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The Goodness and Severity of God

"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." -- Romans 11:22.

THE VALUE of a complete understanding of all the underlying principles of God's law is truly inestimable. Therefore, to have a good measure of practical knowledge of how *all* the divine attributes -- wisdom, justice, love, and power -- work together in perfect harmony, means much to those Who desire to have the law of God operative in their own inner life. Since all creation is governed by fixed laws, and dependent on obedience to those laws for existence, how essential it is that all intelligent creatures -- angels and men -- should be conversant with the great principles of the divine government. This is particularly important when it is remembered that God is revealed to us as being "no respecter of persons," and that no creature in heaven or earth, therefore, is exempt from the exercise of his, righteous judgments.

THE PROBLEM OF SIN MUST BE DEALT WITH

The goodness of God represented in his acts of grace can never operate contrary to the decree set forth in his Word, namely "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Forgiveness may indeed be extended to the sinner, but the results of sin may linger to the end of life. God cannot be mocked, and the law of "a just recompense of reward" for infractions of his just commands must be, forever reckoned with. Surely this is the great lesson being taught in the permission of evil for six thousand years.

In a most impressive and lasting manner, both the Church and the world are to learn that "the wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness," and that the way back to the perfection of obedience he demands, is indeed full of painful reminders of the sinfulness of sin, and of its deep, deep roots in the soil of our character. Forgiveness is but a beginning in the process of eliminating sin's defilement, but in order to "cleanse from all unrighteousness," much of scourging, much of the Refiner's fire, must be experienced ere the work is done. Sin must and will be punished. It is this very fact that gives us confidence that once the present experience with sin is "over,

"affliction shall not rise up the second time." All will have learned to appreciate the fact that in the holy character of God both love and wrath combine to make him worthy of reverence and devotion.

LESSONS DRAWN FROM THE AGES

For finite minds to comprehend all the minutia of God's law, would of course be impossible; for as the Apostle has well said, "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." (Rom. 11:33.) But our finite minds are capable of understanding the fundamental principles underlying our Creator's righteous government, and "this after all, is the important thing for us just now, until that which is perfect is come. These important principles are so plainly set forth in the Word of God, and they have been so effectively carried out in his dealings with transgressors in the past, that it would be folly to overlook them, or to treat them as though they were not of universal application. Surely this is the very lesson .Paul is seeking to impress on our hearts in rehearsing the manifestations of the goodness and *severity* of God in his dealings with Israel. No amount of favor previously enjoyed by the Jew would exempt from punishment when merited, and the favored Gentile must likewise stand in the fear of removal, if unfaithful. And how terrible has been the punishment meted out to the Jewish nation -- a chastisement that has involved generations yet unborn when the sin of rejecting the Son of God was committed. The derisive cry, "His blood be 'on us, and on our children" has brought upon all succeeding generations a fearful demonstration of the severity of God. The fact that death has passed upon all because of Adam's sin, does not absolve from present responsibility, and the Bible speaks plainly of this fact to those who "tremble at *his* word."

In support of the foregoing we quote from the pen of Brother Russell as he wrote some years ago on

THE RETRIBUTIVE CHARACTER OF GOD'S LAW

"The Scriptures, as well as observation, assure us that our justification before God does not remove at once and without our cooperation all the results of previous transgressions. The harvest comes like the sowing, but the penitent and forgiven one has, promise of grace to help him in the battle with his inherited as well as his cultivated weakness; and so we read (1 John 1:9): God 'is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' It is in this cleansing process, which follows the legal justification, that the justified believer must, of necessity, experience some of the baneful results of a past course of sin -- reap the reward of his former sowing. While the Lord will be very merciful in dealing with him, nevertheless, as a wise physician, he will not spare the necessary discipline to eradicate the deep seated evil propensities of long cultivation in the past.

"Here the retributive character of divine law is specially noteworthy. Men often make a distinction between the law of nature and the moral laws, calling the one natural and the other divine. But the fixed principles of both are divine in their origin, and accomplish the divine will in their operation. Both operate on the basis of retributive justice. All divine law, whether of nature or of morals, is but the operation of certain fixed principles of righteousness, having for their object the peace and happiness of all intelligent creatures under' its jurisdiction. Obedience to this law brings its reward of happiness, while any interference with it incurs its certain penalty.

"The fact that the retribution -- the reward or the penalty -- is often delayed is frequently presumed upon by the foolish, -- who vainly think that they can sow their crop of wild oats and never realize their harvest. Both individuals and nations have long presumed to act upon this

hazardous and vain hypothesis; and well indeed would it be if they would even now hearken to the Apostle's 'warning: 'Be not deceived: God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth [or has sown!], that shall he also reap.'

"Even though such a one be freely forgiven upon repentance and faith in the Redeemer -- fully absolved from legal condemnation through Christ, who bore its divinely pronounced penalty, death, nevertheless, the fruits of his sowing are manifest in his character, and must all be rooted out and a proper character formed at a considerable cost of painful but valuable experience; for God is just, not only to forgive us our sins, but also to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. The eradication of these evil dispositions, propensities, and, appetites, deep rooted and long cultivated, will cause great disturbances of the soil in which they have grown; and pain as well as joy will attend their, removal, and their replacement with the graces of the spirit."

THE SWORD OF JUDGMENT IN THE HOUSE OF DAVID

The importance of this subject of **God's severity** will justify a restatement of a part of the foregoing conclusions. The life of David furnishes us with an illustration of how "'some' men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment, and of how -- „v this law of punishment works. We cannot, question the sincerity of David's confession of his grievous sin, as he pours out His soul in the Fifty first Psalm. And that God did accept his prayer we are assured. Yet; hearken to his word regarding David's after-life: "Now therefore' she sword shall never depart from thine house because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife." (2 Sam. 12:10.) God *in his grace* restored the penitent sinner to favor, but *in his holiness* he could not set aside the "just recompense of reward" that his crime merited. Truly God is not mocked. The history of David's family life reveals in a striking manner the goodness and *severity* of God. And if confessed sin is so drastically punished, what must be God's attitude toward those who fail to manifest a troubled conscience, or "a broken and contrite spirit"? On another occasion we find the Lord emphasizing the same truth: "Be sure your sin will find you out." This need not necessarily mean that the wrongdoer's sin -- will be found out by others, but it does mean that his sin will sooner or later find him out and will be reckoned with. How manifest it is then that all of life subsequent to our consecration will be just so much of an opportunity to demonstrate a supreme love of righteousness, and a corresponding hatred of sin. Should the language of our heart not be such a prayer for purity as this:

"So wash me now, without, within,
And purge with fire if that must be,
No matter how, though hard it be,
If only sin die out in ,me."

O HOW I LOVE THY LAW

When the Scriptures declare that "God is love," we are happy indeed to find abundant confirmation of that fact in his dealings with ourselves and others. But is our appreciation of his holiness and hatred of sin active, and are we equally pleased, as fallen creatures, wholly dependent upon his grace, to know God as One who hates sin with a consuming intensity? Do we rejoice in a God who cannot look upon sin with any degree of allowance -- One whose love is wholly compatible with an intense hatred when occasion require; the exercise of that hatred toward sin without respect of persons? It would seem that such an appreciation of all his attributes must fill our minds and govern our approach to him. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom we are told, and true reverence for him will glory not only in his love, but glory also in knowing that our God is a consuming fire." Any other attitude would be first class evidence that

our deeds are evil, loving darkness rather than light; for all who love righteousness and hate iniquity are hidden in the shelter of the Rock of Ages, and glad to pray, "Search me, O Lord, and know my heart."

EVIL TO INCREASE IN THE LAST DAYS

Careful attention to the whole counsel of God will reveal that "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," are the integral features of the full Gospel message. Such careful study will also establish the conviction that the neglect of these issues would be disastrous, for "if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" In other words, as another commenting on these evil times has well admonished: "Be on your guard against that tendency of this generation to paste a bit of white paper over all the threatenings of the Bible, and to blot out from our consciousness the grave issues that it holds forth." At various intervals throughout the ages, it seems to have been God's way to raise up a "preacher of righteousness," a man of fearless character, to proclaim the judgments of the Lord. No reformation ever attempted has accomplished anything unless it first of all produced a profound sense of sin and a desire for holiness in the hearts of such as came under its influence. Furthermore, the moment any awakening of this kind ceased to put the emphasis on the reality of, sin, and the need of a complete cleansing therefrom, it ceased to be a reformation, and soon followed the well-beaten path into apostasy, and ere long became part and parcel of the leavened mass.

To "prepare the way of the Lord" John the Baptist must preach the message of repentance, and to continue "in the way of the Lord" there must be a complete turning of the back on all "the works of the flesh and the Devil." When the holy spirit came at Pentecost, its first message was a call to repentance, and that message stirred the hearers to inquire, "Men and brethren, what shall we 'do?" And as the spirit had its way in the ministry of the Apostles, it did not hesitate to warn men of "the terror of the Lord." "True, "perfect love casteth out fear, for fear hath torment," but, there is a wholesome fear of the Lord, calculated to make us walk carefully before him, lest we fall into the "great transgression" of presumptuous sin. "No fear of God before their eyes" is one of the evidences of impenitence, and the sure token of an absence of any real sense of sin. It is always necessary to emphasize the fact that God is on his throne, and that the individual who violates his law does so at his peril. The goodness and severity of God are most essential to the stability of his government, and happy the man who has learned to glory in both his love and wrath.

WHO SHALL ASCEND INTO THE HILL OF THE LORD?

The Apostle has reminded us that one of the outstanding characteristics of the last days would be that there would be many "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." -- (2 Tim. 3:5.) This forecast has surely been correct, for is it not one of the chief features of religious life today? Satan's most successful snare is a combination of things apparently Christian and holy with things that are evil and vitiating. For this reason it will require a keen perception in order to detect his subtle methods. When we see any inclination to modify the exacting requirements of life and conduct demanded of saints, as these, are set forth in God's imperative commands, we may well experience alarm. When sin's small beginnings are treated lightly, we 'nay ' know that ere long iniquity will abound, and "the love of the many grow cold to the holy things of God. To every saint, therefore, the question comes with searching emphasis today: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?" And so that we might know, theme answer is given, "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.

THE FOUNDATION OF GOD STANDETH SURE

If at times we are disposed, to marvel at the length of the period set aside in the Plan of God for the gathering of the Church, our wonderment is quickly removed when we turn to the Scriptures for a portrait of what beauty and chastity the Bride of Christ must possess. Indeed, when due consideration is given to the purity she must undoubtedly have, what question could be more fitting than that of the disciples long ago, "Who then can be saved?" But since the Gospel of grace is most certainly "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, and since God can bring to pass all that he has undertaken to perform, we know that there will be found a sufficient number who will follow on to know his power. Given full sway in the life, he will work out every' requirement his righteousness demands. But what jewels they will be who compose that royal diadem in the hand of our God! What a fulness of consecration will have characterized them, and, what a life of separation will have been theirs here below. All the exacting conditions of complete devotion to the whole, "good and perfect will of God" must have been deeply impressed upon their minds, as from year to "year they kept going "on to perfection" -- "perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord."

What a sobering thought it is that a very few, comparatively speaking, will make their calling and election sure to a full inheritance above; for many are, called; but few chosen. Truly, it is just such sobering meditations that we need to indulge in at the present time. Unto whom, much has been given, of them the Lord in the severity of his just demands will -- require the more. If, as all agree, knowledge brings responsibility, then how great is ours, yea, "what manner of persons ought we to be" in view of what we know of truth. It is well that we remember that the very arguments we use in support of our right in claiming to be a separated people, will witness against us unless we are better than others. Our claims of holding more correct views of consecration than Christians "who walk not with us," will bring us before the judgment seat of Christ to make good our boast. To charge others with being merely "consecrated to a work," will demand that we ourselves exemplify an unmixed devotion only to the will of God. Can we claim today that we are such a people? Is our "house so with God"?

FACE TO FACE WITH GOD

In the conclusion of this our serious consideration of what the Lord our God requires of us, let us recall the forceful lessons taught us in two outstanding incidents recorded in the Scriptures: Going back to the days of the early Church we read the story of God's drastic judgment on Ananias and his wife. What speedy judgment fell upon these two for deception in the matter of claiming to give their all, as did the others. And why was this drastic punishment inflicted, in view of the indisputable fact that perhaps thousands throughout the Age have committed the same offense, and to all appearance gone unpunished? Was there anything vindictive about the blow that fell on Ananias and Sapphira, or was it intended to serve some important purpose? Assuredly it could not have been other than an object lesson of the greatest possible importance to all the succeeding generations of the Church. It must have been intended to demonstrate to one and all that the act of consecration, and a profession of 'having our all on the altar, brings us face to face with God, and any trifling there is a serious matter. In other words, this incident is surely intended to produce that "fear and trembling" urged upon us by the Apostle. The fact that God dealt thus with a false claim long ago, is all the evidence we need that he views the same offense just the same today. He does not change. Can we come into the presence of the Master and say, "We have left all to follow Thee" and have him accept our word as true? If not, how can we escape his judgments?

OFFERERS OF STRANGE FIRE

Another incident full of solemn import is found in the record of the destruction of Nadab and Abihu. These two under-priests had presumed to offer a sacrifice to God in some manner contrary to the law of the tabernacle, and true to the warnings previously given, they were severely punished for their sin. They "offered strange fire before the Lord which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord." (Lev. 10:1-3.) "All such workings must, inevitably, call down, sooner or later, the solemn judgment of a righteous God who cannot suffer his claims to be trifled with. 'I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified.' Men will be dealt with according to their profession. If men are honestly seeking, they will, assuredly, find; but, when men approach as worshippers, they are no longer to be regarded as seekers, but as those who profess to have found; and, then, if their priestly censer smokes with unhallowed fire, if they offer unto God the elements of a spurious worship, if they profess to tread his courts, unwashed, unsanctified, unsubdued, if they place on his altar the workings of their own corrupt will, what must be the result? Judgment! Yes, sooner or later, judgment must come. It may linger; but it will come. It could not be otherwise. And not only must judgment come, at last; but there is in every case, the immediate rejection, on the part of Heaven, of all worship which has not the Father for its object, Christ for its material, and the holy spirit for its power. God's holiness is as quick to reject all 'strange fire' as his grace is ready to accept the faintest, feeblest breathings of a true heart. He must pour out his righteous judgment upon all false worship, though he will never 'quench the smoking flax nor break the bruised reed.' The thought of this is most solemnizing, when one calls to mind the thousands of censers smoking with strange fire throughout Christendom. . . . Very much of that Which passes among men for the worship of God is, but 'strange fire' after all. There is neither the pure fire' nor the pure incense, and, therefore, Heaven accepts it not; albeit, the divine judgment is not seen to fall upon those who present such worship, as it fell upon Nadab and Abihu, of old."

O FOR A THOROUGHLY TRUTHFUL HEART

Well, indeed, has the Psalmist written, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." (Psa. 89:7.) "May we learn to walk softly in the divine presence -- to tread Jehovah's courts with unshod feet and reverent spirit. May our priestly censer ever bear upon it the one material, the beaten incense of Christ's manifold perfections, and may the power of the spirit kindle up the hallowed flame. All else is not only worthless, but vile. Everything that springs from nature's energy, everything produced by the actings of the human will, the most fragrant incense of man's devising, the most intense ardor of natural devotion, will all issue in 'strange fire' and evoke the solemn judgment of the Lord God Almighty. O! for a thoroughly truthful heart, and worshiping spirit, in the presence of our God and Father, continually!" ,

"The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

-- J. J. Blackburn

"The Hidden Life"

"Your life is hid with Christ in God." -- Col. 3:3.

IN ORDER that the wide gap between unsullied holiness and man's deep depravity may be effectively bridged God has provided a great Redeemer in the person of his well-beloved Son. To him has been entrusted the privilege not only of dying to effect man's release from death, but also of reigning over the earth to accomplish man's deliverance from the grip of sin. In all this redemptive work our dear Lord is several times depicted as the "Arm of the Lord" (Isa. 53:1; 51:9; Isa. 40:10) the instrument employed by God to reach down to the lowly level of man in his sinful estate, and then to lift him up to the purity and innocence of the perfect state.

In the old Tabernacle days in Israel this great redemption work was represented by the propitiatory services of the anointed priesthood which had been separated out of the house of Israel for this specific purpose. Of all the services rendered to Israel by Aaron and his sons none were of greater importance to the people than those performed in connection with the great Atonement Day, for here, more than at any other time, more than in any other way, the wide gap between the holiness of the Most Holy Place and the sinfulness of the Camp was bridged over, and the sacrifice being made, holiness went forth, in the uplifted hands of the high priest and rested again upon a cleansed and purified nation. Israel became again "holy unto the Lord."

The position of the priesthood in this reconciling work was unique. No man could take that honor to himself save he that was called of God. Presumption in a matter such as this was dangerous indeed, as may be seen in the conduct and fate of Korah and his 'company. (Num. 15.) Carelessness, too, was fraught with dire peril, as may be gathered from the retribution that befell Nadab and Abihu for presenting strange fire before the Lord. (Lev. 10:1-3.) God kept in his own hands the prerogative to call whom he would, thus permitting no man to intrude himself, at his own whim or caprice, into this holy service. In his own native state no man was fit to undertake the service of approach before the mercyseat of God on behalf of other men; nor could he go forth from that holiest place as representative of God to stand and bless in the Holy Name, by reason of any virtue in himself. He must be first chosen, then called, then sanctified and bear the anointing of God ere he was fit to stand between the people and their God. Without this calling and endowment it would have been rebellious sacrilege to dare to intercede or bless; equipped with calling and endowment it was hallowed service, unique, essential, to stand thus twixt God and man. Here, more than in any other place, more than in any other thing, God was a jealous God -- jealous in the best and noblest sense of that easily misunderstood word. The zeal of the Lord for his Holy Name, and for his Holy Habitation was most intense, and none may trifle or think lightly of his jealous care, nor of the sacred task of ministering unto him:

Greater things were shadowed forth in all this meticulous jealousy and care. Here was a picture of a yet greater purification from sin, and of a diffusion of holiness intended to sanctify the world, and make this earth a habitation fit for God to dwell in. (Rev. 21:3.) God had charged Moses to take the greatest care in making and preparing all these things, for in the lines and angles of the Tabernacle structure, and in the ordinances and ceremonies connected therewith, an outline of eternal truths had been embodied, which would, one day, bear testimony to those long -- purposed truths when the times of reformation and reality had come.

At the heart and center of all these things stood the priesthood itself, an intended representation of a better priesthood centering in Christ Jesus our Lord. From, the name of the special ceremony by means of which the former priesthood was installed comes the name by which also the better priesthood was foreknown. That word, shortened and transferred from the Greek, is the word

"Christ." Its Hebrew equivalent was the word "Maschiach." The priesthood (the high priest in particular) upon which this ceremony was performed was called "Mashach," from which term the word. Messiah was at last evolved.

Also from the sacred oil which was used in this ceremonial installation exceedingly deep lessons are to be drawn. It was an unguent exclusively devoted to God, and might not be made or possessed by any person other than Moses or the high priest. Nor might any near imitation of it be made by any member of the House of Israel. These particulars are specifically given by the Lord in Exodus 30:22-33. Although its principal use was for the anointing of the high priest on his succession to that elevated office, it was also used to sanctify the whole priesthood (Exod. 30:30), as well as all the vessels and utensils of their ministry. (Exod. 30:26-29.) By a study of these and other related Scriptures we may understand that it was by the application (or anointing) with this precious and exclusive oil that God constituted these called and separated men (as well as all the vessels of their ministry) holy unto himself. In a very special sense they were the servants of the Lord, first, in that they ministered *unto* him in the priestly office (Exod. 29:44); and secondly in that they ministered *for* him towards Israel. -- Num. 6:22-27.

The anointing with the holy oil gave them their credentials and warranty from 'the Lord for officiating in their sacred calling, and irrespective of the nature of the service being performed -- whether it be for the removal of personal or national sins, or the presentation of personal or national thank offerings to the Lord -- this anointing was the sole ground of their ordination and authorization so to act. Together every member of the priesthood upon which this holy oil had been outpoured or sprinkled (Exod.. 29:21) constituted the "anointed company" -- the anointed of the Lord. In all these things the high priest was given precedence and priority of place; nevertheless the sons of Aaron were accounted as sharers together with him of the priestly standing and privilege, he as high priest, they as priests (or under priests). Thus the "anointed of the Lord" was a company of men, with the high priest as their head (or chief) -- and not any one single member of the company in particular, save that the special place accorded to the high priest rendered him the most essential member of the whole company

In the case of Aaron, at the initial installation of the priesthood any speciality of prerogative accorded him was not conferred upon him because he was the father of the under -- priests, and therefore their senior, but because he had been specially named of God for the high office, and because he came to be enrobed in the holy garments sacred to the office. The same speciality and precedence was accorded to a brother (as to the father) when Eleazer succeeded Aaron in the holy office. Our point is, it is not age: nor seniority that provides the warranty for the holy service, but exclusively the Lord's call, and the application of the "oil" peculiar to the Lord. These and these alone constitute the Lord's ordaining mediums, these and these only were the grounds of their authorization to minister in his name. Every vestige of power and authority was thus kept exclusively in the Lord's hands, and all whom he was pleased to call and install in this ministry were responsible and answerable to himself in every *way*, and for every little thing.

THE. MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

Here is the ground work and outline for one of the profoundest and most sacred, aspects of the mysteries of God. That it has remained very much a secret feature of the higher Calling is evidenced by the number of counterfeits of the real Calling set up in the great churches of the so called Christian world. The whole structure of the Papacy has been erected on such a counterfeiting, a visible and literal priesthood performing visible and literal ceremonies, having been placed in position and authority in the church and presuming, because of a change of age and dispensation, to have superseded' the ancient Aaronic priesthood. Apart from their own,

assumption and text books, there is, not the slightest warranty or authority for their presumptuous claims. At its very best (that is, in its choicest saints) the whole system of the Papal Church is nothing more than a carnalized counterfeit, operating in the place of the Aaronic line, with not even the credit to its name of being a type or picture of the better Priesthood yet to come. But it goes to prove that in so large a portion of the so called Christian world the truth concerning the "better things" is both a "mystery" and secret still. The same thing applies to the Eastern (Greek) Church also, and in the same way.

Among even the reformed and dissenting churches the same lack of understanding also prevails. No matter what the place, or beneath whose authority it claims to take place, any presumed ordination to membership in a special class of ministers, and to a specialized service in any church (Anglican; Lutheran, or otherwise) is but an externalized perversion of a truth, which, as yet, "eludes their grasp. "Holy orders" were not set up in any church until the world encroached upon, and overcame the hitherto suffering saints in the third, fourth, and fifth centuries, and found the standards of Christian life (set out in the Bible, and required by the Lord) too high to be kept and observed by this encroaching multitude. Thenceforward the comparatively few, who sought to live the higher life, came to be accounted a class apart, and were by distinction called "the religious," and given degrees of reverence accordingly. The modern titles "Reverend;" "Right Reverend, "Very Reverend;" wherever claimed or conferred, springs from this old time distinction, and has no other source of origin anywhere.

The claim of this class to enjoy special privileges as administering the Lord's Supper, of christening or baptizing infants or men, or of joining men and women in holy matrimony, rests on no higher authority than that of this ancient secularized church, in those early centuries; unless, on the other hand, it draws its warranty -- as it sometimes does -- from the older Israelitish institution of a priesthood separated from its people. And that in itself would lower its ground of authority to that of a mere type.

Very much more evidence could be advanced in proof of these assertions if need so required, but as this is not an inquiry into the origin and institution of modern "holy orders," the foregoing is all that needs to be said. Even this has been said not by way of condemnation, but as corm oration for the assertion previously made that where this separation in the church is established and acknowledged, in the persons of a "reverend clergy" and an "un-reverend laity," the great truth of the "Christ manifold," and of the holy spirit's anointing thereto, is as yet a partial (if not a complete and entire) mystery -- a secret not yet fully understood.

THE ANOINTING WHICH YE HAVE OF HIM

There was no honor so great in Israel as that of the anointed of the Lord. Whether, as in the later times; a man was anointed, as king in Israel, or in Aaronic days, was chosen to the office of the priest, the honor was the greatest which could then be conferred. Any affront or indignity made against them was accounted as a sin before the Lord and received fitting recompense accordingly.

A similar sort of specialized favor carries through, and upward, into the New Testament thought, which, carried far enough, brings us at last to the high status of him (or them) who, at length will stand forth approved of God, as his kings and priests for restitution purposes.

Every member of the Christ company throughout the whole of this Gospel Age has been inducted into that Membership by the impartation and anointing of the holy spirit of God. That, this holy spirit of God is the anointing power -- the counterpart and equivalent in "the better things" of the holy anointing oil -- is a fact taught in quite a number of Scriptures. And that it is outpoured by

God himself is a statement amply proved. Of himself Jesus said, quoting Isaiah's ,prophecy, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor, .. (Luke 4:18.) Also of him the Church in Jerusalem, under stress of persecution, said with united voice, "For of a -- truth in this city against thy holy servant Jesus, *whom thou didst anoint*, both Herod and Pontius Pilate were gathered together." (Acts.4:27.) Again in the declaration before Cornelius, Peter says, "God anointed him [Jesus] with the Holy Spirit and with power." -- Acts 10:38.

In those very early days, before the larger thought had fully dawned upon their consciousness, the disciples claimed repeatedly? in the presence of both people and Sanhedrin that God had made both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom they had crucified. (Acts 2:36.) In addition to this we have Peter's noteworthy confession (Matt. 16:16), which Jesus so warmly approved, and which he said had been revealed to Peter, not by flesh and blood, but by the Father in heaven.

The outpouring of the holy spirit; upon Jesus stands unmistakably as the counterpart to the anointing of the high priest in Israel, and conferred on Him, in a higher spiritual sense, both the ordination and authorization to speak and bless in the name of the Lord God of heaven and earth. In a very special sense it constituted him God's called and chosen messenger and representative to Israel, and set him before the people as their future King and Priest. That they did not receive him with acclamation matters not -- the right to anoint and designate him to those dignities not being in their power. In this choice and induction God was exercising. This own reserved prerogative, and marking the beloved Son as the One who thenceforth was equipped and authorized to minister unto him in the priest's office.

But this process of anointing did not cease with the anointing of Jesus alone. This we may learn from the words of Hebrews 1:9, in which fellows are spoken of, who also are described as "anointed with the oil of gladness" in the same way that the great Son had been. But we must, note the position of superiority accorded him in that he was anointed "above" his fellows, because she was God's firstborn Son.

This thought is supplemented in 2 Corinthians 1:21, in which place we also learn who these fellows actually are. It reads, "Now he, that stablisheth us with you in Christ, and anointeth us, is God; who also sealed us, and gave us the earnest of the spirit in our hearts." "Us with you" -- Paul and the Corinthian brethren, and with them all who since those days have received the anointing of that same holy spirit. In addition to these words of Paul we have the words of John, "Ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye all know it." (1 John 2:20.) And still again in verse 27, we read, "As for you, the anointing which ye received of him abideth in you and ye need not that any one teach you (about it] but as his anointing teacheth you, ye abide in him." It is good to see John and Paul in agreement on this point, as of course they should be if both were being led by the same holy spirit into these deeper truths, but it indicates to us that here was truth held conjointly, and presented by each in his own sphere of service towards both Gentile and Jew, and thus accepted in common by both sections of the early Church.

We have here before us in this joint testimony the direct thought of the anointing brought right along' from its old Hebrew usage, with the sole difference that the holy spirit, not the holy oil, is the medium employed in the anointing. All the ancient implications are here, but adapted to a new spiritualized setting. It is well for us to ponder this very carefully, for it is only too easy for us to lose sight of these deeper implications in the general usage of the term "Christ" in its New Testament connections. It was very easy to use the term Christ as though it stood merely as another synonym, and equivalent for the word Church, without any of its deeper implications attaching to it. It is true that it came to be used of the general body of the faithful, and even at

times of those of very immature growth in spiritual qualities. (1 Cor. 3:1.) It is also spoken of as a thing that could be "formed in you" (Gal. 4:19), and of a "being" which could "live" in us. -- Gal, 2:20.

Paul also spoke of some who were "in Christ" before him, as though membership in the Church and membership in Christ were equivalent things. These usages are but adaptations of the main thought, and need keeping in their limited and generalized relationship to its main idea, so that the meaning and implication of the thought carried over from the Hebrew ceremony is not lost sight of. It will be greatly to our loss in spiritual perception if we permit this deeper, transferred thought to be filched from our minds, or if held there, to remain blurred and indistinct. To be "in Christ" is more than to be a member of a Christian Church or to be in Present Truth. It may include all this, but its implications go much deeper and further than this.

Beneath all these implications lies the foundation of a better covenant, an instrument by means of which many men's many sins (primarily those of the Houses of Judah and Israel) will be effectively removed, through the services (both sacrificial and corrective) of those upon whom the choice of God has fallen, and who have received through their anointing by the holy spirit, their ordination and authorization from God, to undertake under Jesus as their Head and Chief, this great redemptive work. The employing of the various secondary usages of the word "Christ" should not be allowed to obscure *this* thought -- this natural and primary thought -- in our minds. It must be carried through from its Hebrew origin to its New Testament development without any modification or mitigation in its meaning, and be permitted there to, tell us of the tremendous honor and dignity of the Christian's: call. We have purposely refrained from making reference in this study to the sacrificial aspect of the priestly service, so that due emphasis, may be given to the priestly "call," and to "the anointing" which initiated the priests into the sacred offices and also that its counterpart in the new covenant scheme of things may receive due emphasis, and stand before our minds in all its beauty and fulness.

"Now he that stablisheth us with you in Christ" -- beloved in the Lord -- "and anointed us is -- God." Let us ever thank him for that. Here is the central core of the most profound mystery hidden by God in Christ -- the germ thought on which all redemption is based. May God help us to ponder long and deeply upon it till we find assurance to our souls that the foregoing Scripture is, true of every one of us.

-- T. Holmes, Eng.

Faith for Today

(As demonstrated in the experience of the Psalmist)

"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass." - Psalm 37:5.

(Concluded from our last issue)

IN our last issue we saw the Psalmist's faith in action: (1) in difficulty; (2) with respect to the future; and, (3) in times of prosperity. Out of his rich experience he tells us further of his determination to trust God, unreservedly, when helpless.

4. TRUSTING IN GOD WHEN HELPLESS

It would be difficult to conceive of a more helpless condition than that of sleep. Yet David's faith rises to the occasion and, in Psalm 4:8, he declares: "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep; for thou Lord only makest me dwell in safety."

To trustfully commit ourselves to God's care while we are asleep, may not seem to us to be any great achievement of faith, dwelling, as we do, in times of peace and safety. We must remember, however, that David's whole lifetime was a warfare, and that very real dangers were oftentimes imminent, when he lay asleep, helpless. Nevertheless, realizing that he was God's anointed, and that God had selected him for his high office, he was able to commit himself unreservedly into the care of him who neither slumbers nor sleeps.

It is no new thing for a child of God to be found in a condition of helplessness.. Examples abound in the Scriptures of God's stalwart ones of a previous age undergoing experiences in which they were quite evidently helpless. Consider Elijah in the presence of 850 prophets of Baal! Or the case of Joseph in Potiphar's prison! Again, what circumstances could we pass through in which we could feel more helpless than the three Hebrew children when they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace; or Daniel in the lions' den? Moreover, concerning his followers in this Gospel Age, spirit -- begotten of the Father, our Master himself said: "Behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves." (Luke 10:3.). How pitifully helpless are lambs among wolves! Brethren, from time to time along life's journey as we meet with an experience in which we feel utterly helpless, let us not lose courage, but let us realize that this is a great occasion for faith. The Lord will not permit these experiences to work any real injury to us. Rather he seeks to teach us the lesson which even the great Apostle Paul took time to learn, "My strength is made perfect in thy weakness." - 2 Cor. 12:9.

"NOT BY MIGHT NOR BY POWER"

This lesson is not an easy one. Rarely if ever is it learned in one experience. Even after we have learned to say with the Apostle, "When I am weak then am I strong," certain polishing experiences are required before our, wise and loving and patient Instructor will be able to give us a graduation mark in this branch of his school. What makes this lesson so difficult? Ah, it is because it is just the exact opposite from what we would naturally expect. Naturally (that is, as natural men) we would prefer the opposite. Even after we have received the new mind, the mind of the flesh resents this instruction, and fain would have us cry: "Send us not out as lambs among wolves, dear Lord, but rather send us forth with power and strength, so that resting in the consciousness of our ability to take good care of ourselves we shall be afraid of nothing, and shall thus have our minds free from distraction to engage in more efficient service to thee and thy

cause." We want to have that feeling, so comfortable to the natural man, that we are personally able to do this or *that* -- *that we, are equal in ourselves* to meet any emergency. But that is not God's plan for us; and 'gradually we learn that his thoughts are indeed higher and grander far than ours. Presently, we become acquainted with the fact taught in his Word (Isa. 40:29), that it is not to the strong, but "to them that have no *might* he increaseth strength," and ere long he confirms in our experience this truth learned from the written page. Let us then press on. Let us learn well the lesson that it is not by might nor by power, but by God's holy spirit that any lasting results will be secured. Thus learning in our weakness to trust in his mighty power, we shall be guided through life's journey, until following our Lord *Jesus* to the end, we, too, as we approach the utter, complete helplessness *of* death, shall be enabled as he did, to trustfully commit ourselves to our Father. There *in the perfection of our weakness will be, manifested the perfection of his strength*, as he exerts his power in granting us a share in our Lord's resurrection.

5. TRUSTING WHEN AFRAID

In conclusion let us note a somewhat peculiar expression from the Psalmist found in Psalm 56:3: "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee."

At *first* glance the declaration of the Psalmist seems almost paradoxical. *How* can he trust God unreservedly, how can he *make* God his refuge, how can he enjoy the rest of faith, "What time he is afraid"?

It is true that on some rare occasions persons are born whose natural courage is such that with them fear seems to be almost an unknown quantity. Such persons, however, are rare, and' even these have their weaker moments. Wish the majority, however, this condition of natural fear is a very real enemy, and one that we cannot afford to ignore. David himself, mighty man of valor, slayer of the lion and the bear in defense of his father's sheep, bold and courageous against the giant Goliath, magnificent warrior-king of Israel, of whom it was said that "Saul hath slain his thousands, but David his tens of thousands," here plainly admits, and elsewhere very candidly confesses, that he was far from free from the spirit of natural fear.

Now this condition of natural fear does not necessarily imply sinfulness, although it may frequently be mixed with lack of faith, which of course is sin. But natural fear itself quite often is the result of a weak set of nerves in the physical body, and this distressing infirmity may overtake some just as, headache or toothache may overtake others. Now while these things are all the concomitants of the death penalty which came upon Father Adam and upon us, his children, because of sin, *we* know that the presence of these infirmities does not imply any particular sinfulness on the part of the afflicted one. We recall our Lord's emphatic rejection of this implication when the question was put to him: "Who did *sin*, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? " Natural fear may come upon *us* without our being able to prevent it. It may not be a *specific* act of unbelief at all. It may be merely the result of our nervous physical condition, *but the best remedy, for this condition will be found in the exercise of a simple faith in God.*

"LIKE AS A FATHER"

Right here is where we need to be very much on our guard. *The Tempter will supply us* with a line of reasoning that would keep us away from our *loving* heavenly Father at these times when we need his encouragement most, Thoughts will be suggested to us as follows: "*You* have no right to be overcome in this unmanly or *in* this unwomanly fashion. *You* ought to learn how to control yourself better. There are *no* promises in God's *Word* which *you* can claim in a circumstance of this kind. If this were fear of a spiritual kind, it would alter matters, but this fear is all physical, and has *to* do with things of earth, present pain, future sufferings. You cannot carry a matter of that kind to God. He expects you to bear

that burden alone." Ah, *we* are not altogether ignorant of the devices of our wily Adversary; but we know, because our Lord Jesus has told us, that he was a liar from the beginning."

What a libel such a line of reasoning *would* be upon the name of any *human* being worthy of the name of "father"; how much more upon the name and character of our gracious heavenly Father! "Like as a father pitieth his children, *so* the Lord pitieth them that reverence him." Does an earthly parent find no time for his child's fears? The child's fears may be ill-founded. It may become alarmed at a strange face, a dark room, an unusual noise. *From the father's* viewpoint, the child's fears *may* be groundless, but if he is *a* real parent, he deals with the problem from the *child's* viewpoint. His child is suffering real fear, and so he acts accordingly, perhaps pointing out the absence of any cause for alarm, but certainly displacing the fear by *a* sense of security as he takes his child in his arms in a tender embrace. Dear friends, it is, not manifesting toward our heavenly Father the trust and confidence *due* him, to keep away from his loving arms when fear cometh. "He knoweth our frame, he remembereth that 'e are but dust," and "like as a father" so he pitieth them that reverence him.

When Peter "saw the wind boisterous, he *was* afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. (Matt. 14:30.) *What* did Jesus say? Did he reprimand Peter? Did he offer no assistance? Ah, no. Our great Elder Brother had a heart of *compassion*. The record reads: "Immediately *Jesus* stretched forth his hand and caught him." Dear brethren, *Jesus has not changed*. "*He is the same, yesterday, today, and forever,*" and if we are not turning to him in our moments of weakness and experiencing his strong support, we are missing something.

It is true that after saving Peter from sinking, *our* Lord said unto him, "O, thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" But these words were not in, censure or rebuke, but were intended to be reassuring to the Apostle. Evidently they had the desired effect, for we read that together they journeyed on the water back to the ship.

"SIMPLY TRUSTING"

Let us then resolve that our times of natural fear and discouragement shall be times of trust also. Thus shall we be able to say with the Psalmist, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." With him, too, we shall be able to say: "I sought the Lord and he heard me and delivered me from all my, fears." - Psa. 34:4.

Few if any of us will be called upon to endure anything worthy to be compared with the trials which the saints of other days successfully endured. But as the poet has expressed:

"The trivial round, the common task,
Will furnish all we need to ask;
Room to deny ourselves, a road
To bring us daily nearer God.

"If on our daily course our mind
Be set to hallow all we find
New treasures still of countless price
God will provide for sacrifice."

Let us then in the common walk of life cultivate a living, bright, happy, childlike trust in God. And having learned to trust God in these things that are least, we shall have developed a faith which God, if it please him, will be able to use in the things that are great, a faith which will lead us, if need be, as was the case with David, from the humble care of his father's sheep, to slay a Goliath who may chance to be standing in defiance of the armies of the living God.

-- P. L. Read.

The Devil's Business

The Lord has given to every man his work. It is his business to do it, and the devil's business to hinder him if he can. So surely as God has given you a work to do, Satan will try to hinder you. He may throw you from it; he may present other things more promising. He may allure you by worldly prospects, he may assault you with slander, torment you with false accusations, set you at work defending your character, employ pious persons to lie about you, and excellent men to slander you. You may have Pilate and Herod, Annas and Caiaphas all combined against you, and Judas standing by you ready to sell you for thirty pieces of silver, and you may wonder why all these things come upon you. Can you not see that the whole thing is brought about through the craft of the devil? To draw you off from your work and hinder your obedience to God?

Keep about your work. Do not flinch because the lion roars; do not stop to stone the devil's dogs; do not fool away your time chasing the devil's rabbits. Do your work. Let liars lie, let sectarians quarrel, let corporations resolve, let editors publish, let the devil do his worst; but see to it that nothing hinders you from fulfilling the work God has given you.

Be sure it is the Lord's work you are doing, not the devil's.

He has, not sent you to make money. He has not commanded you to get rich. He has never bidden you defend your character. He has not set you at work, to contradict falsehood which Satan and his servants may start to peddle. If you do these things you will do nothing else; you will be at work for yourself and not for the Lord

Keep about your work. Let your aim be as steady as a star. Let the world brawl and bubble. You may be assaulted, wronged, insulted, slandered; wounded, and rejected; you may be abused by foes, forsaken by friends, and despised and rejected of men, but see to it with steadfast determination, with unfaltering zeal, that you pursue, the great purpose of your life and object; of your being until at last you can say, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.

- Source Unknown.

Life and Death

So he died for his faith. That is fine --
More than most of us do.
But, say, can you add to that line
That he, lived for it too?

In his death he bore witness at last
As a martyr to truth.
Did his life do the same in the past;
From the days of his youth?

It is easy to die. Men have died
For a wish or a whim --
From bravado or passion or pride --
Was it harder for him?

But to live -- every day to live out'
All the truth that he dreamt,
While his friends met his conduct with doubt
And the world with contempt

Was it thus that he plodded ahead,
Never turning aside?
Then we'll talk of the life that he lived
Never mind how he died.

- Ernest Crosby.

Seeking a Bride

(Continued from our last issue)

NOW let us consider the servant's testimony. He said, "I am Abraham's servant. And the Lord hath blessed my master greatly, and he is become great; and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and men -- servants, and maid servants, and camels, and asses. And Sarah, my master's wife, bare a son to my master when she was old: and unto him hath he given all that he hath." (Gen. 24:34-36.) Thus he speaks of the father and the son, revealing the vast resources of the father and all that he hath he has given unto the son. With this testimony the servant seeks to obtain a bride for the son.

This reminds us of the words of the Master, "When the advocate is come, whom I will send to you from the Father; -- the spirit of truth who comes forth from the Father -- he will be a witness (or a testimony) concerning me." (John 15:26.) "He will not speak of his own accord, but all that he hears he will speak, and he will make known the future to you. He will glorify me because he will take of what is mine and will make it known to you. Everything that the Father has is mine; that is why I said that the spirit of truth takes of what is mine and will make it known unto you." - John 16:13-15.

What effect or result will this testimony have upon your life or mine? The same as it did upon Rebecca, for it was by telling of Isaac that he sought to attract the heart, and we know it is by telling of Jesus that the holy spirit seeks to draw us away from a world of sin and folly unto the hope of a marriage, whereby we can share in "the unsearchable riches of Christ." It is by the holding up of Christ that the spirit seeks to draw us to God. Yes, it is the Father's revelation of Christ by the holy spirit that inspires the hope of the Church. What was the Master's answer, to Peter when Peter confessed Christ to be the Son of the Living God? "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar Jonah; for mere human nature has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven, and I declare to you that you are Peter, and that upon this rock -- [truth] I will build my Church." -- Matt. 16:17, 18, *Weymouth*.

This opens to us a revelation which, being received by faith, draws our hearts to Christ, who becomes the well spring of life and power, the ground of membership and the power of fellowship. The holy spirit has but one testimony to deliver -- and that is Christ, and that is important. This is shown by the testimony of the servant to Rebecca. He set before her the blessedness and reality of being made one with this highly favored and beloved son. He showed to her that all that belonged to his master's son would belong to her when she became part of him.

Now let us look at the result of the, servant's mission. In Rebecca's case the effect was most marked and decisive, for the testimony of the servant sank deeply into her ears and into her heart. The result was that she became entirely detached from the scene of things around her, and was ready to leave all and follow Eliezer's guidance in order, to apprehend that for which she had been apprehended. And so in the strength and beauty of what had been testified unto her, she arises and expresses her readiness to depart, in these memorable words, "I will go." So, then, forgetting those things which were behind and reaching forth towards the things which were before, she pressed on towards the mark for the prize of her calling, which centered in Isaac and his love.

As they journeyed across the wilderness, no doubt the companion of her way poured fresh testimonies into her ears concerning the one for whose; love and inheritance she was willing to

leave all. What a most beautiful picture there is in this of the Church, under the, conduct of the holy spirit, going onward to meet her heavenly Bridegroom.

Think of the treasures of his love, his grace, his promises, his riches, his goodness, his glory, and remember the revealer of these is the holy spirit. He brings our minds to think on the precious blood of our precious Lord, and as Rebecca of old listened to the voice of Abraham's servant telling her of Isaac, his love and his treasures, so the spirit speaks to us of our divine Lord and the blessings that are ours, and the glory we are yet to share if like Rebecca we are fully prepared to enter by faith upon an unknown path in companionship with the one who was sent, of God to search out a bride for his dear Son. Just as Eliezer led Rebecca safely through the wilderness with' all its dangers and difficulties, so will our Eliezer lead, us through this world with its many temptations, helping us to overcome our self will and bringing us in safety to our divine Isaac.

In Rebecca's case the effect was most marked and decisive. Not even the request of her brother and mother to abide with them a few days longer had any inducement for her. The prospect was far too bright to be thus delayed or given up. True, she had not yet seen Isaac, but she believed; the testimony of the servant and had received the earnest of it and these were enough for her heart. So laying' aside every weight and entanglement she was ready, under the conduct of Abraham's servant to go onward to meet her bridegroom. And so with us, nothing but the hope of seeing Jesus as he is and being like him will enable us or lead us to purify ourselves elves even as he is pure.

If we have love for the Lord and a well grounded faith in the Word of God, our faithful guide, the holy spirit, will carry us through to the end of, our journey. Joyful in the anticipation of seeing him whom we love with all our hearts, let us sing with the whole heart:

"Holy Spirit, faithful guide,
Ever near the Christian's side;
Gently lead us by the hand,
Pilgrims in a desert land.
Weary souls, for aye rejoice,
While they hear that sweetest voice,
Whisp'ring softly, "Traveler come,
Follow me, I'll guide thee home."

The spirit's work in us will not be complete until we have been brought into the presence of Christ; just as in the case of Abraham's servant, whose work was not completed until he had presented Rebecca to Isaac. Is there anything in the Word of God, directly or indirectly, that will strengthen our faith and brighten our hope of meeting our heavenly Bridegroom, also pointing out the time and place of meeting? Most assuredly. When Rebecca started out in company with that faithful servant, she had hope that at the end of the journey she would meet the one whom she loved but had not yet seen.

Can we imagine with such a prospect before her that Rebecca would become indifferent as ito the full realization of that hope; in other words, become drowsy, depending upon her guide to awaken her when Isaac appeared? Watchfulness seemed to be the primary characteristic in Rebecca's case, as it should be in every Christian who .has this hope within him. Did not the Master say unto his disciples, "What I say unto you, I "say unto all, watch"? (Mark 13:37.) Peter also said, "Be sober, and hope to the end." (1 Peter 1:13.) Yes, the greater Isaac will surely come to meet and receive his Bride, just as Isaac met his bride.

Where was that? At the well of the Living One, the well of Hagar's relief, the well of him that liveth and seeth me. (Gen. 16:14.) Isaac dwelt in the south country and he came by the way of the well, thus going out to meditate in the field at eventide, and lifting up his eyes, behold the camels were coming. This reminds us of the words of the Prophet: "So shall my Word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. (Isa. 55:11.) Yes, God sent forth his servant to search out a bride for his dear Son and here is the result, the camels, his Word, returning, having accomplished his great purpose.

Oh, the unsearchable riches of our God! By his will the holy spirit will bring the bride, the Lamb's wife, to the meeting place. There is no uncertainty but that in the twilight of this, Gospel dispensation the greater Isaac will come and meet his bride and take her unto himself. The question is, Are we watching, looking forward to the grand consummation of this hope, "for we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." (1 John 3:2.) If this is our hope, it means walking in the light, entering into God's mind and work, for he is planning a marriage for his Son, and the Church is to be the bride. She is the object of the Father's purpose and of the Son's love, which has been testified to her by the holy spirit, for Jesus said, "He shall testify of me." - John 15:26.

As previously noticed, Rebecca was alert -- watching. She was not indifferent to her hope and she did not wait for her faithful guide to direct her attention to the man walking in the field but, noticing him, herself, she inquired, "What man is this that walketh in the field to meet?" And receiving the answer, "It is my master," she took a veil and covered herself.

In Revelation 19:7 we read respecting the -- Church, the Lamb's bride, "His wife hath made herself ready." Amazing blessedness awaited Rebecca, for "Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent and took Rebecca and she became his wife," a member of his body, of his flesh and of his bones, "and he loved her." In due season our Isaac will come to meet and claim his, bride and take her to the place typified by Sarah's tent. Jesus went up on high and we are told to wait patiently and to watch for his appearing. Did he not say, "In my Father's house are many mansions"(resting places)? "I am going away to make' ready a place for you. I will return and take you to be with me, that where I am you also may be." - John 14:2-4, *Weymouth*.

Glorious hope! After its consummation, Christ, with whom the Church appears in glory (Col. 3:4) will speak peace to a stricken world. Praise His Holy Name!

"Triumphant Zion, lift thy head
From dust *and* darkness and the dead!
Though humbled long, awake at length,
And gird thee with thy Savior's strength.

"Yea, soon astonished men shall see
The laurels of thy victory;
And thou, *with* grace and glory crowned,
May'st lavish blessings all around."

-- T. G. Smith

The Question Box

Question:

Please explain the Parable of the Unjust Steward. Just what quality is Jesus commending him for? - Luke 16:1-13.

Answer:

In this parable our Lord is teaching his disciples the proper, that is to say, the Christian, use of earthly goods.

The rich man of Luke 16:1 is an Oriental lord, or landlord, who had entrusted to a steward the administration of his lands. It was the steward's duty to gather in the produce and after providing for his own needs and for those of the household to sell the remainder, and to transmit the surplus income to his master.

This steward had been unfaithful to his trust. We are not told that he was dishonest in the sense of embezzlement, or in the taking of bribes. We are simply told that he "wasted" his master's goods. Evidently he had been negligent and had lived an extravagant, luxurious life.

The rich man of this parable represents God himself, and we (Christ's followers) are to consider ourselves not as owners, but as stewards, of such earthly goods as we may possess. In his relationship to other men one may, indeed, be regarded as the owner, the proprietor, of his goods; but in relation to God no one can ever be more than a tenant or steward. If, therefore, it could be truthfully said of us that we were *wasting the goods* of God, it would mean that, after taking what is *necessary* for our maintenance, instead of consecrating the remainder to the service of God and his cause, we were squandering it on our pleasure or hoarding it for ourselves.

Here, then, at the very outset, we have the judgment of Jesus on that course of conduct which, while to many it may appear quite natural and proper, can never seem so to his followers; that conduct which forgets that we are stewards and acts as though we were proprietors.

In the parable nothing is said as to the guilt or innocence of the steward. From Luke 16:2, however, we may see that, at least his master was convinced of his guilt for he pronounced the sentence: "*Thou mayest be no longer steward.*" Against this sentence, so definitely expressed, the steward makes no remonstrance, from which fact also we may learn that the truth of the accusation made against him is presupposed in the narrative.

In Luke 16:3 we find the steward considering what he shall do in his present position. Of the two courses which present themselves to his mind, the first, digging, and the second, begging, are equally repugnant. Luxury has unfitted him for toil; charity would choke his pride. But is there no other course?

At last, after much reflection, he sees a way out of *his* dilemma. "I have it," he concludes (talking within himself, "I am resolved what to do. My master's goods are still in my possession. My final accounting has not yet been rendered. I will use some of these goods to make my master's debtors my friends. Then, when I am put out of the stewardship, they will receive me."

The debtors, whom he calls to him with this in view, are the merchants who are in the habit of coming to get their supplies from the estate managed by the steward, executing and handing over

to him a written bond or "bill" or note for the amount of the produce thus obtained. They are, therefore, dealers who obtain their wares from him on credit.

Turning to the first of them with the question: "How much owest thou unto my lord?" he gets him first of all to acknowledge the amount of his debt: "A hundred measures of oil." And then, having thus first made him feel his position as a debtor, and aroused in him the sense of the amount of his debt, he says to him, at the same time handing him his bond, "Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty."

This instruction from the steward would mean that the debtor should endorse the bond thus handed back again, reducing the amount from 100 to 50 measures of oil. Moreover, this should not be understood to mean that the steward was inviting the debtor to falsify the bond, but that, acting as the fully authorized steward of the property, and on the ground of the authority of his position *he* here permits the first of the debtors to reduce the amount specified on his bond by a definite sum. The injustice done here, is not a falsifying of the bond on the part of the debtor, but an abuse of his powers on the part of the steward. Indeed, it was an additional wasting of his master's property, only in a way different, from that alleged in Luke 16:1.

With no time to lose he proceeds to act with the second debtor as with the first, and, as we may conclude from the opening words of Luke 16:5, with all the others. Thus, in the eleventh hour, he has so used the authority of his position which gave him formal right to dispose of his master's property, as to grant all of his master's debtors a reduction of their debt, thus disposing them to feel generously towards himself, and to be prepared to receive him into their homes as his future necessity would require.

His lord commended the unjust steward, but does *our* Lord? Let us see. After he had told this story, a story so true to human life, Jesus proceeded to comment on it; to apply it, and (mark this point well) *to limit its application*; to point the moral which he intended this parable to adorn. What does he say? He says: "The children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light." (Luke 16:8.) The landlord in the parable commended the steward's wisdom: and our Lord, without precisely commending it, fixes on this very wisdom as the notable thing in him, as that which he would have its imitate.

"The children of this world are wiser than the children of light. That is to say, men belonging to this, age (men whose thoughts and acts move within the limits. of this present. age, not stretching beyond it) show a superior sagacity and earnestness in pursuing their aims to that shown by Christians in the pursuit of theirs. They see their ends more clearly, adapt such means as, they. possess to those ends more skilfully, handle them more vigorously. They are more contriving, more "patient, -- more indomitable, in their endeavor -- to make a business or a fortune, than are Christ's followers to gain the, knowledge of God or to win an eternal blessedness. They aim lower, but they aim better. They work harder, though they, are not paid so well They do more to obtain a corruptible crown than, we to obtain the crown that fadeth not away. Christ does not approve *them*; but he does approve *this in* them; this wise foresight, this skilful adaptation of means to an end, this capable and resolute handling of them.

Yet that we may not mistake him, that we may not sink into an immoral admiration of mere cleverness, our Lord is careful to limit the application of his parable. The children of this age are wise; they are prudent, forward -- looking; they will deny themselves today to reach a greater good tomorrow; And we should show a similar wisdom in our pursuit of the heavenly treasure. But their wisdom is far from perfect. We must be careful how we admire it. They are wise *only in their generation*; when that is past their wisdom may prove to have been folly. They may have

made a fortune, but they cannot take it with them when they die. They may have carefully prepared "houses" for themselves so long as they, live on earth, but prepared for themselves no habitation when heart and flesh fail them. Their wisdom is only a wisdom for this world. Measure their conduct on the scale of their own generation, and it may be truthfully said: "These are capable, sagacious men"; but measure it on the scale of eternity; that is to say, on the scale of their whole life, including that in the age to come, after this age has passed away, and one is constrained to add: "What fools and how blind they are after all!" Their thoughts, and their gains perish with them. Notwithstanding the fact that the hope of eternal life -- life everlasting -- is held before them,, they limit their foresight to a few short years, and make absolutely no preparation for the eternity which lies beyond; nay, *they often unfit fit themselves for the eternal life by their very devotion to the business of the life they now live in the flesh.*

So that, even while our Lord commends the wisdom of the unjust steward, he also condemns it. He would have us possess ourselves of, it indeed; but he would have us use it for higher end, on 'a larger scale, to secure a heavenly treasure. There were no perfect men for him to put into any of his stories; so he had, perforce, to put an imperfect man in this one. But it is only for the sake of the one good. quality lie; possessed; and even this one quality, so imperfect and limited in him, is to become perfect and complete in us.

-- P. L. Read.

Important Notice

The Directors have authorized the printing of 4000 extra copies of the April "Herald." These will be mailed to prospective new readers to acquaint them with the work and message of the Pastoral Bible Institute. In this effort to further the ministry, we invite all our readers to cooperate. If you can use one or more copies to pass on to a religious minded friend or neighbor, write us at once. Or if you prefer to have these mailed from Brooklyn, furnish us with full names and addresses. There will be no charge. So, will you not join us in helping to spread the Message to other hungry hearts?

Recently Deceased

Sister Grace Alesandar, S. Pasadena, Calif. -- (January).
Brother Charles Bowman, Johnson City, Ill. -- (October).
Sister Margaret R. Brown, Norristown, Pa. -- (January)
Sister Cesira Cecchim, Richmond, Va. -- (January),
Sister Lillian Farrer, Monterey Park, Calif. -- (January)..
Sister Florence Hart. Seattle, Wash. -- (January).
Sister Ida G. Karel, Orlando, Fla. -- (January).
Brother Nelson Roy Kinder, N. Frankfort, Ill -- (January).
Sister Ruth Lindstror, Green Bay, Wis. -- (January).
Brother John. W. Newall, London, Eng. -- (November).
Sister Jessie Perrin, Cameron, Ont. -- (December).
Brother Philipp Ripper, Sr., Lawndale, Calif. -- (December).
Brother George William Wood, Cupertino, Calif. -- (January).