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The Thanksgiving of the Master

A Meditation for the Thanksgiving Season

THIS YEAR, as we, listen to or read the customary call of the President of the United States to set apart a specified day as a season of praise and thanksgiving unto "the Giver of every good and perfect gift," our hearts may well be responsive. If, in former years, it has been meet and proper for us, as a nation, to give thanks to Almighty God. for His faithfulness, surely it is most fitting this year. While we have not, as a nation, been kept from the great scourge of war, the invader has been kept from our shores, while within our borders we have enjoyed the blessings of tranquillity, union, and plenty to a marked degree. In the midst of a world in which brute force again sought to prevail, we have lived, as a nation, under the reign of comparatively just and equal laws. Civil and religious liberty continue to be our prized possessions. The means of acquiring- and diffusing useful knowledge are still ours and may be enjoyed in ever -- increasing measure. In God's providence we continue, as a nation, to command the respect of the world. To us, as a nation, much indeed, has been given; from us, surely, much will be required. (Luke 12:48.) God grant to our, nation this one further gift -- faithfulness -- to its stewardship.

But while the season is one of national interest, whatever the faith of the individual may be, it possesses a significance that is peculiarly applicable to consecrated followers of the Master. These have been taught that "in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving" they should "rejoice in the Lord alway" and hold sweet communion with Him. Their hearts respond also to the call of David: "Serve the Lord with gladness . . . enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise; be thankful unto Him and bless His name." - Phil. 4:6; 4:4; Psa. 100:2-4.

For the benefit of these consecrated ones, then, we propose, in this meditation, to draw the lesson of thankfulness from the Master's own., example; to seek not only to be grateful to Him, but grateful like Him; to make Him, with the Father, not only the goal 'of our thankfulness but. its guide. The Scriptures record only four occasions in the life of Jesus when He publicly offered thanks. - Let us examine each in turn and endeavor to learn -the lessons they may have to teach us.

1. THANKS FOR TEMPORAL BLESSINGS

One instance of thanks publicly expressed by the Master was in connection with the miraculous feeding of the more than five thousand. It is interesting to note, in passing, that of all the miracles of Jesus this is the only one recorded by all 'four Evangelists. (Matt. 14:15-21 Mark 6:34-44 Luke 9:12-17; John 6:1-13.), The circumstances are well known to all our readers. A multitude had followed our Lord into the region beyond the Sea of Galilee. Time passed rapidly in the presence of so wonderful a Teacher, ' .but at 'last the pangs of hunger insisted on due attention being paid to bodily needs. The disciples themselves, unaware that our Lord was but making ready for one of the most dramatic of all His miracles, urged upon Him that He send the people back to the villages to buy food to satisfy their hunger. But our Lord responded: "They need not depart; give ye them to eat." In the Greek there is an emphasis on the "ye," the' Master thus leading His disciples to realize their own utter inability, in order that, when His intended miracle had occurred, they would realize more completely the magnitude of the power and resources with which, He had been entrusted by the Father.

There were but five loaves and two fishes at hand to supply the needs of about five thousand men, besides women and little children, but these were sufficient for His purpose. Taking them, "and looking up to heaven, He blessed, and brake, and gave the . loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.. And they did all eat and were filled. And they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full."

We have already observed that this miracle is recorded by all four Evangelists. It is worthy of notice also that each of the four records the Master's expression of thanks. He "blessed," that is, "gave thanks for" the loaves. Matthew Henry remarks that "He did not appoint one of His disciples to be His chaplain. He Himself invoked His Father's benediction; He invoked it with adoration and thanksgiving.

We are not curious to know just *when* the miraculous multiplication occurred, whether at the moment of breaking, or later nor are we disposed to speculate on *how* the miracle was accomplished. For us it 'is enough to know that the power of the Creator was present; to such power it could be no greater difficulty to produce bread for a few thousand' people, in an extraordinary (supernatural) way, than it is to produce, by ordinary (natural) methods,. food for the supply of the teeming millions who daily feast at God's bountiful table. Nor are we greatly concerned to know whether His thanksgiving was for the limited supply of food (the five loaves and two fishes) provided by the little boy, or for the larger supply which would .shortly result from the exercise of divine power, or for both. In any case His thanks was for material food, physical benefit, an earthly, temporal blessing. In this, He has set us an example which we do well to follow. No matter how or from whom they have directly reached us, it is from God that all our earthly blessings have come, and it is most fitting that we render thanks. As Babcock's verse puts it:

"Back of the loaf is the snowy flour
And back of the flour the mill;
And back of the mill is the wheat and the shower,
And the sun, and the Father's will."

It is instructive, too, to note that giving of thanks for temporal blessings was not occasional but habitual with our Lord. Even after He had completed His earthly career and had been raised from

the dead, it was in the "giving of thanks" that He disclosed His identity to the Emmaus disciples. - Luke 24:30.

One word of caution before proceeding with the next example of our Lord. We are not to be understood as, urging ostentation in expressing "grace before meals." Doubtless there arise occasions on which outward expression would be out of place. Usually, however, it will be found possible for thanks to be expressed. Always our hearts will give thanks. And surely we will daily find opportunity to audibly express to Him our thanks-forgetting not all His benefits.

2. THANKS FOR THE "DIVINE PLAN" REVEALED

The second thanksgiving of Jesus which we wish to consider is found in Luke 10:21 and Matt. 11:25. In St. Luke's account the context indicates that He has just heard the victorious report of the Seventy as they have returned from their journey. Confident in the promise of their Master, they had set themselves to heal the sick and it was not long before they found themselves in combat with the severest malady of all that of demon possession-and they had had good success. Their surprise at this unlooked for result is described with the vivacity of an entirely new experience: "Even the devils are subject unto us through Thy Name."

Now while Jesus cautioned them to rejoice not so much because the spirits had been subject unto them as because their names were written in heaven, it is nevertheless evident that their experience occasioned Him much satisfaction. In their experience He saw the beginning of the complete overthrow of Satan's empire. Perhaps He had meditated often on the problem: How shall My mission succeed when it fails altogether to enlist the aid of any of the men of knowledge and authority in Israel? If at any time that had been His thought, the success of the Seventy brought Him the answer of God. It is by the humblest instruments that God is to accomplish the greatest of His objectives. In such an arrangement, so contrary to human anticipations, Jesus recognizes and adores with an overflowing heart, the wisdom of His Father. It was "in that hour," the same hour that the Seventy reported their success, that "Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

On first meeting these words a difficulty arises in the minds of some. Can it really be true, such wonder, that Jesus gave thanks to His heavenly Father because He had hidden the truth of His glorious character and plan from some? Jesus rejoiced that it was revealed to "babes"; would He not have rejoiced still more if those from whom it was presently hidden (the "wise and prudent" in this world's estimation) had also been permitted to enjoy it? Is it not true that His capacious heart would have been glad if all Jerusalem had suffered themselves to be gathered under the ample wings of His protecting care? Did He not "weep" because they "would not"?-Luke 23:37.

To meet this apparent difficulty it has been suggested that in the phrase, "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes," the first clause is to be regarded as merely a stepping-stone to the second, and that it is the second only on which the Savior's mind rested, as exhibiting the object which He really had in view for which He offered thanks. In support of this viewpoint, reference is made to other Scriptures where the stepping-stone relationship of the first clause to the second is clearly in evidence. For example, Romans 6:17. There we read: "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." In this Scripture, of course, the real object for which the Apostle thanks God, was not that the Romans were once the servants of sin, but that, though they had once been sin's servants, that was true of them no longer; that instead, they had now embraced the doctrine he had delivered unto them, obedience to which was resulting in righteousness. If Luke 10:21 were freely translated, with the idea in mind of bringing out this stepping-stone relationship between the clauses it would read - "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that, though Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, Thou hast revealed them unto babes."

However, we *need not adopt* such free translation to avoid the difficulty, which, after all, is more apparent than real. And, indeed, we *must not* adopt it, for there is no authority for it; and it impairs the depth of our Lord's thought.

Jesus not only gave thanks that "these things" were revealed to some; He gave thanks also that they had been "hidden" from others.

The difficulty in understanding His thanksgiving results from supposing that God is capable of bestowing His favors' or withholding them in an arbitrary manner. Nothing could be further from the truth. God never acts arbitrarily but always in agreement with the principles of truth and righteousness. ' If to one He gives and from another He with holds, there is in each case, in every case, a reason for His action. If at times the reason be not apparent, it none the less exists, and we must patiently search for it. Fortunately the solution of the present difficulty is not far to seek. All will agree that to a man who has done his duty well, it is God's good pleasure to give the sense of duty well done. To a man who has neglected his duty, it would be morally impossible for God to give that same sense of satisfaction, and, God be thanked, it is not His good pleasure to do so. Yes -- God be thanked, even though' we should be the one derelict in duty; for this moral law pervading, as it does, all God's dealings with mankind, can continue to be of value only if maintained inviolate. Thank God that Balaam *could not "die the death of the, righteous,"* much as he longed to do so. (Num. 23:10 31:8.) Thank God that the only way Balaam of old, or any modern Balaams of today, could be sure of dying the death of the, righteous, is to live righteously. Thank God that this is so, even though we find at times a trace of the very spirit of Balaam in our own heart. Thank God that it *must* be rooted out. Thank God that it *will* be.

So with the passage before us. It is not a question of "hiding" or "withholding" truth from any one. It is a case of men "loving darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil." (John 3:19.) Jesus said: "Every one that is of the' truth heareth My voice. (John 18:37.) What did, He mean by this statement? We answer: He meant that every one having a disposition favorably disposed towards the practice of truth and righteousness in heart and life (not merely giving mental assent to it) will recognize the Gospel message, when it is clearly presented in the power of the Holy Spirit, as being the message of God. Not only so, but having thus recognized it, they will gladly embrace it. Let us not be misunderstood here. This does not mean, necessarily, that such will recognize and embrace the message as presented *by us*. *Our* presentation may be faulty. It may be faulty, even though letter-perfect, should it happen that our lives are proclaiming, in trumpet tones, a message sadly in conflict with the words we may be, speaking. Nor does it mean that such will recognize and embrace 'the Gospel message "straightway," * even when it is properly presented. But "every one that is 'of the truth" will, sooner or later, in this Age or the next, hear and obey His voice. Now if this be true, as we believe it is, does it not follow that any one to whom., the message of the Gospel was presented with all the matchless force and power that the Master Himself possessed, who did not recognize it as having been God-sent, and who did not gladly embrace it, thereby gave evidence that he 'was not, as yet, "of the truth"? Must it not also be apparent that a man not "of the truth is in no condition, as yet, to receive truth? As the Psalmist says: "Light is sown for the righteous." (Psa. 97:11.) It is there for the unrighteous, too '(Matt. 5:45), but *they* cannot see it. It-is. not "hidden from them by any hostile hand. They hide themselves from it, even as they "hid their faces" from the Light of the World.' (Isa. 53:3.) None are so blind and deaf as 'those who *will not* see and hear.

* See "Herald" August 1938, page 127, for an interesting comment on "straightway" as used in Luke 5:39.

Jesus, then, thanked God that it was His Father's will that all the spiritual blessings that are to be derived from an understanding of His Word are reserved for those of a childlike, humble disposition. 'Except, ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of heaven.' (Matt. 18:3.) We, too, may thank God that, this is so. In the words of a faithful Pastor, we may rejoice that "such a disposition is essential to those who would receive the wisdom which cometh from above. They must have a humble appreciation of their own deficiencies and lack of wisdom, else they cannot receive freely, heartily, the wisdom which God is pleased to grant in the present time only to those who are in the attitude of heart to receive it." (Manna, January 31.) And again: "Let us, dearly beloved, as we realize that thus far God has counted us worthy to look upon the scroll of His Plan which has been unsealed for us by our blessed Lord Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, prove our worthiness to continue to look therein, and to read the wondrous things of His law, by, faithful -obedience and loyalty to it in all things. Let us not undervalue our great privilege in being counted worthy to have some part in the blessed ministry of reflecting the light of divine Truth. Let us prove ourselves jewels. of rarest value, diamonds indeed, heartily receiving and beautifully transmitting to others the light of Truth, and faithfully enduring the ,severest pressure that God may permit to come upon us; for, if faithful in these small things, we shall in due time be counted worthy also to reign with Christ in power and great glory." - Manna, December 21.

3. THANKS THAT THE FATHER HEARS AND ANSWERS PRAYER

The thanksgiving of Jesus which we wish to notice next is found only in John 11:41, 42. It is a thanksgiving for the Father's inclined ear and ready response to His every petition: "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I know that Thou hearest Me always; but because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

To get the setting of this special occasion for thanksgiving we must travel in spirit to, the tomb of Lazarus. Jesus is about to perform another, perhaps the greatest, of the "signs" that were to attest His, Messiahship. His "friend" Lazarus had died. Jesus, overcome with tender sympathy for the grief Martha, and Mary were experiencing, is Himself reduced to tears. The word translated "wept in verse 35 is not the same as the word twice translated "weeping" in verse 33. There the meaning is "sobs," but here "tears" are to be understood; it 'is the expression for a calm and gentle sorrow.

This text (John 11:35), which shows our Lord to be the "sympathizing Jesus," is held by some critics to furnish proof that the entire narrative of the raising of Lazarus is spurious. Such maintain that since Jesus knew He was soon to bring Lazarus back to life, He could not have shed genuine tears, or experienced sincere sorrow. Certain it is that if John's Gospel, instead of being the inspired Word of God, were merely the result of speculative thought, as some claim, it would not have contained verse 35. Jesus, as the true Logos, with nothing human except the outward appearance, would have raised His friend with triumphant looks and unmoistened eyes. But those who hold such views fail to appreciate the significance of John's earlier statement that "the Word was 'made *flesh*.'" (John 1:14.) As one able writer has remarked: "It is not with a heart of stone that the dead are raised." To us there is real significance in the fact that the very Gospel in which the divine Sonship of Jesus is most clearly asserted, is also the one which makes us best acquainted with the profoundly human side of His life.

The miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead was, in the eyes of Jesus, already effected; hence He gave thanks for it as for a thing accomplished. Lifting up His eyes to heaven He said: "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me." He thus confirmed the view of His miracles already held

by Martha (I know that even now whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee" - verse 22) they were, just so many answered prayers.

The fact that in this instance Jesus expressed His thanks aloud, was not because there was anything extraordinary in the conduct of His Father towards Him on this occasion. His publicly expressed thanks is anything, but an exclamation of surprise at being exceptionally heard; constantly heard by the Father, He is continually, giving Him thanks. That which urged Him to do so aloud at this solemn moment was the presence of the people by whom He was surrounded. Already in private conversation He had prepared His disciples and the two sisters to behold and understand the work He was about to perform. He now desired to dispose the right-hearted ones of the people also, whom the Father had unexpectedly assembled around this tomb, ' to behold "the glory of God" (verse 40) , that is to say, to see in this miracle, not merely a wonderful feat, but a sign of His Messiahship.* Otherwise the astonishment they might feel would be unfruitful and would not terminate in faith. It was for this reason that our Lord uttered in an audible voice that sentiment of filial gratitude which at all times filled His heart. By thus addressing His Father He put God into the position of either granting or withholding His cooperation. If Lazarus remained in the tomb, let Jesus be acknowledged an impostor, and all His other miracles attributed to Beelzebub. On the other hand, if God, who was thus solemnly invoked, should manifest His power, let Jesus be acknowledged as sent by Him. Thus this act of thanksgiving before the still occupied sepulchre made the moment one of solemn ordeal, like that of Elijah on Mt. Carmel. When Jesus had given sight to the man born blind, the Jews had regarded it as startling and inexplicable, but had denied its Messianic character because, in their view, it was a violation of the sabbath. (John 9:16.) Here at the tomb of Lazarus, by giving thanks to God before all the people, prior to the performance of 'the miracle, Jesus positively makes God participate in the work to be effected. Jehovah, the God of Israel, will henceforth be either the Authenticator of His mission, or the Accomplice of His imposture.

* John's Gospel was written to prove the Messiahship of Jesus. Out of more than forty miracles performed John mentions only seven, See "Herald," June 1942, page 85, for a discussion of all seven.

It is no part of our mission to awaken the dead, 'nor has the Father entrusted us with that power, although power 'to do even greater works will be our prized possession in the hereafter. (John 5:20; 14:12.) But we need not postpone to the Millennial Age the joy of unbroken communion with the Father. That may be our blessed portion now, if we will. All of us, doubtless, if we are truly consecrated, enjoy to some extent, the privilege of communion with God. But it should not be intermittent; it should be unbroken. Only one thing is capable of interrupting this fellowship-earthborn clouds. As we sometimes sing:

"Sun of my soul, my Father dear,
I know no night when Thou art near.
O, may no earth-born cloud arise
To hide Thee from Thy servant's eyes."

For the privilege of access into the Father's presence and for the assurance that His prayers would always be heard and answered, the Master gave thanks. Surely we may follow His example in this. Often words will fail us, but we need not be without them for, in the matchless prayer-pattern He left us, there is a phrase which includes both Petition and Thanksgiving, -"Hallowed be Thy Name. " Here is Petition, in that we express the longing desire of our hearts that His Name should be everywhere hallowed. Here also is Praise and Thanksgiving, in that even as we utter the words our own hearts reverence -His Name with a deep sense of satisfaction in so doing. May it

be ours truthfully to take upon our lips these other words of the Master, and speak them in the ears of God: "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I know that Thou hearest Me always" - except when I have been untrue to my vows of consecration. And even these times of unfaithfulness have been forgiven, (because they have been sorrowfully confessed and truly repented of) according to Thy gracious Word. - 1 John 1:6-10.

4. THANKS IN PROSPECT OF DEATH

Temporal blessings, spiritual food (the revelation of His truth and the supply of its spirit), the privilege of prayer and communion with the Father these were some of the Father's gifts for which the Master's gratitude was publicly expressed; gifts for which we, too, may find gratitude welling up in our own hearts. For our final lesson we turn to a more intimate earthly scene "than any of the other three considered. There is now no thronging multitude - only His 'close associates are with Him. It is the upper room where the Master and His disciples have just finished celebrating the Jewish Passover. (Matt. 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:19, 20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26.) At the conclusion of the feast our Lord arises and taking first the loaf and then the fruit of the vine - ' He ; Offers thanks. For what, does He - here give thanks? Not for temporal blessings merely, for they are now to be used not to satisfy physical hunger but as emblems. His thanksgiving, then, must have been for that which those emblems signified. Those emblems, we know, represented Himself, His flesh and blood, about to be sacrificed on our behalf, to accomplish our salvation. The pouring out of His earthly life. would make life available. for us. *That* He knew. And for the privilege of being our Savior He offered thanks! Think of it! It is written: "God love-th a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. 9:7.) Was there ever a Giver like our Lord? He gives thanks not only for gifts received, but for the privilege of giving His very life!

It is noteworthy that the Lord's Supper is frequently spoken of as the Eucharist or Thanksgiving doubtless deriving its name from this thanksgiving act. of our Lord; it is remarkable, too, that it was in, the very night on which He was betrayed that He took the loaf and the cup and "gave thanks" -- thanksgiving in the midst of treachery!

May it not also be true that He was giving thanks for the fellowship with His Church which His death would make possible? Surely it must have been so. For, - soon after His institution of this "memorial," - He poured out His heart to the Father .in that high priestly prayer on her behalf, recorded for us in the seventeenth chapter of John; that prayer in which 'He prayed that they and we (the eleven and we who have since believed) might be kept from the evil that- is in the world, sanctified by the truth, and made one with Him and with His Father. His vision must have swept down the centuries until it embraced the fellowship of all the consecrated, all those who would solemnly covenant to be one, with Him indeed. These emblems were to be a sign of the most sacred association - the association of Christ and His Church; 'emblems of what He, the Holy One, was willing to do' for those He loved, and of what they, in their turn, - being reckoned holy, were, willing to do for Him. For this He gave thanks.

We, too, have taken the cup of salvation, that cup, which, in this Age, involves the cup of suffering as well as the cup of joy; - we too, partake of the "cup of blessing which we bless," that is, the cup for which we give thanks, knowing in advance that it will surely be a cup of sacrifice. With St. Paul we have counted all things both loss and dross that we may know Christ, experience the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. For this inestimable privilege, the language of our hearts is: "Dear Father, accept our grateful, heartfelt thanks. And give us grace to keep our consecration, vows, walking faithfully in the footsteps of the Master to the end of the journey. Then:

"Looking back we'll praise the way, Thou hast led, us day by day."

- P. L. Read.

The Authorship and Credibility of the Bible

2 Timothy 3:16

Continuing our study on the Authority and Credibility of the Bible, we now consider other means of verification. Another remarkable means for preserving and verifying the New Testament writings is their copious quotation in other writings. Origen, who wrote in the early part of the third century, quotes 5745 passages from all the books in the New Testament; Tertullian (AD 200) makes more than 3000 quotations from the NT books; Clement (AD 194) quotes 380 passages; Irenaeus (AD 178) quotes 767 passages; Polycarp, who was martyred AD 165, after serving Christ 86 years, quoted 36 passages in a single epistle; Justin Martyr (AD 140) also quotes from the NT. These were all Christian writers; and in addition to these, the Scriptures were largely quoted by heathen and infidel writers, among them Celsus (AD 150) and Porphyry (AD 304). Indeed the entire New Testament, with the exception of about a dozen verses, has been found scattered as quotations through various writings that are still extant. And if every copy of the NT had been destroyed by its enemies, the book could have been reproduced from these quotations contained in the writings of the early Christians and their enemies.

While the means for the preservation of the Scriptures have been thus remarkably complete, and in view of the unparalleled opposition with which they have met give evidence of Divine care in their preservation, the means for their verification, and for arriving at an understanding of them in God's due time, are found to be none the less remarkable. No other book in the world has ever had such attention as this book. The labor that has been spent in the preparation of complete concordances, indexes, various translations, etc., has been enormous; and the results to students of the Bible are of incalculable value. And while we recognize the providence of God in all this, we should and do appreciate these labors of his children and their great service to us, though we utterly repudiate, as useless, the labor that has been spent on many so-called theological writings, which are nothing more than miserable efforts to support the vain traditions of men, the accumulated monstrous volumes of which would indeed form a monument of human folly.

Just in 'The Time of the End,' when the prophet (Daniel 12:9,10) declares that 'the wise (the meek and faithful children of God) shall understand,' we find these wonderful aids coming forward to our assistance. And parallel with these has happened the general spread of intelligence and education and the placing of the Bible in the hands of the people, thus enabling them to use the helps provided.

In view of these things, our only reasonable conclusion must be, that this wonderful book has been completely under Divine supervision in its preparation, and in its gradual and seasonable unfolding to the understanding; and yet it has all been accomplished through human agency. Those who are too careless, or too indifferent, or who permit themselves to be too much engrossed with the cares of this life to give it a studious examination, should not be expected to comprehend its weight of authority, and its full evidence of credibility. We are aware of the fact that in these days when the art of printing has flooded the world with literature of every description, good, bad, and indifferent, one might reasonably reply, We cannot examine everything. Very true, but this book has a claim superior to that of any other book in the world, and no man is as justifiable in laying it upon the shelf, as he would be in doing with the Koran or the Vedas.

The very existence of such a book, animated with such a spirit of justice, wisdom, love and power, and disclosing such good tidings of great joy to all people, having such a history and

authorship, and containing such varied information -- historic, scientific, and moral; and so remarkably preserved for so many centuries, though so violently opposed, is sufficient to awaken at least a suspicion of its value, and to claim the attention and investigation of every reasoning mind. The claims of this book upon our attention are by far superior to those of any other, and these reasonable claims appear on its very surface, while every systematic and properly directed effort at investigation rewards the diligent student with copious and abundant proof, both of its truthfulness and of its value.

THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE.

The Bible claims to be a book written under divine inspiration. The word inspire signifies to breathe in, to infuse, to fill, to inhale -- as to inspire the lungs with air. (See Webster's Dictionary.) Hence, when it is said that certain scriptures, or writings of godly men, were given by inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16), it signifies that those men were in some way, whether through miraculous or natural means, inspired by, or brought under the influence of God; so as to be used by him in speaking or writing such words as he wished to have expressed. The prophets and apostles all claimed such inspiration. Peter says, 'The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the holy Spirit.' -- 2 Peter 1:21 .

Through Moses we have the law of God and the only existing credible history of mankind from the creation of Adam down to his own time, covering a period of about 2500 years. While Moses and the other Bible writers were holy men, inspired with pure motives and holy zeal, and while personal pride, ambition, etc., were no part of their spirit, we learn that Moses was inspired with the knowledge of God's law, both in its great principles and also in the minutiae of its typical ceremonials, by direct revelation from God at Mount Sinai, and of some points of duty at the burning bush at Horeb, etc.

As for his historical writings, Moses was evidently guided of God in the collation and presentation in its present complete and connected form of the history of the world down to his day, which was really in great part the history of his own family back to Adam with an account of the creation doubtless given by God to Adam while he was yet in fellowship in Eden. Nor does a correct handing down of family information, covering a period of over 2300 years, seem impossible, or liable, as it would now be, to have become polluted; for, aside from the fact that it was handed down through the God-fearing family line of Seth, it should be remembered that at that time the bodies, brains and memories of men were not so weak as they are now, and as they have been since the flood; and finally, because the long lives of two men link Adam with the family of Abraham, the family of covenant favor, -- with Isaac, the typical seed of promise. These two men were Methuselah and Shem. Methuselah was over 200 years old when Adam died, and had abundant opportunity, therefore, for information at first hands; and Shem, the son of Noah, lived contemporaneously with Methuselah for 98 years, and with Isaac for 50 years. Thus, these two living, God-fearing men acted as God's historians to communicate his revelations and dealings to the family in whom centered the promises, of which Moses was one of the prospective heirs.

In addition to these facts, we have the statement of Josephus that Methuselah, Noah and Shem, the year before the flood, inscribed the history and discoveries of the world on two monuments of stone and brick which were still standing in Moses' time.

As for the writings of the prophets, their devoted, godly lives attest their sincerity; their lives were spent for God and in the defense of righteousness, and not for gain and worldly honor. And as for proofs that God acted through them and that they merely expressed his messages, as Peter

declares, it is to be found in the fulfillment of their predictions. These we need not enumerate here and now, as they are elaborated in MILLENNIAL DAWN, Volumes I. and II.; and will be further discussed in Vol. III., now in course of preparation.

This brings us to the examination of the inspiration of the New Testament. Of the four gospel narratives and the book of the Acts of the Apostles, which are merely historic narratives, it might with considerable force be argued that no inspiration was necessary. But we must remember that since it was God's will that the important doings and teachings of our Lord and his disciples should be handed down, for the information and guidance of his Church throughout the age, it was necessary that God, even while leaving the writers free to record those truths in their own several styles of expression and arrangement, should nevertheless exercise a supervision of his work. To this end it would appear reasonable that he would cause circumstances, etc., to call to the memory of one or another of them items and details which, otherwise, in so condensed an account of matters so important, would have been overlooked. And this was no less the work of God's spirit, power, or influence than the more noticeable and peculiar manifestations through the prophets.

The Apostle Peter tells us that the prophets of old time often did not understand their own utterances, as they themselves also acknowledge (1 Peter 1:12; Daniel 12:4,8-10); and we should remember that the twelve apostles (Paul taking the place of Judas -- Galatians 1:17; 1 Timothy 2:7) not only filled the office of apostles -- or specially appointed teachers and expounders of the Gospel of the New Covenant -- but they also, especially Peter and Paul and John, filled the office of prophets, and were not only given the spirit of wisdom and understanding by which they were enabled to understand and explain the previously dark prophecies, but in addition to this we believe that they were under the guidance and supervision of the Lord to such an extent that their references to things future from their day, things therefore not then due to be fully understood, were guided, so as to be true to an extent far beyond their comprehension, and such consequently were as really prophetic as the utterances of the old-time prophets. Illustrations of this are to be found in the Revelations of the Apostle John, in Peter's symbolic description of the Day of the Lord (2 Peter 3:10-13), and in numerous references to the same period by Paul also, among which were some things hard to be understood even by Peter (2 Peter 3:16) and only partially then by Paul himself. The latter, however, was permitted to see future things more clearly than others of his time, and to that end he was given special visions and revelations which he was not allowed to make known to others (2 Corinthians 12:1-4), but which, nevertheless, influenced and colored his subsequent teachings and his epistles. And these very items which Peter thought strange of, and called 'hard to be understood,' are the very items which now, in God's due time, for which they were intended, so grandly illuminate not only Peter's prophecies and John's Revelation, but the entire word and plan of God, -- that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished. -- 2 Timothy 3:16,17 .

That the early church considered the writings and teachings of the apostles different from all others, in authority, is manifest from the early arrangement of these writings together and the keeping separate from these, as apocryphal, other good writings of other good men. And yet there were, even in the days of the apostles, ambitious men who taught another gospel and claimed for themselves the honors of special revelations and authority as apostles and teachers of no less authority than the twelve apostles.

And ambitious men of the same sort have from time to time since arisen -- Emanuel Swedenborg and many less able and less notable -- whose claims, if conceded, would not only place them in rank far above Paul, the prince of the apostles, but whose teachings would tend to discredit entirely, as 'old wives' fables,' the whole story of redemption and remission of sins through the

blood of the cross. These would-be apostles, boastful, heady, high-minded, have 'another gospel,' a perversion of the gospel of Christ; and above all they despise and seek to cast discredit upon the words of Paul who so clearly, forcibly and logically lifts up the standard of faith and points to the cross -- the ransom -- as the sure foundation, and who so clearly showed that pseudo-apostles, false apostles, would arise and deceive many.

It not only required an inspiration to write God's plan, but it also requires an inspiration of the Almighty to give an understanding of that revelation; yet this inspiration is of a different sort. When any one has realized himself a sinner, weak, imperfect and condemned, and has accepted of Christ as his Redeemer, and full of love and appreciation has consecrated his heart (his mind, his will) to the Lord, to henceforth please not himself but his Redeemer, -- God has arranged that such a consecration of the natural mind brings a new mind. It opens the way for the holy mind or will of God, expressed through his written word, to be received; and as it is received into such a good, honest, consecrated heart, it in-forms that heart and opens the eyes of the understanding, so that from the new standpoint (God's standpoint) many things wear a very different aspect, and among other things the Scripture teachings, which gradually open up as item after item of the divine plan is fulfilled, and new features of the unfolding plan become due to be understood, and from the new standpoint appreciated and accepted.

Just as with astronomers, the close observation of facts and influences already recognized often leads them to look in certain directions for hitherto undiscovered planets, and they find them, so with the seekers after spiritual truths; the clear appreciation and close study of the known plan lead gradually, step by step, to the discovery of other particulars, hitherto unnoticed, each of which only adds to the beauty and harmony of the truths previously seen. Thus it is that 'The path of the just is a shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.'

Of course the writings of all such as have their wills fully subjected to the mind of God, as revealed in his Word, must be also somewhat inspired by God's spirit, received from his Word by their complete subjection to its leading. The spirit of the truth inspires and controls to a greater or lesser extent not only their pens but their words and thoughts, and even their very looks. Yet such an inspiration, common to all the saints, in proportion to their development, should be critically distinguished from the special and peculiarly guided and guarded inspiration of the twelve apostles, whom God specially appointed to be the teachers of the church, and who have no successors in this office. Only twelve were 'chosen,' and when one of these, Judas, fell from his honorable office, the Lord in due time appointed Paul to the place; and he not only has never recognized others, but clearly indicates that he never will recognize others in that office. -- Revelation 21:14 .

With the death of the Apostles the canon of Scripture closed, because God had there given a full and complete revelation of his plan for man's salvation; though some of it was in a condensed form which has since expanded and is expanding and unfolding and will continue to expand and shine more and more until the perfect day -- the Millennial Day -- has been fully ushered in. Paul expresses this thought clearly when he declares that the Holy Scriptures are able to make wise unto salvation, and that they are sufficient.

As we consider, then, the completeness, harmony, purity and grandeur of the Bible, its age and wonderful preservation through the wreck and storms of six thousand years, it must be admitted to be a most wonderful book; and those who have learned to read it understandingly, who see in it the great plan of the ages, cannot doubt that God was its inspiring Author, as well as its Preserver. Its only parallel is the book of nature by the same great Author.

- *Reprints, pp. 1144-1149.*

The True Mark of Christian Maturity

Part II

"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." - Rom. 13:14.

AS WE have seen in our previous discussion of this subject, if faith is exercised in the exceeding great and precious promises of God, and we are filled with a fervent desire to attain to maturity in Christian experience, there is nothing to prevent our reaching the goal of such attainments. Neither our weakness nor any recognized personal inabilities need to discourage us from the hope of reaching that maturity. Discarding all misconceptions of what constitutes a victorious life, and confining ourselves to what we are so plainly taught in the Scriptures on the subject, it becomes a settled and an effectual conviction that when Paul says, "As many as be perfect, be thus minded," he means that such maturity is to be accepted as a fact of experience.

Having, then, seen, that it should be with us as the Apostle tells us it was with him, we too will desire to "follow after, if that we may apprehend that for which also we are apprehended of Christ Jesus." With this in mind we come to the examination of what is really meant by the words of our text, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ."

It is manifest that this text has in it much more than such admonitions as, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Evident it is, that it means even more than that "He loved me and gave Himself for me." It is a statement by which we are taken beyond all other texts treating on the point of **how** we have been redeemed from sin, made- accepted in Christ, and thereby are in the enjoyment of our privileged "no-condemnation" standing in Christ. All such statements of the Word are antecedent to the one we are now to consider in its own setting. This is unquestionably correct, for the reason that Paul wrote the letter from which our text is taken, "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, **called saints.**" (Rom. 1:7.) The words "to be" in the Authorized Version are no part of the original. The Twentieth Century New Testament gives our text thus: "Arm yourselves with the Spirit of the Lord Jesus"; and Moffatt renders it: "Put on the character of the Lord Jesus Christ." And has not Paul given us his own meaning in saying on another occasion, "Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." - Eph. 4:22-24.

The sum of all the graces is love, for God is love. The sum of all of our knowledge and experience of that love is our being made like God -- made like God in holiness of character. "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty," is the cry that comes from before His throne, and therefore, without holiness no one may see His face. The Christian life is sometimes represented as a life of faith, of service, of devotion to be proven under ordeals of fiery trials, but it is everywhere presented as a life lived in the pursuit of personal holiness. Other truths, however important, are but aids to this greatest of all revealed truth concerning the will of God for His Spirit-begotten children. "Be ye holy, for I am holy," is the word that stands out in preeminent distinction above all others in the Bible. All of the redemptive purposes are set forth and carried out in order that in a perfect holiness His redeemed creatures may approach Him without a Mediator between. Soon, a Church shall stand in His immediate presence, "faultless," and "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," and eventually a redeemed, perfected race "shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads." - Jude 24; Eph. 5:27; Rev. 22:4.

Thinking, then, of putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, let us begin with that most important statement, in which we are given in concise form the primary reason for God's approval of our Lord Jesus. Thus it reads, "Thou hast **loved righteousness, and hated iniquity**; therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." (Heb. 1:9.) There is no forgetting His humiliations, and all His Calvary sufferings, all of which were borne faithfully and meritoriously. This text appearing in both Old and New Testaments, as it does, seems suggestive. It can at least be taken as giving emphasis to the **outstanding character** of all Scripture in its demands, and the Word makes it unmistakably plain that a supreme love of righteousness, and a corresponding hatred of iniquity must characterize all whom He will approve.

What beautiful consistency characterizes all the ways of God. Having in His grace ordained that not the great and wise of earth would be called to joint-heirship with His Son, but that chiefly those considered much less great and wise would be the favored ones, it follows, then, just because consistency marks His operations, that the **supreme** test of character demanded of all such would lie within the reach of all. Due to the varied degrees of mental ability to be found among the called, any other requirement than that made preeminently important by God Himself must in the very nature of things be inconsistent. Many called of God have lacked the power of deep analysis, been incapable of comprehending certain ramifications of primary doctrines, and thereby have been limited to the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus. But without exception, all whom our God has called and added to the Church have clearly understood that to love righteousness for righteousness' sake, and hate all iniquity as God hates it, is the one true primary mark of the faithful follower of the Christ whose worthiness of exaltation was proven, both Old and New Testaments declare, in that He was fervent in His love of righteousness and uncompromising in His attitude toward iniquity.

This, then, is how we are to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." We must be as He was in this respect. - It requires maturity in spiritual understanding to "walk even as He walked" in His attitude toward all iniquity. He hated sin in all its forms. Whether in moral uncleanness, or in hypocritical sham, His was indeed "a pain to feel it near." To walk with Him, then, in the close fellowship required to grow up into Him and have His character formed in us, means our taking on of His antipathy toward all iniquity. It means reaching the place where our greatest joy in present justification is in that glorious truth, "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that **we might be made** the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Cor. 5:21.) Where this is held as the great heart-gladdening truth of the present hour, there will be the deepest sense of joy experienced in the future prospect of awakening in His perfect holiness. And the very best evidence of our sincerity when we say, "I shall be satisfied when I awake in Thy likeness," lies in our present burning desire to be holy.

Attaining Victory Through Christ

There can be no question about the plain teaching of Scripture that ours is to be a victorious life. As it has been well expressed, it is to be an "hourly victorious, daily victorious, and finally victorious" experience. Nowhere does the Bible give any encouragement to the thought that sin is to be eradicated from the flesh of God's children developed under grace. Quite to the contrary. Indeed, the more perfectly understood the Bible teachings on this subject are, the more the fact is borne into the soul, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." Just as the near vision of God caused the Prophet to cry out, "Woe is me! for I am undone," so the clear view of our sin, inbred and incurable as pertaining to our flesh, only serves to reveal that it is not by its eradication, but by the counteraction of an incoming spirit of holiness, that it is kept in subjection. The Lord Jesus was wholly triumphant over sin in all its forms. By the gracious arrangement of God who justifies us from all sin through hiding us in Christ. we are sharers in this triumph of

Jesus, and thus, through faith, we are now reckoned as hourly and daily victorious. A most precious standing is this -no condemnation before the eyes of God. But the same Apostle who confessed his hopelessly corrupt state as pertaining to the flesh, was, nevertheless, the same who declared so victoriously, "I keep under my body, **and bring it into subjection**," thus indicating that though far from believing that sin in the flesh could be eradicated, he did assuredly believe that a victorious control of the flesh was not only possible but in reality essential to a place among those worthy of being rated overcomers.

This attitude on the part of the Apostle Paul would be the only consistent position for him to take in view of the very high attainments to which he urged his converts to aspire. Such attainments we saw held out in the texts presented in the first part of this review of Christian maturity. We refer to such statements as "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." And now let us consider a few of those texts wherein are shown the **degree of victory** to which we should fervently aspire. We will note the requirements first, then find in Christ our help.

We take these few texts as illustrative. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." (Gal. 5:16, 24; Rom. 8:13; 13:14.) It will not be overlooked that none of these Scriptures are negative in tone. All give the same assurance of obtainable results. As suggested, these are given merely as illustrative texts, supplying us with an understanding of the principle operating in all that the Word stipulates as the attainments required of us now. They clearly teach that notwithstanding our position in justification and our being accredited perfect through faith, and notwithstanding our inherent weaknesses according to the flesh, yet for all, **God does expect** us to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and live an overcoming life.

Putting on Christ then, implies, a change in the active desires of the heart. It means reaching that point in experience where we yearn after the grandeur of the Christlike character, where beholding the beauty of the Lord becomes the special delight of the soul. Thus we are changed into His own likeness as clay by day we get clearer and richer views of His glorious character; and to be made a copy of God's dear Son eclipses all other aims.

"Emptied that He Might Fill Me"

In concise language, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" means that we are to become filled with His indwelling power; that power being manifest in our entire deportment, in our life of joy, of peace, of marked affinity for all that is pure and holy, and of a fixed antipathy toward all evil. But to attain this experience it must never be forgotten that it is reached only in one way, and that way is not one of lifting oneself by boot-strap methods. **Christ** in the heart, in the imparted power He gives, is the way. With Christ in the heart, a living, energizing, quickening force, who can question that old things, habits, weaknesses, besetting sins, and fleshly cravings **will pass away**.

Who can dispute the practical operation of the power that raised Christ from the dead, and in the face of numerous texts of Scripture continue to look on "good intentions" as being all that power can be expected to produce in us. What an impractical visionary Paul was if our "good intentions" are to be the acme of victorious overcoming in Christian life. Why would he pray that saints might be "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man," and ask that they may be "filled with all the fulness of God," if the reign of sin within is not to be broken and the power of Christ within result in no real and practical triumph? Surely, to take such a view is to "limit the

holy One of Israel, since "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Faith to believe God can work in us to will and to do His good pleasure.

Let us have the faith to believe that if we yearn after righteousness as a possession of our own, we shall be filled according to promise. Let us pray over and over the prayers of Paul as the fervent petitions of our own intense desires; and as we do this habitually, it will become a fact of our own experience that Jesus does save His people from their sins: that He saves us from the guilt and power of our sins, first, by changing our standing into that of justification, and then by perfecting our **state** in holiness. Thus we put on Christ, grow tip into maturity of stature, and exhibit the distinguishing mark of a true Christian development. By such fruits shall maturing characters be known.

We Seek the Mind of Christ

Though we have been reviewing the subject of Christian maturity in its entirety, there is yet another phase of the matter over which we may profitably concern ourselves here. There is a twofold meaning to the Christian life. It involves both walking before God, and walking among men. Among those very pointed and outspoken statements of the Apostle John we have reminders of this twofold nature of Christian maturity. Harken to his forceful presentations of indisputable facts "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now"; and again, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." (1 John 2:9; 4:20, 8.) Let us not miss the manner by which the Apostle associates love for God and for others in practical every day life. How clearly he teaches us that love is the sum total of the royal law of God, and to love Him with all the powers of the heart, and one's neighbor as oneself, is the only practical evidence of having been properly affected and matured by the grace of God. How practical his appeal is! "Beloved, if God so loved us, we **ought** also to love each other"; and again, "Beloved, we **should** love each other; because love is from God; and every one who loves has been begotten of God, **and knows God.**" - 1 John 4:11, 7.

The Bible tells us that "God is love," and Jesus is the witness that He is indeed. But Jesus is more than the witness of that love; He is the channel of its impartation to all who receive Him as an abiding power in the heart. It is well that we know by the experience of sins forgiven that God is love, and by the witness of the Spirit that His love has taken us into His family circle, but we must also know experimentally that "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts," that is, we are to know an impartation of that love of which God is the sublime and perfect fountain. This, then, will mean that the degree of love required according to the pointed statements of John, **will be acquired**, and in active operation in all who have put on the Lord Jesus Christ. It will mean "the life of Christ manifest in our mortal flesh," as Paul has stated, and it becomes, according to John again, the final proof of our being indwelt by Christ because we dwell in Him. "But," says John, "he who keeps His Word, truly in this man the love of God has been made perfect. **By this we know that we are in Him.**" - 2 Cor. 4:11. 1 John 2:5, Diaglott.

Maturity in the love of God represents the possession of a love reaching out to a more perfect approximating of His love divine, all love excelling. God's love reaches out into wide dimensions. Of it we sing truthfully regarding its wideness like that of the sea. To be a possessor of that love, then, means that in our perfecting measure of it, a measure growing increasingly as we come to know and experience "the knowledge-surpassing love of God," there is a wideness in our mercy, our loving-kindness, and generosity. But this divine love is one complete whole. With us this fact is often overlooked. As illustrating this principle, we have noted that, according to John, we

cannot love God without loving all His children, and conversely; our love for those begotten of Him testifies primarily to the fact that we **do** love God. Carry the principle a little further. If we love God for what He is and have become possessed of His love, then, as "God so loved the world" in pitying love, so we will exhibit a similar attitude of divine sympathy. How forcefully the words of Jesus emphasize this fact when He urges us to be perfect like our Father in heaven, who so graciously sends His "rain on the just and the unjust." This kind of love had its grand and practical exhibition when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on which the blood of martyred prophets was found, and upon which His own rejection would bring- further guilt. Its casting off was merited -- unquestionably so. The justice of its doom was in every way consistent. But what was the attitude of Jesus, the rejected Messiah? Was He vindictive, or happy to know that retribution would come in waves of punishment? Once again the record is, "Jesus wept."

And what means all this to us now? It leaves us face to face with some important questions to answer, each for himself. Some of these are: Have I so received of the love of God that I am loving Him back **with the love** wherewith He loves me? Do I love **all** whom He loves and **as He loves them**? Do I love **my enemies** with the sympathetic love **they receive from God**, loving them until sin and sinner may be proven inseparable. Do I rejoice in a love that will **not let me go**, nor **let my brother go**? Can I look out over a present-day multitude so glad to believe there may be among them a "seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal" and are known to God, and in my heart of love prefer to believe that this is so, rather than shut them away from the tender love of Jesus, though they walk not with me? Have I reached the degree of maturity making me glad to give the fullest possible scope to such unrescinded statements as these? "**He** that hath the Son hath life." "**If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.**" Have **I** attained the degree of spiritual perception by which I take the ground that love is the principle thing, and to have Christ formed within, the one all supreme test of Christian character? If to these questions our life of love, of mature spiritual vision, answers as that answer is found in the character of Jesus, **we have put on the Lord Jesus Christ**, and we bear the true mark of Christian maturity.

- J. J. Blackburn

Precious Promises

*"My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." -
Psalm 73:26.*

WE HAVE been thinking of those dear saints who through old age or other infirmities are prevented from taking an active part in the fellowship and communion they once enjoyed with others of like precious faith-thinking of how much they miss the encouragement and comfort that attended those blessed seasons of fellowship. The realization that quite a large proportion of the friends whom it has been our privilege to meet are in that category, further impelled us to write, in the hope that these thoughts might prove of some help or encouragement to these dear children of God

Because one is denied the blessings and privileges of other days, he is much more apt to feel discouraged. The Adversary, taking advantage of the circumstances, seeks to undermine one's faith, not so much in the Word of God as in the personal application or appropriation of those precious promises of God's Word to himself. In furtherance of his evil designs the Adversary may inject into one's mind thoughts of unworthiness and perhaps cause one to remember those times when opportunities of fellowship were neglected. This slackness is enlarged upon and made to appear a great neglect of God's good grace, adding to feeling of unworthiness. Often some weakness or fleshly tendency is enlarged upon until it looms almost as an impassable barrier between him and "the prize of the high calling" once hoped to be attained.

For these dear friends who are passing through some such phase of discouragement, it is well to remind them that "God knows well our feeble frame," that none of his "little ones" are capable of perfection in thought, word or act. Not even the most active or faithful child of God could ever merit the blessings God designs to give to those that love him. It is only through Christ's precious merit that one could ever hope to attain to so glorious a prize.

Only "in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," can we base our hopes (1 Cor. 1:30). He has promised "never to leave nor forsake us," "even unto the end of the Age," "for having loved his own, he loved them unto the end" (Heb. 13:5; Matt. 28:20; John 13:1). "His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue. Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:3,4). That "ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, *Abba, Father*. The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Rom. 8:15-17; Gal. 3:29). "It is God which worketh in you both to will and do of his good pleasure," and "we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end" (Phil. 2:13; Heb. 3:14). Thus "we know that *all* things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." "According to his abundant mercy he hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (Rom. 8:28; 1 Pet. 1:3-5). Our Lord tells us: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. . . . 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 again at the last day.... every one which seeth the Son, and

believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." So "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (John 6:37-40; Luke 12:32). "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:31-35, 37-39). "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." - 1 Cor. 15:57.

"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. Amen." - Jude 24, 25.

- *H. J. Barlow*

Encouraging Messages

Dear Brethren:

. . . It is good that we heed the Apostle's words of 1 Corinthians 11:1, and also Hebrews 13:7, 8, words which suggest that it is profitable to note the progress made by brethren who, by the grace of God, have reached a higher attainment of Christian development than we have. There are those who manifest this desirable quality of "growth," and their lives are to us an inspiration, and incentive to "higher ground." One welcomes the spoken word, the letter, in which Love is manifestly the motivating principle. And after all, Love is the principal thing.

Sometimes I feel that the desire to understand the symbols and figurative things of the Word may, and does, detract from understanding and practicing the more essential things by which the fulness of the Christian life is to be measured and seen.

It would seem that this is no new thing, and so it were well if the brethren who prefer to discuss and dwell upon the "hard -to be understood" things should concentrate more fully upon the lines which the words of the Master spoke in Matthew 22:37-40, words in which there can be no misunderstanding, no confusion of thought, or no diversity of opinion such as may lead to the disunity of the spirit and the consequent dissension, strife, and separations, all of which "mar the paths" of the sons of God. And so it is, for "the Church has always suffered more from within than from without," and thus has, in a measure, frustrated, or hindered, the grace of God in the perfecting of the saints.

Would that Paul's words of Galatians 2:21 were seen in their potency and power: "I do not frustrate the grace of God." Herein is seen consecration in its depth and purpose. The previous verse reveals how Paul could say that the "fruit of the spirit" is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance: against such there is no law." To Paul, Love was the one all-absorbing theme; hence his great exposition of that divine virtue in 1 Corinthians 13. And so, dear brethren, our prayer might well be: "Lord, create within me a clean heart, a heart in which is no place for guile, no place for anything which could hinder thy Spirit from doing thy will and purpose in and through me." "Teach me how to love thee for thy love"; and likewise, how to love him who, in life and death, revealed to us the all-comprising Love which seeks to magnify thee from day to day.

By so living may there be seen in us, an increasing measure of that of which Jesus speaks in John 15:7-14, Love to the Father and Son for unbounded grace and justification, Love to our brethren, and Love to all mankind. When that quality of Love is ours, we shall strive, not by bickerings and dissensions, not by arguing along unprofitable lines or theories, but rather, we shall strive, as Paul says, "to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace," provoking one another to a larger, a richer, and a fuller life.

As time goes on, the flesh weakens, and we cannot do all that the heart would do. However, if the spirit is willing, this will in no way detract from acceptability. Let us, all who love the Lord, seek to magnify him in labors of love, and "works meet for repentance." "Working together with God." . . . The efforts of our brethren are not without the blessed results which are hoped for by us all. Carry on; to some of us the "day's work is nearly done." The joys of faith are ours; the peace of God which was promised, gives to us a "rest" even now. We have a hope which envisions a glory and a service far beyond our thought. We have a faith which sees and accepts the never-failing

promises of a promise keeping God. We have the promise of the spirit, by which we have the assurance that we are "the sons of God"! What else matters? Soon our hopes will be changed to actual possessions. Even now, in a measure, we "possess all things." (2 Cor. 6:10.) May we all continue "in the faith," "looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith."

"My beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." With love to you all from the brethren here, I am, by grace,
Your brother in the Lord,
W W. -- B. C.

Dear friends:

Having been so richly blessed and fed sumptuously with the food served us through the articles in the "Herald," and having read for the third time the article written by Brother Holmes, "He is Precious," I just had to stop and tell you how grateful I am that you are sending me the journal here where I spend my days. Every article in these issues is superb rich indeed is the deep water of truth in the Word of God. Each time I go over that article, "He is Precious," I feel I have been brought nearer to our heavenly Home, and there is a longing in my heart to be submissive to the, chiseling necessary to be one of the living stones that is in process of preparation for Jehovah's dwelling place . . .

I just had to write and tell you how very grateful I am to God and to . . . all the dear shepherds who feed us with "Truths deeper values." May the strength gained from its daily use be the means of assisting us to make our calling and election sure is the sincere prayer of my heart.

With love and many thanks,
Yours as always by Grace Divine,
H. B. -- Mass.

Dear Brethren:

I have finished reading Vol. I of Revelation, and never enjoyed a book so much. It is wonderful. I could wish and pray every one would read it. I would like to read Vol. II and will finish reading it as soon as I can, so some one else can have it.

I would also like to have a price list of Bibles, something with a large print. I have friends who would appreciate one, and I and to make some gifts. . . .

I am still waiting for a visit from one of the Pilgrim brethren, and hope one comes soon -- God willing.

Where is the nearest Class of Bible Students from here? ...

Thanking you in the name of the Lord, I remain,
Yours in the love of him,
M. A. D. -- Ariz.

Dear friends:

Greetings in the name of our dear Lord.... I believe you will be interested in a recent experience. In February of this year, I think it was, that I was in the market buying groceries. I noticed an elderly lady who was having difficulty in reading the prices of articles on the shelves, so I helped her a little to find the things she wanted. She was most grateful and thanked me kindly, saying she wished I lived near her and could I visit her. I asked her if she liked to read the Bible, and her face beamed as she answered, Oh! yes, more than anything else. So I gave her some leaflets from the "Herald" office which I had in my purse. Then a few days later I had a card from the office at Prospect Place asking that some one call of a lady . . . who had written for literature. It came to my mind the name was the same as the lady I had given the leaflets to in the market, and sure enough when I called on her, I found she was the same. I hadn't given her my name or address. She was overjoyed *in* seeing me, and said .she had been praying the Lord *would* send me to her. She had already been letting her light shine, and had given the Vol. I, The Divine Plan, you had sent her to a minister (before she had finished reading), and he was reluctant to return it. So I called again to take her a Vol. I, which *she* read twice through, and needs to use a magnifying glass to see to read.

I, have called several times, as she doesn't live too far from Where I am, and each time I have found her greatly rejoicing in what she says is "this light that" has come to me." I have taken her reading matter I thought would continue to interest her. She is 89 years old.... It is marvelous what clear mind *she* has at her age. She is really interesting to talk with and I think a truly consecrated person. She has been dissatisfied with the teachings and worldliness of the churches for some time, and no doubt ready for more light. I have given her some copies of the "Herald," and I think she would greatly appreciate a three months trial subscription, if you will please send it to her

The Lord, does work in his own wise way his wonders to perform, and I am very thankful for the small part he has permitted me to have in bringing the light to this dear soul, and I thank you for sending her name to me. I trust I have been faithful in this opportunity to serve, and I will continue to help her in any way I can to grow in the knowledge of God's wonderful Plan of salvation. She does have a love for what she has discerned

I am about out of leaflets to hand out *on* opportunity. Would you please send me some of each *you* have.

My Christian love and best wishes for a pleasant year of joyful service in his cause, and may we all finish our course *with* joy.

Your sister in Christ,
D. E. A. -- Colo.

Recently Deceased

Sister V. Davis,, Binghamton, N. Y. - (August)
Sister Emma Hurni, Neuchatel, Switzerland - (July)
Sister Nettie Jensen, Dallas, Texas - (Sept.)
Sister Alva V. Molin, Venice, Calif. - (Sept.)