and then remember to what lengths that love would lead him in his delight to demonstrate its reality. It is that love that is pledged to undying devotion to keep us, because it is God's will that he should do so. Think again of the love that he personally has for us, and of which he has not left us in doubt, for has lie not said, "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." - John 14:21; 15:9.

Are these not, then, two most powerful influences operating in our Lord's heart on our behalf? Do they not afford us "strong consolation" in every cloudy and dark day, as well -- as assurance -- when "life flows on in endless song" that he will never leave us nor forsake us?. On the one hand there is his delight in supreme oedience to the Father's will, and on the other hand his love, "all love excelling," for those whom that Father has given him. Truly! what more can he say than to us he has said, to us who are being kept by the power of God.

But to enjoy this keeping power of which Peter in our text is writing, there are, as always, certain antecedent requirements to be recognized and appreciated. This keeping is the privilege only of such as are marked out "through sanctification of the spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." The limitations are definitely fixed in the foreknowledge of God, and the only door of entrance is the narrow one of sanctification, setting apart, separation. Then, when that door has been entered and the "lively hope" operates "by the power of God through faith" to carry forward the foreordained purpose of divine love, there comes a more and more blessed faith appropriation of the "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." As the love of Jesus operating to keep us for the Father and to keep us for himself mingles in our affections with the deepening love wherewith we increasingly love them, how eager and active

our powers of appropriation will become. Then, blessed result! there come increasing longings for separation, and increasing assurances of being kept in the secret place of the Most High.

IN THE FURNACE GOD MAY PROVE THEE

After reminding us of all that God has made possible to us in calling us into this inheritance, Peter is quick to forewarn us of impending trials of faith. Manifold temptations are to be expected -- yea, there will be seasons of heaviness because of the weight of trials -to be borne. And that these *will* be unusually severe at times he is also faithful to warn us, for if we are unacquainted with God's purpose in such experiences, there would be a danger of considering them strange and inconsistent with the pledge of our safe keeping in his love and care. But we of today cannot get away from the innumerable witnesses of God's faithfulness, unless *in* unbelief and hardness of heart we close our eyes to the record of ages past, and deliberately forget the goodness and mercy that *has* followed us all our lifetime. Is not our *experience* a most favored one, in that we are *so* far down the stream of time that we may look back over ages of God's operations? Contrast our advantages with those of Abraham when he was called- out into a life of separation wholly on faith. What records did he have of exploits of faith to strengthen him? How limited were the examples before Daniel and his faithful friends when they were called upon to believe that a fiery furnace and death in a den of lions were wholly compatible with a belief in God's love and care. With so great *a* cloud of witnesses surroundmuing us, can we do aught than fervently pray that we may not fail to prove strong in 'faith? How unthinkable it is that we of today should be less strong in the Lord and in the power of his might than those who so gloriously triumphed in an Age of much less revelation, and whose rewards are to be inferior to that of even the least in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Turning back, then, to note some of the noble characters. of the past, whose records furnish us with indubitable proof that God will keep his own under all circumstances, we may learn much that will be a profitable "instruction in righteousness," and greatly strengthen our faith today. By observing in these examples of obedient faith the relationship existing between the trials of today and the opportunities of yesterday, we will be helped thereby to understand much that may otherwise seem inexplicable. For, though it be, seldom remembered at the time, it is our reactions to certain heaven provided preparatory opportunities granted to us in the present hour, which will in all probability determine our course of action under the tests of tomorrow -- yes, even if that tomorrow of test be months or years yet before us. The revolving wheel may turn slowly at times, but turn it will as long as character registers with precision the thoughts of the heart, and the acts of life. This, of course, it will always do, for the law of cause and effect is God's fixed law.

PREPARING FOR COMING TESTS

From early days we may have sung "Dare to be a Daniel, dare to stand alone," but have *we* always remembered how it calve about that Daniel stood alone? Not only Daniel, but his three loyal companions likewise were faithful under equally crucial tests, and therefore they too become outstanding examples for us to follow. The underlying secret of the fortitude and faithfulness of these men, is unquestionably related to their positive course of action at an earlier date. We recallthat after the captivity of Israel began, Nebuchadnezzar had taken these four young captives and placed them under special tuition for places of responsibility in his kingdom. Immediately, these true Israelites revealed themselves possessed of admirable strength of character. And so we read, "And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. . . . But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore lie requested of the

prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." (Dan. 1:5, 8) And while Daniel alone is mentioned in the text just quoted, the narrative clearly shows that his companions were sharers with him in this determination to remain undefiled. Apparently these men had not permitted their plight as captives to swerve them from their devotion to God's law, and hence they did not reason that their changed circumstances would be ample justification for indulging in all the king might place before them. Rather, they determined that those very conditions were such as to make it imperative that they separate themselves from defilement.

Remembering the customs of those days, and the dispatch with which the king's displeasure was executed when his will was crossed, we can see that this was no small matter to have determined on such a course. But freedom from defilement was the real issue, and the approval of God they placed above life itself. And with what gratifying results: "As for these four children, God *gave them* knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in *all* visions and dreams." This is always God's way with those who honor him. "Touch not

the unclean thing, *and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*" "What man is *he* that feareth the Lord? *him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.*" (2 Cor. 6:17, 18; Psa. 25:12.) In the time of trouble, the time of final testing, he will hide such in his pavilion: "In the secret of his tabernacle shall lie hide them; he shall set them up upon a rock." They shall be kept by the power of God unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. As with Daniel, so with these of a later' day, the character formed in the tuition period has everything to do with determining the course of action when subsequently brought face to face with issues involving life and death.

HE IS ABLE TO KEEP YOU FROM FALLING

Peter, in our text, reminds us that we are kept by the power of God, and it is very important that we remember this. Oh, how many have boasted while putting the armor on in calmer days, only to subsequently provide another painful illustration of instability, over-confidence in self, and a failure to remember that *only* those who are "*strong in the Lord*" can possibly escape the wiles of the Adversary. Let our natural powers of mind be what they may, and let our efficiency as exponents of the Truth by tongue or pen be ever so great, yet how unfit for service we are until the power of the holy spirit comes upon us to sanctify our own lives, and thereby fortify us against the pitfalls spread before our feet. The measure of our spiritual power -- God's power in our lives -- will be in exact proportion to our cleansing from all filthiness of the flesh and spirmuit, and this must include a proper estimate of the utter unprofitableness of our own works aside from a true abiding in Christ. Indeed, it is not until the divine power can work *in* a fully consecrated and spirit guided life that there is any power to endure under trial, or to do any spiritual work. "Our sufficiency is from him," *is* the Scriptural reminder; therefore, all dependence on our own wisdom, our own talents, or our own intellectual abilities, our own powers of argument or persuasion or appeal, is an ignoring of the fundamental truth, and some ignoble fall may be necessary to awaken us to that fact.

Paul writing to Timothy reminds him that "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." (2 Tim. 2:20, 21.) This is but a repetition of the same fact, and is meant to teach that unmortified lust, fleshly or spiritual defilement tolerated in the life, *will* constitute an effectual hindrance to spiritual vision, and to the kind of service bearing fruit unto eternal life. It was a law in ancient Israel that they must "bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord." Should the vessel be unclean, it must be rejected as one

in "which is no pleasure," and the offering would not be accepted by the Lord. That same law remains unrepealed in the statute book of Christ. Long before it was elaborated by the Apostle, these same principles were anticipated in the lives of four young captives in Babylon who had determined to keep themselves undefiled, and the story has been written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the Ages have come. Shall we not heed it?

THE WISE SHALL UNDERSTAND AND SHINE AS LIGHTS

In support of the thought previously advanced, namely that the heaven-provided opportunities enjoyed today for attaining character are meant to be accepted as preparatory experiences looking forward to the tests of tomorrow, we may find strong corroboration in the lives of Daniel and his companions. As we have just seen, they were placed in circumstances where it would have been easy to compromise and gravitate to the level of their environment, but this they did not do. They were doubtless considered extreme and foolish by their immediate associates for so doing; and since human nature changes little in matters of this kind, they probably suffered the disapproval of some of their brethren whose policy would be the less distinctive one, the one of compromise. But refusing "the king's meat" and avoiding defilement, prepared Daniel for a day when "the king's dream" would create a crisis in his own life, and that of his fellows. Yes, and a crisis it was, from which the only way of escape was in being in unhindered fellowship with God. Enjoying that, it was an event in which he experienced a blessed assurance of divine love and keeping power, and in which his clearness of vision constituted him a savior of others.

"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." How beautifully this is exemplified in the incident we are now considering. The king was troubled over a strange dream, which, though forgotten, greatly disturbed his peace of mind. As usual under such circumstances he summoned all his wise men and placed before them the task of recalling his dream and supplying its interpretation. This, of course, they could not do, and consequently were dismissed from the royal presence under sentence of death. Then it was that *one who had not been thought of at all as competent to contribute help*, was, discovered. Daniel was brought before the king, and at once honored his God by making it known that whatever wisdom he might have was due to his relationship to the God of Israel. Securing a season of respite, he returned to his companions and asked "that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning the secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon." Daniel, the beloved, had learned where, to look for the solution of his problems. His appeal was to the only source of true enlightenment and help. He had learned to "cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils," and to go to the only place where God's will may be surely understood—the closet of prayer.

There is a God in heaven who knows all about our problems, and who is working out his grand designs midst all the perplexities surrounding our pathway. True, he could have relieved us of any responsibility in connection with the progress of his cause in the world, and perhaps he could have so arranged his Plan that it would be simply a matter of fate when error's baneful fruitage thinned the ranks of his separated people. But God's Plan involves the recognition on our part of some very important responsibilities. We are, all of us, in some measure, our brother's keeper, and in Daniel, and also in Paul, we have outstanding examples of how burdened our hearts should properly be on behalf of those walking with us the same—Narrow Way.

May it not be, however, ever, that, as is often the case, we have overlooked a very important feature of God's provision for his people? When problems confront the Church, how possible it is to forget the very lesson this bit of Daniel's history can teach us. When clear vision is needed, we may depend upon it that God has not left himself without a witness in the earth. Somewhere there will be found a Daniel; a Hananiah, a Mishael, an Azariah, whose names will "be interpreted in lives that excel in the virtues they represent. To these, who have faith enough, and devotion enough, and self-denial enough, and holiness enough, to separate themselves from all compromising expedencies, God will show his covenant promises fulfilled. Such shall have the Light of Life through all the maze. God will certainly direct the path of all who walk with him in the sanctity of his presence. Yea, he will guide them with his eye. And what a saving influence in the Church such characters may be.

THE PRAYER OF THE RIGHTEOUS AVAILETH MUCH

Doubtless, when all knowledge is ours, and Church history is all spread out before us, we will discover that on more than one occasion when the enemy was preparing some subtle snare, or actually sweeping, in like a flood, it was, not some strong magnetic powers of exhortation that saved the day and sent the wily foe away defeated and disappointed, but the strong crying and tears of some unthought of heroic Daniel had been heard from some closed closet of prayer. Ah, yes, perhaps it will then be seen that many of our advances in fruitful ministry were simply God's answer to some importunate prayer for Zion's sake. Then, too, we will doubtless find that many of our fine schemes whereby we had thought to accomplish much, were not brought to naught so much by a wicked enemy of the Church, but because some burdened souls sensed the special need of the call to prayer. For it cannot be questioned that when the enemy is most active, it will be those who have walked closest to God who will first detect his presence. When the Lord has judged his people, and the "day" which "will declare every man's work of what sort it is," has come -- and it is here even now -- then who will be most competent to understand the complex situation? Ah, it will be those who have put prayer, sanctification, and fidelity to truth, before all else. When the Spirit must write over any work or movement, "Ichabod" -- "The glory has departed" -- then, only the prayerful, separated, undefiled Daniel like characters, will be ready to interpret with accuracy the "cause and effect. And it is just here that such characters will act for God and for his people, as he desires they should. Men of spiritual vision must necessarily be men of prayer, and men of prayer must certainly be men of humble mind, deeply conscious of personal unworthiness and weakness. True, they will not always be judged as such by others, but God must know them as such, and he will surely know how constantly they confess their imperfections at his feet. Such a character was Daniel. His life of separation made possible a clearness of vision, and the revelation made him pray, and in prayer he was humble, not only for himself but for his brethren. How beautifully this is revealed in his intercessory prayer preserved for us *in* chapter 9. At its close we read, "And whilst I was speaking, and praying, *and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel*, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God" -- a true patriot surely, *and* one greatly needed at a time like that.

But how much would Daniel's contemporary brethren enter into his contrition? Might it not be hoped that many of them would rally to his side and join with him *in his prayer for Israel's sake*? Surely so! "But then, how little are the judgments and actings of faith understood or valued, when things get low amongst the people of God! This is very apparent on every page of Israel's history, and, we may say, on every page of the Church's history also. The path of simple child like faith is far removed from human sight; and if the Lord's servants sink into a low carnal state, they can never understand the principle of power in the soul of one really acting by faith. He will be misunderstood in various ways, and have wrong motives attributed to him; he will be accused of setting himself up, or acting wilfully. All these things must be expected by one who stands in the breach, at a time when things are low. Through lack of faith in the majority, a man is left alone, and then, when he is led to act for God, he is sure to be misinterpreted." Nevertheless, when crisis hours come, the clearest vision, the deepest perception, the calmest judgment, the most spiritual diagnosis, will be found where there has been most of the bended knee, and most of honest confession, and most of real sincere longing for an undefiled and separated life.

OUR GOD WHOM WE SERVE

Continuing our study of these exemplary characters of long ago, we are impressed with the suggestive sequence with which lesson follows lesson. As the determination to avoid defilement by eating the "king's meat" prepared Daniel and his fellows to face the test introduced by "the king's dream," so both in turn are strengthening influences preparing them for the coming test of "the king's image." That next test will have to do with *the character* of their worship and service of God. It will afford an opportunity to reveal the ideals, motives, and principles, by which they are influenced. It will also constitute them witnesses for God on a very much larger scale than they could otherwise have been -- yes, the kind of witnesses whose testimony is always most effective lives which witness "in demonstration of the spirit and of power." And here again there was ample opportunity for compromise. It would have been an easy matter to have found a way out of really bowing and worshipping the image before them. Expediency, mental reservations, and other subterfuges might have been brought forth as arguments in favor of less than an out and out protest. But once again we see the value of a background of positive determination to settle questions of right or wrong with "God first" before the mind. This was David's way also, according to his testimony: "I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." A well known writer, commenting on the positive action of these faithful young men, and the many lessons which this record teaches, has given the following:

"On the whole front of it there flames in letters of blazing gold that there is an almighty, living, and independent God, unbound by Nature's laws and unlimited to natural forces, whose word is written in his Book, whose eye is upon his confiding servants, and who *will* never leave nor forsake them that put their trust in him!

"From the innermost spirit of it there comes the proclamation that if kings *or* dignitaries or commands of church or state go against Jehovah's laws, or demand obedience against his Word, or undertake to keep conscience for the human soul, no true man of God dare obey them, nor shall he be the loser for his fidelity, no matter what penalties he may incur... . And in the whole make-up of it there stands memorialized for ever that *the only true expediency is inflexible principle*. It matters not for immediate consequences. God will make *all* right in the end to them that stand fast to truth and duty. They are, after all, the true heroes, and shall not fail of their rewards."

This writer has given emphasis to several points worth noting. How true it is that "no true man of God can give the keeping of his conscience to another. When that is done, deflection from the principles of pure worship must inevitably follow; for no substitute can be found for personal responsibility to God. And such deflection is treason against the holy spirit, against the Bible,- against those we stumble and against our own eternal interests. How much better the example of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. How much better to be fortified against such "fear of man," and instability, by having the principles of righteousness so woven into the texture of the character, that obedience would be spontaneous. "Dare to be a Daniel, dare to stand alone!"

Another point well emphasized by the writer just quoted is in the statement that, "the only true expediency is inflexible principle." If we forget this, we are very likely to be deflected and turned aside, by compromising influences about us. Just as the compass of a ship can be deranged by the iron which enters into the structure of the vessel, so with the Christian, his service and worship may easily become misdirected, and become a sad violation of his Lord's searching test of love and obedience. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." "My sheep hear my voice, and a stranger *will they not follow*." In order therefore to keep our worship and service pointing in the

right direction, we need to keep our eye upon the Lord, and let him alone be our fear. Yes, to ever remember that "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

THE TRUE SPIRIT OF DEVOTION

It will be observed that in the foregoing we have not been attempting any application of possible typical features to be found in the image which our heroes refused to worship. Rather, our present purpose is to review certain facts of Christian experience and gather lessons to supply present needs. And referring to our opening text wherein Peter is reminding us of some who are being kept by the power of God, we are finding in our study, we trust, some suggestions calculated to quicken our understanding of what God may properly expect of us. No feature of truth seems more in need of emphasis today than such lessons as these things "written aforetime" may now teach us. Promptness of obedience to God, then, was the outstanding character of the Hebrew captives in our study, and since *spontaneous obedience* is the only real demonstration of loving devotion, is it not seasonable to examine ourselves by the standards inspiration affords us? Surely so! For it cannot be denied that both by precept and by the history of exemplary characters, the Scriptures are constantly teaching us that nothing can be more dangerous than to hesitate when divine light is thrown on the path of duty and fidelity. To fail to act then, once the light has come, is to run the risk of meriting some serious and perhaps very unexpected results. As another has said, "Never go before your faith, nor lag behind your conscience," for to do so, is to trifle with one's eternal possibilities.

No one who has given careful attention to "all Scripture" can have failed to note the constant repetition of one outstanding fact, namely that in God's dealings with his people of the Jewish and Gospel Ages, there has first been a recognition of the mass, or general "mixed multitude," and then a distinct dealing with individuals. Passing by the various illustrations of this fact that Jewish history reveals, let us note that there are three stages marked out in their probation: For centuries God dealt with the whole nation. Then, with the appearance of Jesus "whose fan was in his hand," it was still in a measure general, but in a stricter sense narrowed down to "the *lost sheep* of the house of Israel." And Jesus himself put forth that narrowing limit, for he repeatedly emphasized that he "came not to call the righteous [self-righteous, unrepentant Jews at that time], but sinners to repentance." Then came the end of all forms of national recognition, and an extension in a definite way to individuals for three and a half years. Similarly, in this Age. There is first the command, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." Then, "Let both [wheat and tares] grow together until the harvest." And when the end of the Age comes, "Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom, and five of them were wise, and five were foolish." Here we have first the general extension of favor to the entire field; then the introduction of that which will separate virgins from others; and finally the examination narrowed down to these alone. On this point we cannot do better than quote from Vol. III, of *Scripture Studies*, page C190:

"The parable of the Ten Virgins, while it shows the entire virgin or consecrated class being separated from Babylon, marks distinctly a testing and separation to take place in this class also—a separation of wise virgins, *full of faith* and *fervent love* and *the spirit of prompt obedience*, from foolish virgins, who allow their first love and fervency of spirit to cool, and their faith and promptness of obedience consequently to abate."

To the individual saint then, these are crucial examination days. While the Lord is thus occupied with the judgment which must begin at the house of God, it is well for us to examine ourselves to make sure that we possess the faith and love that knows no expediency other than that of principle, and to make- positively sure that *prompt obedience* has characterized our service and

worship hitherto. Crisis periods are doubtless coming to each of us as the days go by, and some of these particular periods will, in all probability, be *the crisis moment* for us. Some day the period of probation will have gone far enough to determine our standing. Some day, by taking the wrong turn, by failing to separate from the dross, or by a failure to render prompt obedience, we will be set aside from the number of his Elect -- if we do not keep our heart with all diligence.

Then, since these things are so, how shall we be assured of divine approval? To that question the Scriptures make reply: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath *clean hands*, and a *pure heart*; who hath not *lifted up his soul unto vanity*, nor *sworn deceitfully*. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." (Psa. 24:3-5.) He shall be "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" -- very soon we believe.

READY FOR THE KING'S FURNACE

We follow our Hebrew heroes yet one step, further. They are yet to be cast into the seven times heated furnace, and experience the distinct approval of God. As to what this may point to as a type of what the Church might expect ere its complete change has come, we are not concerned here in our present study. For the present we have considered the various trials the true saint will have in his contact with opposing influences; and in considering "the king's furnace," and its results to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, we call to mind the blessed results which God wills shall come to us through the fiery trial already here, or yet to come. It is so much easier for us to think of the furnace of trial, than to rejoice in what the furnace experience may make possible. The great Refiner's purpose in permitting fiery trials is twofold: He wants to destroy the dross, and he wants to purify and brighten the metal. Whatever therefore may be the character of our peculiar testings today, God has but one special purpose, and that purpose the Scriptures tell us is to the end "that the approved may be made manifest. And, what would we not be willing to bear up under, just to have a record of victory like that of these men! How inspiring it is! "Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire. And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counselors being gathered together, saw these men, *upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats -changed, nor the smell of fire shad passed on them.*" Glorious triumph! In all these things they were "more than conquerors." They had walked in separation with God before the furnace came, and God walked with them within its flame, "to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." - 2 Chron. 16:9.

So, whatever form our individual trials may take -- and God knows how hearts are burdened with sorrows; no one fully understands but God-let us take comfort from the lesson before us. It will be with us as with the Hebrew captives in their furnace experience. "God was there! -- there, in his power, to write contempt upon all man's apposition -- there, in his deep and tender sympathy with his tried and faithful servants-there, in his matchless grace, to set the captives free, and to lead the hearts of his Nazarites into that deep fellowship with himself for which they so ardently thirsted.

"And, my beloved reader, is it not worth passing through a fiery furnace to enjoy a little more of the presence of Christ, and the sympathy of his loving heart? Are not fetters, with Christ, better than jewels without him? Is not a furnace where he is, better than a palace where he is not? Nature says, 'No!' Faith says, 'Yes!' .. Here, then, was a noble testimony-such a testimony as would never have been rendered,; had the Lord, by a mere act of power, preserved his servants from being cast into the furnace. Nebuchadnezzar was furnished with a striking proof that his furnace was no more to be dreaded than his image was to be worshiped by 'the servants of the

Most High God.' In a word, the enemy was confounded; God was glorified; and his dear servants brought forth unscathed from 'the burning fiery furnace.' Precious fruits, these, of a faithful Nazariteship!" Oh, to be kept unscathed, unharmed today!

And can we too hope to so fully overcome, that God will thus "manifest" us as his approved ones? Surely so! "Now unto *him that is able* to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever." "I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." (Jude 24, 25; 2 Tim. 1:12.) If we seek the inner circle of close communion with God, and shun the defilements he frowns upon, and keep our wave offering of acceptable service lifted up, *we will be kept from falling*, and ere long be forever separated from all the limitations experienced in, a world like this. Meantime, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; 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.

- J. J. Blackburn.

Paul to Philemon
A MODEL LETTER EXAMINED
PART 4

I have sent [Onesimus] back to thee in his own person, that is, my very heart: whom I would fain have kept with me, that in thy behalf he might minister unto me in the bonds of the Gospel: but without thy mind I would do nothing that thy goodness should not be as, of necessity, but of free will. For perhaps he was therefore parted from thee for a season, that thou shouldest have him for ever; no longer as a servant, but more than a servant, a brother beloved, especially to me, but how much rather to thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord. If then thou countest me a partner, receive him as myself. But if he hath wronged thee at all, or oweth thee aught, put that to mine account; I Paul write it with mine own hand, I will repay it: that I say not unto thee that thou owest to me even thine own self besides - Philemon 12-19.

HISTORY RECORDS that fugitive slaves seeking refuge on the decks of English men-of-war discovered that the government had instructed that every one must be returned to his owner. Paul similarly sided with the owner; but Onesimus goes not as one "dragged from the horns of the altar," but gladly accepting return to servitude, now as a "bondslave of Jesus Christ." We are not told what his thoughts were as he carried the letter to deliver it in person to his master, Philemon. Perhaps fear did tug at his heart and tempt him to turn back to the supposed freedom he had been trying to enjoy. But that, too, he would fear to do, for he well knew that if the law laid its hands on him and dragged him back to his master, it might mean not only death for himself, but death for all others who were companions in his slavery. For ordinary slaves in ordinary households these would undoubtedly have been the conflicting thoughts, bringing much of misery into the 900-mile journey. But Onesimus in returning to his earthly master was going to a fellow bond-servant of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the strangest of all experiences ever coming to Christians is that temptation to seek deliverance from bondage to Christ and his principles. The discrete answer to that suggestion is, "To whom shall we go? A yielding would be a return to "the bondage of corruption," "the cords of sin," a departure from the service of Christ to the service of Satan. (Prov. 5:22; John 8:34; Acts 8:13; Rom. 6:16; 2 Pet. 2:10, 20.) For those who do draw back, the verse last cited indicates "the latter end is *worse than the beginning*." They were "born in sin and shapen in iniquity," and it is a blessing that God's arrangement for such is destruction. It is unthinkable that divine love would permit them to go on eternally into ever increasing depths of depravity. Only by the destruction of all whom "it is impossible to renew 'unto repentance" can His creatures have a clean universe in which to spend eternity.

Flesh apparently realizes that it is not capable of exercising freedom, at least subconsciously recognizing also that it *is* the slave of sin and self. Perhaps for this reason it often readily submits to a measurable overlordship of some individual or organization. The Christian, too, realizes even more keenly than the world his need of supervision, and joyfully accepts bond servitude to the one Master who can teach him how to sever connections with all previous bondages, protecting him from abandonment not only to sin but every degrading influence, everything that would in any degree lower the standard of Christian living. When any master is of a higher type mentally and morally than the slave, slavery can be a blessing. This is manifestly true of slavery to the One who is perfect in wisdom and all other qualities. Hence the joy of being the slave of our Lord Jesus Christ. The 'flesh has a natural aversion to being in absolute bondage to any one, and this in

spite of the fact that it has never really known freedom at any time. Because' of this aversion it must be "browbeaten" to bring it into subjection.

The Apostle Paul points out elsewhere that it is not bodily freedom from bondage to other humans that is the essential thing. His advice in, 1 Corinthians 7:21, 22, 24 is: "Wast thou called being a bond-servant? care not for it: nay, even if thou canst become free, use it rather. For he that was called in the Lord being a bond-servant, is the Lord's freedman: likewise he that was called being free, is Christ's bond-servant." It is thus that Paul is sending Onesimus back to Philemon, not as his servant, but as the Lord's. Justice forced him to send him back, and love forced him to write this lovely letter. A sanctified conscience and a consecrated desire for God's glory forced Onesimus to return.

"THOSE MEMBERS WHICH SEEM TO BE MORE FEEBLE"

The intimacy that has grown up between Paul and this slave in their little season of contact is figuratively expressed in the twelfth verse by speaking of Onesimus as if he were a portion of Paul's own body, as essential to him as his own heart and lungs. The symbolism is not too strong. No saint can count on full spiritual health if he is not benefiting by every other member the Lord has seen fit to give him. "That which *every* joint supplieth" must be appropriated or spiritual ill health will result. As for the word "bowels," which the King James version uses, it is better to supply "heart." The Greek word is applicable to the higher organs only, and therefore expresses greater importance in the relationship even than the Authorized reading.

It is Paul's seventh argument that we have just considered. The eighth tells of the pleasure it would have been to have kept Onesimus 'by his side to further serve him. The suggestion has come to the Apostle's mind, but has been stifled at its inception. Of that throttled thought he writes, "I was wishing;" but now "I willed to do nothing without thy consent." "The language is exact; there is a universe between" wishing and willing, the Expositor's Bible comments. Justice would not permit him to accept such service without the owner's permission, and he does not even now suggest the possibility of the slave returning to serve him. He is emulating his heavenly Master in accepting only free-will service.

The Church's present mission is vastly larger than, though preparatory for, the effecting of all reform. Only when God's purposes have been accomplished will it be apparent how far short any attempt at freedom fell which left men still in bondage to sin and selfishness. The freedom that men thought they were bestowing by emancipation of slaves, has removed only one shackle while leaving the entire being in galling bondages of various kinds. For the Church the situation is very different, for whom Christ "maketh free, is free indeed." It is only a little company that have as yet taken advantage of that freedom; but the more extended emancipation is to be revealed in that time of which Isaiah prophesied (Isa. 61:1): "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek . . . to proclaim liberty to the captives," liberty in every sense; except that there will be a willing submission on the part of many to the Mediator of the new covenant. Luke 2:32 and Luke 4:18 apply this to our Lord himself as the one speaking. Definitely a similar mission is pointed out as the future work of the Church in Isaiah 42:6, 7 and applied to them by inspiration in Acts 13:47 and Romans 8:21. Because this is to be their mission the spirit again speaks of that work as that for which the whole groaning creation waits, though evidently unconscious of what they are waiting for. Not until the sons of God are manifest can the world know the blessings God has planned for them. - Rom. 8:22.

FREED TO BECOME SERVANTS

Soldiers of the cross are never conscripted. What compelling there is is that of love. Our understanding of the Millennial use of the rod of iron in the hand of Jesus is softened when we realize the appropriateness of the phrase: "shepherding them with a rod of iron." Appropriately those who will be associated with Jesus in bringing liberty to the captives of Satan are those who themselves are appreciative of that blessing. The indication is that this will always be manifest in their association, for "where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." (2 Cor. 3:17.)

Theirs is a liberty carefully used, however, lest it "become a stumbling-block to them that are weak." (2 Cor. 8:9.) "Brethren, we have been called unto liberty, only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love *serve one another*," Paul exhorts. Gal. 5:13.

FLESHLY PHRASEOLOGY CONTRASTING WITH SPIRITUAL

Paul's next argument, and one of his most telling, starts with a word that is often difficult for the flesh to use, but very useful to the spiritually minded: "perhaps." How much better to start with that and some day be able to change it to "verily"; rather than some time have to supplant the dogmatic statement with, "I was wrong." However, regardless, of the care one uses in forming his opinions, all new creatures have sufficient opportunity of exercising the grace of humility this confession gives. It is doubtful if any one has ever entirely avoided the error of permitting some thought of his own to slip in between facts certified to by the holy spirit, only in due time to learn that it is indeed true that the God of all truth entirely disclaims all of our thoughts, just as every true saint does when he learns that God's thoughts are always as much higher than, ours as the heavens are higher than the earth. (Isa. 55:8, 9.) The Apostle corroborates this, saying: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to *think* anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." - 2 Cor. 3:5.

Errors of interpretation can be made very profitable to the spirit if accepted as an opportunity to humbly confess our mistake, not forgetting however next time to "wait on the Lord," for only "those things which are *revealed* belong unto us." Since the wisdom of the wisest human minds is but foolishness with God, how puerile must appear the inventions of our feeble brains when we force them into the discussions of things divine. It should be apparent that as "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" "are hid" in Christ, no human system of speculation will discover the smallest item of truth. All must remain hid until his time for revealing. Note God's many times repeated and harsh denunciation of the prophets of old for speaking what he had not inspired. - Jer. 14:14; 23:14-16, 25-32, etc.

Paul's humble "perhaps" of this fifteenth verse might be understood as such speculation, but the uncertainty is not as to God's beneficence but as to how effectually Philemon will demonstrate the good that is in him as a Christian. Note how easy Paul is making it for him, and how attractive. He does not use the harsh word "departed" that is found in the King James translation, but says, Onesimus "was parted from you -for awhile." In the mind of this one who wrote in his letter to the Church at Ephesus (Eph. 1:11) that his God "worketh *all* things after the counsel of his own will, there was no doubt as to the wisdom that had so timed and directed everything that the feet of Onesimus might lead him to the very city where one of his messengers at that moment was waiting with an abundance of time to preach to every listening ear. The mind that could see in his imprisonment a circumstance the holy spirit was using for the "furtherance of the Gospel" (Phil. 1:12) had no difficulty in seeing God's hand in Onesimus' flight. To him he was not a runaway slave, but one who "was parted" by divine providence that Philemon "might have him back for ever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother." The principle back of this

is fairly easy to grasp; but the difficulty comes when one endeavors to apply it in his life moment by moment. To live that kind of a life, one does not just hope-he believes, he knows. (Heb. 10:3.) Faith far outstrips radar in equipping the consecrated mind to see beyond life's rocky shore and to be ever inspired with a vision of the ocean of God's love that for the human understanding is concealed by the fog of human mindedness. The loveliness of the blue bells on the flax does not spare them from going into the vat to rot with all else except the tough fibre that later will be used to tow mighty ships to their harbor. "Sown in weakness; raised in power is the life story of a Christian." Flowers have to fade in order that their fragrance may be given' bottled permanence. The dwarfed mind of man, judging God's working by his feeble intellect, sees principally the suffering and death. Faith, under God's guidance sees a kingdom filling the whole earth: "righteousness, peace and joy in the holy spirit." And "to his Kingdom and peace there shall be no boundary," an old Moravian version reads. Not in the valley at its foot, but lifted above those depths one can best judge the height of the mountain beyond.

LOVE HOPETH ALL THINGS

Again in the sixteenth verse Paul reveals how strong his attachment for the slave, "beloved ... *in the Lord,*" has become; but he anticipates that to Philemon he will be still more precious: "beloved, specially to me, but how much rather to thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord." That, however, will be after he has learned to know him in this new capacity, as a brother. The first few days will be the period of uncertainty, so Paul pleads: 'If then thou countest me a partner, receive him as myself.' This is not the demand of a superior, but the request of a "partner" standing on equal ground with Philemon; but asking the very heartiest of welcomes for his protege, "more than a servant, a brother beloved." In Christ Jesus "there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all." (Col. 3:11.) Moved by disgusting pride of the flesh one may make reluctant concession for Sunday if the one he thinks beneath him will only keep his place from Monday to Saturday. The only arrangement satisfactory to the Apostle and the Lord is an unrestricted seven day partnership. Anything less than that is "living after the flesh." Partnership with the Father and the Son would appeal to any mind, but our beloved John assures us that if w^o walk in the light which that partnership will throw on our path, "walk in the light as He is in the light, we have partnership with one another." To that he adds the startling provision, "and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." Evidently to reject the partnership of the humblest brother is to risk rejecting the blood of our Elder Brother. (1 John 1:3, 7.) But in spite of this extreme warning, what a variety of fences have been made 'by the flesh to shut others out of this partnership throughout the Age. If this text were fully believed, the tendency would be to accept into our fellowship every one who names the name of Christ, regardless of the fact that our human reasoning casts some doubt upon his sincerity.

No less an authority than the ancient Horace records for us that the "anxious master fears lest his slaves shall pillage him and fly." Paul in alluding to this very crime on the part of Onesimus by using the mildest of expressions avoids antagonizing Philemon. He does not say: "Since he has robbed you, 'for he told me so with his own lips': but, "If he hath wronged you." "Love is kind." Paul is being kind to both brothers by this selection of the gentler words.

"Charge that to my account," is lawyer-like phraseology, used, it is suggested, in a half playful manner. Its legality is completed by, "I, Paul, write it with mine own hand," seeming for this much of the letter to take the pen in his own hand and thus make of it a bond on which Philemon could collect. The Greek is a rare word used for a very rare, Christlike act. Freely he was taking upon him the chastisement of Onesimus' peace. - Isa. 53:5.

It is not necessary that we know the circumstance that made it possible for the Apostle to advance his fourteenth argument: "I say not unto thee that thou owest to me even thine own self besides." Whether physical or spiritual life is alluded to, there is here another excuse for commanding and therefore another indication that this wise pupil in the school of Christ has learned the greater power of love. "True love never presses its claims, not recounts its services," Alexander MacLaren truthfully states; and in that statement brands as of its master the devil, much that parades itself as love. Paul's allusion is not made as a boast, but as a gesture of love to obtain for both brothers all that is possible of the Lord's favor. "Love delights to give, asking no return." Selfishness has its eye on the reward, praise of men, or perhaps only a comfortable feeling in the con, science, the warmth of self commendation. We, too, have a debt-owe our very selves to Christ. If there is gratitude, there is response, an eagerness to give what we can-all we have. - Gal. 4:15; 1 Thess. 2:8.

- P. E. Thomson.

The Question Box

Romans 5:15-17

Question:

In Romans 5:15-17 St. Paul seems to be arguing that the sacrifice of Christ was more than a corresponding price for the forfeited life of Adam. In verse 15 he says the grace of God and the gift by grace "much more" abounded. In verse 16 he says that the gift was "not as it was by one that sinned" -- the context implying that it was greater. In verse 17 the phrase "much more" is once *again* employed in reference to the work of Christ in contrast to that of *Adam*. How are we to understand these verses?

Answer:

This question is a most interesting one. To secure a satisfactory answer to it is a rewarding study.

Let us first glance back at what has gone before. In the development of his great theme, namely, that the salvation of every man, whoever he may be, rests on the righteousness which faith procures (Rom. 1:16, 17) St. Paul has shown:

- (1) The heed of the whole world, both Gentile and Jew. - Rom. 1:18-3:20.
- (2) God's provision to meet that heed. - Rom. 3:21-26.
- (3) That the wondrous gift of salvation was offered to Gentiles as well as to Jews in accordance with the principle of Jewish monotheism. - Rom. 3:27-31.

Such a conclusion would be very difficult for his readers, especially his Jewish readers, to accept, and so he devoted a whole chapter (chapter 4) to show that this mode of justification is in keeping with the decisive example, Abraham.

In the first eleven verses of the following chapter *he* shows that the righteousness thus obtained will not fail the consecrated believer no matter what the tribulations of the present may be.

Next comes the paragraph containing the verses to which our question relates, a paragraph which runs from verse 12 to the end of the chapter.

The main argument in this paragraph is given in Rom. 5:12, 18-19. In the Authorized Version Rom. 5:13-17 are shown in parenthesis. Omitting, for the moment, these parenthetical verses and reading only verses Rom. 5:12, 18-19, the main argument *may* be more readily discerned. We offer the following paraphrase:

"Since, condemned as we all were, we have found reconciliation in Christ, there is, therefore, between our relation to him and our relation to Adam the following resemblance, namely:

Rom. 5:12 -

"As by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men for that [in Adam] all sinned;

Rom. 5:18 -

"Therefore, as by one offense [the disobedience of Adam] there was condemnation for *all* men, *so* also by one act of justification [the act of God who, in consequence of the death of Christ has pronounced justification for all sinners] there was for all men *justification* of life.

Rom. 5:19 -

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners so by the obedience of one [the holy life and vicarious death of Christ] shall many be made righteous."

It must be apparent that in these- three verses St. Paul is arguing the *parity* between the two works the work of Adam and the work of Christ-not *their disparity*. However, in verses 15-17 he ascribes a certain superiority of action to Christ's work as compared to Adam's. Why does he thus interrupt his parity argument?

The parity argument is clear: Even as death passed upon all because of certain matters stated (Rom. 5:12) so the free gift came upon all men to justification of life (Rom. 5:18) .

Since this parity idea is the main argument, it follows that Rom. 5:15-17, *when properly understood*, demonstrate this parity. *Let us* see if they are capable of being thus understood.

In these verses the thought of the Apostle appears to be this: "If, from the first factor which, from one point of view may be regarded as *a* comparatively insignificant one, namely, the offense of one, there could go forth an action which spread over the whole multitude of mankind, will not the conclusion hold *all the more strongly*, that from two factors (the grace of God and the gift of Jesus through this grace) acting on the opposite side, powerful and rich as they are, there must result an action, the extension of which shall not be less than that of the first factor, and shall consequently also reach the whole of that multitude? If the offense affected all mankind, shall not these also?"

If we have correctly understood the Apostle's thought, it will be seen that the "much more" of Rom. 5:15 is to be understood in the sense of "much more certainly." The Apostle is not here concerned with demonstrating that there is more of grace in Christ than there was of death in Adam. What he wishes to prove is that if a slight cause could bring sentence of death on all mankind, this same race, every member of it, could surely experience the effect *of a* cause much more powerful.

The point may be illustrated thus: If a very weak spring could flood a meadow, is it not safe to assume that a much more abundant spring, if it spread over the same space of ground, could not fail to submerge it? If Adam's act could bring death to all, much more certainly can we believe that the grace of God and the gift of Jesus must be capable of extending a saving influence to the same multitude of people.

When we reach verse 16, a second difference between the work of Adam and that of Christ is brought to view. In the case of Adam and his ruinous work there was only one actual sinner -- his race played only an unconscious and purely passive part, being yet unborn. Contrast this with the work of redemption to be wrought by Christ. Here it is not a case of one sinner to be justified but that of a multitude, having added their own contingent of sins to the original transgression. In the matter of condemnation in Adam, mankind were passively and collectively subjected to the sentence of death, whereas in regard to their relationship to Christ, we have to do with persons who lay hold individually and personally of the decree which justifies them. "Note well this circumstance," instructs the Apostle, "unlike the judgment of condemnation which resulted from the sin of one, Adam, the free gift of justification has reference to the sins of many (Adam's entire family)." There, on the one hand, was a single and solitary condemnation, which embraced them all through the deed of one; here, on the other hand, is a justification (collective, indeed, but appropriated by each individually, and thus transformed into as many personal justifications as there are believing sinners) which cannot fail to establish the reign of life as firmly, nay more firmly, than . the reign of death resulted from the condemnation of all in Adam.

The superiority of. the work of Christ is thus a second time noted as proving the Apostle's main (his parity) argument. It is as though he were to say: "What a difference between the power of a spark which sets fire to the forest by lighting a withered branch, and the power of the instrument which extinguishes the conflagration at the moment when every tree is on fire and makes them all live again!"

We come now to Rom. 5:17. Here once again, as in Rom. 5:15, "much more" has the sense of "much more certainly." Unquestionably there is a greater abundance of life in Christ than there was of death in Adam. But that is not the point here. The Apostle is not aiming to establish either a contrast of *quality* (between *life and death*) or a contrast of *quantity* (*more of life than of death*) . It is a higher degree of *certainty* which he enunciates and demonstrates. Justified, we shall reign still *more certainly* in Christ than as condemned we are dead in Adam. Our future glory is more certain even than our death; for a more powerful cause, and one individually assimilated, will make us live *still more certainly* than the weak unappropriated cause could make us die.

To sum up the teaching of these three remarkable verses: Rom. 5:15 demonstrates the *universal destination of justification* in Christ. The argument runs thus: If a cause so weak as Adam's single offense could influence a circle so vast as that of the entire *multitude* of mankind, with greater reason must a far richer cause (the double grace of God and of Jesus) extend its action over *this same multitude*. Verses 16 and 17 demonstrate the full reality and quickening efficacy of the *personal application* which every believer makes of the justification obtained by Christ. Affirmed in Rom. 5:16 this individual efficacy is proved in Rom. 5:17: One single agent, serving as the instrument of a very weak cause, could bring about the death of so many individuals who had not personally taken part in his act. Consequently, and *much more certainly*, will each of those same individuals, by *personally* appropriating a force *far superior* in action to the preceding, become thereby a possessor of life.

- P. L. Read

Words of Encouragement

Dear Brethren in Christ:

The publication of my letters has been a very great help to us as we have received many very valuable packages and nice letters from the brethren. I am so happy to tell you that all our needs are supplied now. That means the needs of our little family. We have shared the blessings with my poor relatives as well. Thanks to the help of all the brethren, I need not ask you for any further material help. You may concentrate your help on others who have not received so many blessings as we. There is one fact I deplore deeply. I did not think to tell you about the offer of help from one, or better, several dear brethren in England. At the time I wrote you my first letter I did not know the full extent of their offered help, as I knew that the English brethren had to make sacrifices in the way of their own rations and clothing coupons. But I can tell you that we received a very great help from these English brethren. I should be grateful to you if you would express my highest gratitude to both the English and American brethren who have extended their loving help. Three months ago we had empty wardrobes and suffering from hunger; now we find all our needs supplied in a really miraculous way.

I am so glad you are sending the six volumes of "Scripture Studies." Many, many thanks for all the trouble you have gone to for us.

Yes, we had the privilege of memorializing our Lord's death. We took Memorial with fifteen brethren in this town. You may be interested to learn that I have gotten in touch with many dear brethren in this country by the indirect help of American brethren who gave me these addresses. . . . Your CARE package will be much appreciated, as the need of food will be the only one to remain permanent as far as we can look into the future. In case of further need for clothing we can communicate with various brethren who have offered their help; so, you may spend your time on matters of more importance. I want to thank you sincerely for all your loving interest and help. It is the Lord who is overruling in all our experiences, and He measures the distance-His help comes always in due time.

With warm Christian love,
Your brethren by His grace,
K. G. S. and family -- Germany.

Interesting Selections

An Invitation

"Come, follow me."

Jesus said unto Philip,, Follow me. - .John 1:43. Jesus said unto Levi, Follow me. - Mark 2:14.

He said unto Simon and Andrew, Follow me and I will make you fishers of men. - Matt. 4:19.

Jesus said unto his disciples, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. - Matt. 16:24; Luke 9:23.

He called unto him the multitude with his disciples and said unto them, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. -Mark 8:34.

And there went great multitudes with him and he turned and said unto them, Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple. - Luke 14:27.

Jesus loved him and said, "Sell whatsoever thou hast and come, follow me. - Mark 10:12.

And he said unto another, Follow me and leave the dead to bury their own dead. - Matt. 8:22; Luke 9:57-62.

"If any man would serve, me, let him follow me. . . . If any man serve me, him will my Father honor. John 12:26.

- *Selected.*

Ambassadors

"The responsibility of service is truly a power to the soul. So long as the Christian's ideal is merely to live in peace and charity with his neighbor without a realization of his responsibility towards others, it is more than likely that he will make little progress in the way of holiness and will moreover be ignorant of his own state before God. His spiritual bankruptcy hardly becomes apparent. As soon as he, however, begins to understand that the humblest Christian, as in the early Church, is responsible for bringing others to Christ, he bestirs himself to seek and find, and so become fitted for the performance of duty. .

"Have we ever wished we might render some real service for Christ? There, is but one way by which this can be accomplished. Of ourselves we can do nothing. The Holy Spirit can do great things through us. The secret of acceptable service, then, is to surrender ourselves to him; to let him guide us in all things; to be willing to, do anything that he may reveal to us as, the will of God.. When we have reached this plane of spiritual existence, then he will be able to use our talents, our energies, our love, our consecration to nobler achievements than we have ever dreamed. It is the touch of his spirit that gives true power to one's life."

- *A. P. Wilkes.*

Pleasing God

We are so to walk as to please God-thoroughly and well. In order to do this, our walk must be (1) A believing walk; for without faith it is impossible to please God. (2) A decided walk. No compromise nor, half heartedness; we must be Christians out and out; no divided vided heart, nor service of two masters. (3) A consistent. walk. Not in word or profession, but in deed; not one; part of our life contradicting the other, but all in harmony; each contributing its separate testimony. (4) A persevering walk. Not a running well at times, and then a halting or fainting; but a constant pressing forward. Only in these ways shall our walk be "unto all pleasing." Is it your aim in all things to please God?

- *Dr. Horatius Bonar.*

Recently Deceased,

Mrs. - Ella E. Harr,-Atlantic City, N. J. - (May).

Mrs. Anna Haxton, Richmond, Ind. - (April).

Mrs. W. Hindle, Pittsfield, Mass. - (May).

Mr. Wm. M. Snipes, Galveston, Texas - (April).

Mrs. Lottie Swager, Beaver Falls, Pa. - (Nov. 1947).

Miss Marilyn Swager, Beaver Falls, Pa. - (April).