

THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

VOL. XXXIX August / September, 1956 Nos. 8-9

Discipline

"He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." - Job 23:10.

IN CONTRAST to the Word of God, containing instructions designed for all, the Lord's providences in our lives may be considered as *personal* instructions, intended to fit and educate each one for his or her respective place in the Kingdom and a special sphere of usefulness therein.

A generation or two ago, before military training became so common an experience among our young people, the plans of parents for a son who was not inclined to exert himself, to apply himself to his studies, etc., was to send him to a military academy where it was believed the "discipline" of regular hours, required application to the school program, and obedience, would be "good for him." This seems to fairly illustrate the objective in God's providence for his sons, which includes so large an amount of discipline. Discipline, therefore, is an intimate subject; it, has to do with the *private* life of every child of God. With these, in addition to their continuing effort to exercise, and live in accord with, their highest ideals, some assistance from a higher and wiser Source is necessary; and all such have endured and profited from discipline they would not have been wise enough to choose for themselves experiences in the harsher and harder aspects of human life.

In the Book of Job (Job 33) Elihu, whose name means "My God is he," points out that one of God's methods has been to "chasten" one upon a bed of illness, and then to send a messenger with a message for the disciplined one; thus having prepared the way and assured an attentive reception of his instruction. Elihu declares in this chapter that God's purpose is thus to (1) "open the ear"; to (2) "hide pride from man"; and the grand over-all objective, that he may be "enlightened with the light of life." (See also Job 36:8-10.) The words "disciple" and "discipline" are from the same root; meaning "to learn." And it has been well said that "there is no school in which men learn so much, or so fast, as in the school of suffering; there is no experience by which the soul is so purged and chastened as by the experience of pain and loss. The divine rebuke (and sometimes by merely mental pain and regret) is as the plowing up of the hardened and weed-stained soil that it may bring forth more and better fruit." How true!

We may say that the most important contribution of Elihu's discourse is, "that suffering is intended by God as a quickening and loving discipline in righteousness, rather than as an angry or vindictive punishment: that though adversity be like the period of the former and latter rain-cold, comfortless and unfriendly to man-yet from that season have their birth, the flower and the fruit, the date, the rose, the pomegranate"-and that in this manner of instruction God's purpose is to give the "light of life."

Chastening, or discipline, is by a poet compared to a trumpet: "I do but bring a trumpet to awake their ears; to set their sense on the attentive *bent-and then to speak!*" How important that we remember this. Looking over the history of God's servants in all ages, Job, Abraham, Joseph, David, Jeremiah, Daniel, Peter, Paul, and many others, we see that chastening, discipline, proving, have been their common experience: "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth." (Prov. 3:11, 12; Heb. 12:5, 6; Rev. 3:19.) In fact, if we should escape such discipline our relationship as sons would be in question, since all sons and faithful servants have experienced that "trumpet to awake their ears; to set their sense upon the attentive bent"-and have responded to it.

GOD PLANNED DISCIPLINE

Looking back to the dawn of creation, we see a glorious being, the Logos: perfect, powerful, devoted, faithful. Of him we read that "without him was not anything made that was made," that his association was so close and intimate that he dwelt, metaphorically, "in the bosom of the Father." Yet, we are told that before the creation of the earth and its inhabitants, the Father's -- conception of a still greater glory for the Logos required that he lay aside his glorious spirit nature and take the human nature, and become the Babe of Bethlehem. And further, that he become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. It required, and was so foretold by the Prophet, that he take a course which would lead to his rejection by his own nation; that he would be "despised, rejected, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"; that finally he would be "led as a lamb to the slaughter." And why, do we ask? The answer is given by the Apostle Paul, that he might be "made perfect by the things which he suffered." He was always perfect; we have Jesus' word for it that he did always those things which pleased his Father; but now he was to have a further and different "perfection"; an experience in the doing of his Father's will at the cost of suffering and death; a perfection which would make it possible for that Father, the very embodiment of love, to exalt that devoted Son "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world [age], but also in that which is to come." Thus-and evidently only thus-through this severe discipline of his beloved Son was it possible to prepare him to restore the alienated, dying race of Adam, and repentant angels; and also "that in him should all fulness dwell" -- "all the fulness, of the Deity bodily." - Eph. 1:21; Col. 1:20; 2:9.

Back there, too, his followers were "predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren." These, too, "were chosen in him before the foundation of the world," to be just like Jesus in character and devotion to the Father's will; to be his "members," the "church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." And these, too, were to be of "the poor of this world, rich in faith"; to be "wrought [developed] in the lowest parts of the earth"; to "suffer with him, to be dead with him" -- in short, to be *disciplined* as their Head. And back there, too, God's conception of glory for mankind, his human sons, included 7,000 years of discipline -- 6,000 of which was to be a "sore travail *given* to the sons of man to be *exercised* therewith." - Eccl. 1:13.

Here we have the key to the age-old mystery, Why were Sin and Death permitted? And the thought is tremendous in its implications: Suffering and Death not merely, nor primarily, a

Penalty; but *Discipline* from which all the willing and obedient of our race will reap enormous benefit; character qualities and experience, theirs for eternity, possessed only by those who have come into personal contact with evil in its multitude of hateful forms and effects, and who by the grace of God through his devoted Son, have been restored to sinless perfection. Thus Sin and Death, the horrors of 6,000 years past, were but Discipline, an enormous "trumpet," and with an assured result: "The creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." - Rom. 8:21.

And how else could the nobler qualities of which Man, in God's "image and likeness" is capable, be developed? How could we know patience without provocation? How gain fortitude without longsuffering? Strength of character without pressure and burdens? Meekness without experience and imposition and injustice? How gain the most glorious of all virtues, sympathy and love, without opportunity to exercise them in the presence of want, sorrow, distress, and need? Well may we rejoice in the Wisdom that planned the curriculum, and the Power that sustains His obedient children in this great School of Experience, the Divine University; and though it mean for each of us much of suffering, loss, hardship, disappointment, let us hold fast our confidence that this method of instruction is that of "the only wise God, our Savior." - 1 Tim. 1:17; Titus 3:4.

JOB AN OUTSTANDING ILLUSTRATION

Among others in the Old Testament, Job is an impressive example of God's methods of instruction, and we find many lessons there for us. We are directed to consideration of his experiences in James 5:11: "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." Job was a man of great wealth, a godly man,

and is supposed to have lived about the time of Abraham. The Book of Job is said to be a poem of great beauty; and it has been suggested that in the opening chapters, the conversations between Jehovah and Satan should be considered as an allegory rather than historical fact. In this section God inquires of Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil?" Satan's reply is, "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land."

The foregoing is worthy of special note: God's high commendation of his servant Job; Satan's testimony that Job's welfare was securely protected and none could reach him to do him injury unless permitted to do so by the Almighty. From this the narrative proceeds, relating that by God's permission Job was permitted to suffer great misfortune: Oxen stolen, sheep destroyed by a storm, camels stolen, his seven sons and three daughters killed by a great windstorm. Reduced to poverty and bereft of all his children, Job's faith stood the test, and we have his testimony in Job 1:20-22: "Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and *worshipped*. And said,... the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."

But Job's afflictions did not end there, in fact the loss of family and wealth were but the beginning. Again Satan defames Job, saying that "all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thy hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face." Again God gives permission for Satan to test Job by physical disease of the most distressing character. The "boils" mentioned are supposed by some students to have been a general term, and that from the description of his disease by Job himself he may have been suffering from

elephantiasis, or leprosy, or possibly both. In any case we are told that Job's faith again stood the test, and in reply to his wife's advice that he was evidently accursed of God, and might as well die, he again gave a loyal testimony recorded in Job 2:10: "But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips."

Job's three friends came to "comfort" him, and undertook to expound their philosophy, presumptuously attributing it to God, to the effect that Job must be suffering for great sin which he had hypocritically concealed under the guise of piety; that if he were indeed a godly man, this wreck of all his possessions and hopes would not have come upon him. Job responds by assuring them repeatedly of his integrity; that to the best of his knowledge and ability he had been a faithful servant of God. This colloquy between Job and his three "friends" constitutes the greater part of the book.

At the conclusion of their discussion, a younger man, Elihu, who was probably among others present and listening to the conversation, interposes and offers some advice and reproof both to the three friends and also to Job, and advances some profound thoughts which he also ascribes to God. Following this discourse by Elihu, the final chapters of Job relate how God spoke to Job out of a whirlwind, reproving and instructing him; Job's humble acceptance of the reproof, and acknowledgment that he now realizes that he is not wise enough to know what is necessary for his development; God's displeasure with the three friends, sending them to Job with instructions that they must offer sacrifice and ask Job to pray for them, and only thus can they be forgiven for their temerity in attempting to speak for God but in so doing really misrepresenting him. Still suffering from his loathsome disease, Job yet has so much sympathy for these "miserable comforters" -- as he has described them -- in that *they are* now actually exposed to the wrath of God, that he does pray for them. And when this final test of Job's disposition and character has been successfully passed, the narrative ends with the restoration of Job to health, and again the father of seven sons and three daughters and twice as much property as he had originally possessed.

(To be concluded in the October issue)

- W. J. Hollister

Conscience Its Use and Abuse

"The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith." - 1 Timothy 1:5. RSV

THE USUAL definitions of the word conscience agree that it is "the power or faculty which distinguishes between right and wrong or between good and evil." It is also defined as "the moral sense, which urges one to right conduct, in accordance with his own conception of what is right." The last clause of the second definition suggests that if a person is not properly instructed concerning right and wrong, and follows the dictates of his conscience, he may do the wrong thing, which may be displeasing to God and injurious to himself and to his neighbor.

A striking example of this was Saul of Tarsus, who later became the very zealous and faithful Apostle Paul. By his birth he was a Jew, a member of one of the three sects of Judaism, called the

Pharisees, His teacher was a celebrated Rabbi of the same sect. After St. Paul's conversion and call to be an apostle of Christ, he repeatedly states that he had been a zealous and bitter persecutor of the true followers of the Lord. And this he did "in all good conscience before God" - Acts 24:1.

His conscience was, what might be termed, a Jewish conscience, misguided and misdirected by the apostate clergy of Jesus' day. The inspired apostles explain that many wrong and injurious things, including the persecution and crucifixion of our Lord, were done in ignorance (Acts 3:17). The Apostle states that many of the religious Jews, including Saul of Tarsus, possessed a large measure of "zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness." - Romans 10:2, 3.

The heathen, whom the Bible designates as Gentiles, have a conscience also, and some of them put it to good use. In Romans 2:14, 15, we read: "When Gentiles who have no law, obey by instinct the commands of the law, they, without having a law, are a law to themselves; since they exhibit engraved on their hearts the action of the Law, while their conscience at the same time bears witness to the Law, and their moral judgments alternately accuse or perhaps defend them." This same divine Law was originally written or engraved in the heart of the perfect man Adam.

The world in general has been on the broad way, which leads to destruction, for over six thousand years, and for this reason the conscience of a worldly person has become dull, distorted, and almost obliterated. In some of the fallen race, whom we call the "conscienceless" or the unscrupulous, the "urge to right conduct" or the "voice of conscience" is very faint, and the will to obey that urge or "voice" is very weak. Some have listened to the feeble voice of this moral sense for many years, before compelling themselves to obey its dictates.

However, such disobedience or trifling with the conscience is very dangerous. Our conscience is a God-given monitor, that will warn and guard us from sin. The Scriptures inform us that we live in an evil world, where unrighteousness and sin is prevalent, "easily besetting." There is great danger of our becoming accustomed to sinful practices when they are widespread. Let us each be on guard to keep our consciences very tender in this "evil day."

ILLUSTRATIONS OF CONSCIENCE

The stores, banks, loan offices, and other institutions of towns and cities are protected at night by burglar-alarms, which might fitly illustrate our consciences. Suppose that the alarm was set off by an intruder, but that the owner or the custodian did not heed the alarm; the intruder would be given an opportunity to accomplish his purpose. Similarly, in the matter of conscience, its violation means peril to us. Every violation of this God-given *moral sense* means an injury and tends to destroy our character. Moreover, whoever violates conscience repeatedly by refusing to correct wrongs already done, thereby undermines his conscience.

Brother Russell likened the conscience to a scale, by which we weigh the various things or problems that confront us. We are invited to use our reasoning power, our best judgment, or to exercise the "spirit of a sound mind," to ascertain the difference between right and wrong, between justice and injustice, between truth and falsehood. This scale may be corroded, worn, and improperly adjusted, or it may be in very fine condition, capable of very fine discrimination. Similarly the conscience of a true Christian should be just and very sensitive.

CONSCIENCES REQUIRE REGULATING

The inspired Apostle says: "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man" (Acts 24:16). Commenting on this, Brother Russell says:

"Our consciences require regulating, as do all the other features of our fallen nature. If our consciences are to be regulated we must have some standard by which to set and regulate them. The conscience is like a watch whose dial is properly marked with the hours, but whose correctness as a timekeeper depends upon the proper regulating of its mainspring, so that it may point out the hours truthfully; so our consciences are ready to indicate right and wrong to us, but they can only be 'relied upon to tell us truly what is right and what is wrong after being regulated in connection with the new mainspring, the new heart, the pure will, brought into full harmony with the law of love, as presented to us in the Word of God.'" - Reprints, p. R2735.

In Hebrews 9:13, 14, we read: "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." In this text reference is made to the Atonement Day sacrifices, which had temporary purging effect upon the Godfearing Jews; but the precious blood of Christ is able to "cleans us from all sin." To us is given this gracious invitation: "Having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." - Hebrews 10:21, 22.

A very helpful comment on the text last quoted is found in Reprints, page R5425. We quote:

"There are definite conditions specified in the Word as necessary to continued progress along this line. As we cannot draw close to the Lord except through this full assurance, neither can we have the assurance unless our hearts are kept 'sprinkled from an evil conscience,' or a consciousness of evil; for, as the Apostle also declares, 'If our own heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things' (1 John 3:20). We may be sure that if our course, as new creatures in Christ, is condemned by our own conscience it would also be condemned by God.

"Therefore, if the child of God would draw very near, and would have the blessed realization of the Father's smile of approval continually, he must seek to have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men—a conscience which can truthfully say, I am striving to do that which would be pleasing to the Lord, that which is in full harmony with my covenant of sacrifice; and I am striving also to do that which would justly have the approval of righteous men. Nothing short of this is at all permissible in those who have consecrated themselves to be members of the royal priesthood, to sacrifice their lives in the Lord's service that they may reign with him."

- *J. R. Muzikant*

Recent Developments in Israel

OUR readers will recall that, in 1953, one of our Directors had the opportunity of visiting Europe and the Holy Land, and reported some of his observations in these pages.* Brother Lanowick, well known to our readers as the editor of "Jews in the News", reports that he has had good success in relating "The Divine Plan" to his illustrated lectures, several hundred copies of that inspiring volume having been distributed by him. Now comes the current issue of "The American Hebrew Christian", (the quarterly organ of the Hebrew Christian Alliance of America) in which the Rev. Fred G. Kendal brings us up to date on "Happenings in Israel", in an article under that caption. We quote:

"A recent issue of the *Hadassah Newsletter* reports on a transformation which has occurred in Israel during the eight years of existence of the nation which has come alive nationally. The writer tells of the change of landscape which can be seen on the road from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Whereas before there were only three or four isolated villages, now dozens of new settlements dot the landscape. The program of building 500 villages in the land is truly being implemented. The Huleh marshes have been drained and cultivated and the arid countryside has been changed into miles of lush green fields.

* Write for free copy of 32-page booklet "The Place of Israel in the Plan of God".

"It was only a few years ago that the Israel housewife could only buy austerity rations. Today, Israel produces enough vegetables, fruit and dairy products to feed its growing population.

"It is the expectation of industrialists that the time will come when the textile mills will produce so much that they will no longer need to import cotton. Israel's peanut crops have found receptive markets in Europe; subtropical fruit trees are also being cultivated.

"Factories are springing up, especially in the Haifa Bay area, and Israel's shops are filled with locally made consumer goods which amaze visitors who recall the bare shelves of a few years ago.

"The most significant economic development during the past years was the discovery of oil. This source of supply is developing so rapidly that oil geologists predict that in a few years Israel will be independent of imported oil. Israeli citrus has recaptured the European market it had before World War II. Diamond polishing has also become an important dollar earner.

"The present political uncertainty in neighboring Arab countries keeps Israel's natural markets on her border closed, and she must look further afield for avenues of trade. Those of us who know the Scriptures realize that what has happened is only a foretaste of the time when the curse is removed and the blessing of the Holy One of Israel will be poured out on the land. 'Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.' - Amos 9:13-15.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IN ISRAEL

"An article in *Israel Speaks* magazine tells of the strife which keeps erupting in the Holy Land over the Sabbath Day question. . . . These differences have come before the government and caused serious problems in maintaining the peace in a land already strife-ridden ...

"More serious ... is the persecution which is being inflicted on believers on Messiah Jesus. Hebrew Christians are losing employment; they are being denied access to living quarters, and in every way life is being made untenable for them.

"Jewish people who have been guilty of nothing worse than asserting their rights as individuals to exercise religious liberty are being denied these privileges and treated as sub-humans. It is strangely inconsistent for our people to be pleading for justice from the nations of the world and to be protesting against racial prejudice in every, land, while they themselves deny justice to their own and exercise religious prejudice"

Half Hour Meditations on Romans

No. 15

For therein [in the Gospel] is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith. -- Rom. 1:17

IN OUR last meditation we noted that the fundamental theme of our Epistle is concisely stated in the text above quoted and that it may be best appreciated by those who study it in the light of the Apostles personal experience. We recalled the fact that "St. Paul had, on the lines of his Pharisaic education in the first half of his life, zealously sought to be justified by works and had found out his mistake." Remembering this, we were prepared to find that "his" Gospel has to do with another method of securing justification. This other method, which he presents in striking contrast to the "works of the law," he declares to have originated with God and to be available to all on the one condition of faith.

Righteousness of God

Let us now examine the text in more detail. In verse sixteen he has said that the Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Now he is concerned to explain how this power operates.

Such is the object of Rom. 1:17. It does so by making known to the believer, by *revealing* to him, a righteousness that has God for its author. The reader will observe that we are here interpreting the phrase "righteousness of God" to mean righteousness which has God for its author. While it is true that the expression "righteousness of God" does in some places denote an attribute of God (e. g. Rom. 3:5, 26), it cannot do so here. The righteousness of God here mentioned is stated to be revealed in the Gospel. The word translated *revealed* denotes "the act whereby a thing hitherto veiled now bursts into the light." Now the fact that God is righteous came to light, or was revealed, not in the Gospel but long before; while it would be true to say that this attribute of God *may be seen* in the Gospel, it would not be exact to say that it was *revealed* there.

Furthermore, it should not be overlooked that the Apostle offers the fact that the Gospel reveals the righteousness of God as a sufficient explanation of his previous statement that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Now even if it were true that righteousness, considered as an attribute of God, is revealed in the Gospel (which we have shown is not the case), such a revelation would constitute no explanation of how the Gospel operates unto the believers salvation. But when to one who is hungering and thirsting after righteousness there is revealed in the Gospel (not an attribute of God, but) a way whereby he may himself become righteous, such a message laid hold of by faith proves to be the mighty energy of God operating unto that ones salvation. The same expression is used for a righteousness the Apostle desired to person ally secure in the stead of the righteousness (?) that he otherwise possessed: "Yea doubtless, I count all things but loss that I may win Christ and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, *the righteousness which is of God by faith*" (Phil. 3:9; so also in Rom. 10:3; 2 Cor. 5:21).

"In these passages righteousness of God is a state in which Gods approval is enjoyed and is Gods gift to them that believe. And these passages are so similar in thought to the words before us and this sense agrees so well with the context that we accept it here. The Jews had long sought conformity to Gods will and the rewards of his favor by attempts to keep the Mosaic law, which

says Do this and live. In the Gospel, God proclaims a new law [the law of faith, Rom. 3:27] Believe and live. By this proclamation he bestows righteousness as a gift [the gift of righteousness, Rom. 5:17] apart from all human effort upon all that believe. Believers conform to the new law and have therefore the approbation of the Judge. They have a righteousness of God or a righteousness from God."

From Faith

The words "from faith" have been interpreted in various ways. Most frequently they have been associated with the words "to faith" that follow, thus making the phrase "from faith to faith." This phrase has been thought to signify the idea of progress that takes place in faith itself. Indeed with this sense in mind the Greek has been actually translated "from faith on to faith." "This progress has been applied by some of the early Christian Fathers to the transition from faith in the Old Testament to faith as it exists in the New. But there is nothing here to indicate a comparison between the old and the new dispensations. The Reformers have taken the progress of faith to be in the heart of the individual believer. His faith, weak at first, grows stronger and stronger."

That the believers faith does actually progress in this way there can be no question in the mind of an experienced Christian, but "this idea is utterly out of place in the context. A notion so special and secondary as that of the progress which takes place in faith is inappropriate in a summary which admits only of the fundamental ideas being indicated. It would even be opposed to the Apostles aim to connect the attainment of righteousness with this objective progress of the believer in faith." Now the Greek word here translated "from" (strictly "out of"), rendered in the Diaglott by means of the preposition "by," expresses origin and can refer only to the righteousness previously mentioned. Such righteousness is from, out of, by, originates in faith.

We submit, therefore, that the Apostles thought may be best understood by sub joining the words "from faith" to the phrase "righteousness of God." With this change the text would read: "For therein is the righteousness of God from faith revealed to faith." By the complete expression "righteousness of God from faith" thus obtained, we understand the Apostle to mean that in the Gospel there is revealed a gift of righteousness, which righteousness has its origin in faith, and that this gift is of God. We are led to this sense also by the parallel expression to which we have already referred: "The righteousness which is of God *by faith*" (Phil. 3:9), as well as "The righteousness of God which is *by faith*" (Rom. 3:22).

Therein Is Revealed . . . to Faith

We have seen that the Apostle well understands that the first essential to salvation must be a righteousness that may be possible for man to secure as a gift. He has found from the fruitless years spent prior to his conversion in an effort to establish his own righteousness, and knowing also that salvation is not to be secured apart from righteousness, that to merit same is an impossibility. We have seen too that this greatly needed gift of a faith righteousness, or a righteousness by faith, he declares to be revealed in the Gospel. Yet he does not say that it is revealed in the Gospel to all. It is revealed only to *faith* :to every one who exercises faith. It is interesting and significant to notice in this connection that the Greek word translated "revealed" is in the present tense: "Therein is being revealed." It was revealed to some at the time the Gospel was first preached. The Gospel has been continuously revealing the gift to others since. It is by the proclamation of the Gospel that the gift of a faith righteousness is daily being revealed *to faith*: to believers. To those who hear the Gospel and who believe it not there is no revelation of the gift. It is still veiled to them.

In this connection it is not difficult to identify the spirit that was upon Isaiah with the spirit that controlled St. Paul's ministry when we see the former moved to prophetically inquire, "Who hath *believed* our report (Isa. 53:1). Many heard the Apostles preaching but not all who heard believed. "To whom is the arm of the Lord *revealed* "? the Prophet inquired further. The Apostle declares that the arm of the Lord stretched out to accomplish their salvation is revealed in the Gospel *to faith*, to believers. "But if indeed our glad tidings be veiled, they have been veiled to those who are perishing" (2 Cor. 4:3, Diaglott).

How Does Faith Come?

In Rom. 10:14 the Apostle inquires: "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" Here the purpose of his question is undoubtedly to make the impression that they could do neither and to clearly show that after the facts of the Gospel exist the order is *preaching, hearing, believing*. Then in that well known seventeenth verse he sums up the matter: "So then, *faith cometh by hearing*, and hearing by the word of God." In our Lord's prayer to his Father he said: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall *believe on me through their word*" (John 17:20).

Observe, he prayed for them who should believe on him through the words of the Apostles; and as he required them to preach the Gospel, the people were expected to *believe* in him *by hearing* the Gospel the Apostles were required to preach. In keeping with this arrangement, Peter preached to the Pentecostians and "when they *heard* this they were pricked in their heart" (Acts 2:37). *So their faith came by hearing*.

The faith of the Gentiles came in the same way, for Peter said, "Brethren ye know that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth *should hear* the word of the Gospel, *and believe*" (Acts 15:7). Luke further tells us that "many of the Corinthians *hearing believed*" (Acts 18:8). "It came to pass in Iconium, that they [Paul and Barnabas] went together into the synagogue of the Jews, and *so spake*, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks *believed*" (Acts 14:1).

Is Faith the Gift of God?

Many well meaning Christians who recognize the force of the scriptures mentioned in the preceding paragraph hesitate to accept them in the sense suggested for the reason that this view of faith seems to them to teach that the man who exercises faith does thereby in some way merit salvation, at least in part.

They reason that if the testimony only is of God and the belief of that testimony is of man and this results in his salvation, it would appear that his salvation under such circumstances could not be entirely of God's grace. Man himself has contributed some thing.

He has contributed faith and thereby partly earned the salvation brought him. But a man may be said to be maintained by his hands and nourished by his mouth when in reality it is his food and drink which sustains him. So the Gospel, yea Christ the sum and substance of that Gospel, is our food and drink and is received by faith, the "hand of the heart." Faith has absolutely nothing to do with earning the gift of God, the water and bread of God; it has all to do with taking it.

One very much misunderstood text respecting faith is found in Ephesians: "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). Is faith the thing here said to be the gift of God? No! What is here said to be the gift of God is salvation. "The erroneous

thought given by many is that faith is not our own faith, nor of our own volition, but an impartation, a gift from God. Of course in one sense every gift and blessing we enjoy is indirectly if not directly from God; Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights (James 1:17).

But we believe the proper understanding of the Apostles words is this: It is of Gods grace and not of personal merit on our part that salvation is offered to us. Although that salvation is offered to us as a *reward of faith* (including true faiths obedience) yet we can not even boast respecting our faith as though it merited the Lords favor, for our faith is the indirect result of Divine providence also. There are millions of others in the world who might exercise just as much faith as we if they had been favored of God with as much light, intelligence, knowledge as a basis of faith. Hence, our faith is not to be credited as a meritorious condition but we are to be thankful to God for it, for the circumstances and conditions that have made it possible for us to exercise faith are of his grace."

-- P. L. Read

Scriptural Perfection

"The God of all grace, who bath called us to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." - 1 Pet. 5:10; Matt. 5:48.

The above passages, in common with numerous others in the Scriptures of like import, bring to our attention not only the possibility and privilege, but the duty and necessity of being perfect. However, just what this called-for "perfection" is, and when and how it should be attained, is a matter of doubt and difference of opinion amongst the Lord's people. Let us, then, consider the matter from three angles:

- (1) When is this perfection to be attained?
- (2) What is this perfection which we are exhorted to attain?
- (3) How is this perfection to be attained?

I. WHEN IS THIS PERFECTION TO BE ATTAINED?

Logically, it might be expected that we should first define this perfection, and then consider the question of *when* it should be attained; on the other hand, the determination from the Scriptures of the *time will* assist us to define its nature.

Many, if asked *when* they anticipate attaining perfection, would answer, "In the resurrection,"-contemplating some great change then occurring affecting apparently their character as well as their organism. In such case, no real effort towards attaining perfection may be expected in this present life, inasmuch as psychologists tell us that it is a law of the human mind that no one can seriously and continuously strive after that which he believes to be inherently impossible of achievement. To illustrate: The successful ascent of Mt. Everest was accomplished by men who were convinced, despite many preliminary failures, that it could be done; and it was this conviction that repeatedly spurred them on. But no one convinced that the task was impossible of

achievement would have even contemplated the project, let alone expend time, money, and even life itself, in its pursuit. In consequence, there are many who year after year make no serious effort to attain perfection, despite the frequent admonitions of the Scriptures to this end.

But others will reply, "Certainly perfection is attainable here and now, and, they add, I have already attained it. I do not, cannot, sin. I am perfect, as the Scriptures exhort us to be." One sister of the writer's acquaintance carried this thought into the physical realm and claimed that she was not subject to sickness. When one or other of the brethren in the class fell ill, such received scant sympathy from her and she implied that they must have failed in some respect. During that period her husband had an uncomfortable time and did not appreciate his wife's "perfection." But following a car accident, the sister had a long spell of illness, in the course of which she realized that she had been trying to express a Scriptural truth but from a wrong angle.

That scriptural perfection is attainable in this present life is indicated by the quotations at the head of this article, as well as many others, such as Col. 4:12, incidentally recording one of the most concise yet all-embracing prayers of the Bible. In Phil. 3:12, 15, we have a double thought, viz., of a perfection still beckoning us forward whilst in a measure attained; not a definite and limited ideal to be attained once and for all, but in itself perhaps immeasurable.

II. WHAT IS THIS ATTAINABLE PERFECTION?

To answer this question it will help us, first of all, to consider what it *is not*.

(a) It is not *perfection in the flesh*. As one writer has expressed it, "Sin is *in* us but not *on* us. The old nature is unchanged and unchangeable. Christ is not the teacher of the *old* nature but of the *new*." As the Apostle states in Rom. 7:18, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) there dwelleth no good thing"; and again in Rom. 8:8, "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." As the prophet Jeremiah declared long before (Jer. 17:9), "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked."

(b) Again, it is not *perfection by works of law*. The writer to the Hebrews states (Heb. 7:19) "The law made nothing perfect"; and again (Heb. 10:1) , "the law ... can never with those sacrifices which they offer year by year continually, make the comers thereto perfect." In Gal. 3:11, 12 the Apostle Paul states, "That no man is justified by the law in the sight of God it is evident: for 'The just shall live by faith'. And the law is not of faith: but, 'The man that doeth them shall live in them.' And in Gal. 3:19 he asks the pertinent question: "Wherefore, then, serveth the law?" and replies, "It was added because of transgressions till the seed should come to whom the promise was made."

What purpose did the law serve in respect of transgressions? By the law came the knowledge of sin, as Paul again says: "I had not known sin but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." The law was the Divine measuring rod of a perfect man and his walk. There have been certain army regiments in regard to which a specified standard of height was required of recruits. When one presented himself for enlistment in such a regiment, the first thing to be done was to measure him by the standard and if he fell short, he was promptly rejected. Such standard, of course, could not add anything to his stature; it merely revealed what his height was and formed the basis of his rejection. Similarly, Israel for over fourteen centuries were measured by that Divine Law which they had accepted at Mt. Sinai, and all, without exception during that period, were proved to fall short, as Paul declares (Rom. 3:23), "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

All, that is to say, until there came one "made of a woman, made under the law" who fully satisfied the Divine requirements and measured up to the prescribed standard. He, Jesus the Christ, received the seal of Divine approval, the Father testifying of him "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The language of his heart was: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God; thy law is written in my heart" (Psa. 40:7, 8; Heb. 10:7-9); and he could reply to his enemies with the challenge, "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" (John 8:46).

After so many centuries of repeated failure to keep the law, Israel might have been pardoned for concluding that the fault lay in the law and not in themselves; surely they could not all have been wrong, the standard must be faulty! But when Jesus came and kept the law perfectly it demonstrated at one and the same time that "the law was holy, and the commandment holy and just and good" (Rom. 7:12) and that all the Israelites from the time of Moses onward up to that time had been at fault. Thus "Jesus magnified the law and made it honorable." (Isa. 42:21). As a necessary corollary, it proved that the annual sacrifices offered continually throughout that period had failed to take away sin; thus the law "served as a schoolmaster (child-leader) to bring them to Christ" (Gal. 3:24), as constituting the one and only all-sufficient sacrifice for sin and the way back to the Father.

In spite of the experience of Israel through so many centuries, and the clear teaching of the New Testament regarding the nature and temporary purpose in the Divine counsels of the Mosaic law, there are Christians even to-day who are endeavoring to keep the letter of that law, with especial reference to Sabbath-keeping on a particular day, viz., Saturday. Such as are honest among them confess that they do not keep this sabbath in all respects as laid down in the Old Testament, but that they do the best they can. So, of course, did many Israelites in the past, but there is no provision in the law for anything but *perfect obedience*. As the Apostle James says: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). Thus they bring themselves under condemnation, instead of rejoicing in that liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free (Gal. 5: 1) and experiencing that "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

(c) Briefly, then, it is *heart-perfection* to which we are exhorted to attain, a totally different matter to perfection in the flesh. Indeed, it is most heart cheering and encouraging to learn from the scriptures that those of the fallen human family commended to us as examples of heart-perfection were far from perfect in the flesh; they would be shunned by many moral-living people today. Had Joseph or Daniel been brought under our notice as patterns for our walk with God, we might have cause to despair. In neither case is anything recorded to which we might justly point the finger of accusation or blame. Their walk throughout various vicissitudes of life was exemplary.

But the outstanding examples of heart-perfection well-pleasing to God brought to our attention, one in the Old Testament and the other in the New, are far from being such ideal characters. The one is David-an adulterer and murderer; and such, not before he had been brought into relationship with God, but after having been greatly blessed and exalted to kingship. Yet this man, in spite of such defects in the flesh, is described as "a man after (God's) own heart who shall fulfill all My will" (Acts 13:22), and he becomes the standard or pattern by which succeeding kings of Judah are measured. See 1 Kings 9:4; 11:4, 6; 11:33, 34; 14:8; 15:3-5, 11; 2 Kings 14:3; 16:2; 18:3; 22:2.

In the New Testament, Paul the Apostle, formerly Saul of Tarsus, testifies: "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer, and a persecute, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love

which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief," and Paul then adds: "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, *for a pattern* to them that should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting" (1 Tim. 1:12-16). Thus no sinner, however culpable, has cause to fear that his former course of life has put him beyond the pale of forgiveness, for, indeed, Jesus Christ came to save such.

PERFECT

There are two words in the original requiring consideration in connection with our subject:

(1) The first has the significance of *finish* or *complete*. However, there are two senses in which something may be said to be finished or completed, viz. (a) ended, and (b) consummated. To illustrate: a road if pursued in one direction may after a while come to a dead end. In the other direction, however, it may become more and more busy until it merges into a highway leading to prospects of almost infinite variety. In the one case, a *dead* end; in the other, the *consummation* of the purpose for which the road was built.

Some render this word "maturity" and up to a point this is helpful, maturity being a desirable goal. But an exhortation to be mature as an immediate attainment would not be of general application. It would be unreasonable and undesirable to expect a child to suddenly attain to maturity. As has been said, you cannot put an old head on young shoulders. The Apostle John refers to "little children," "young men," and "fathers" (1 John 2:12-14) and it could not be expected of these that they should all attain maturity together. Perhaps "spiritual normality" might better express the thought; that is, just as in the physical sphere, it is desirable to be normal according to age and circumstances, so God our Father expects us to be normal in our spiritual growth; not backward like those referred to in Heb. 5:12, nor manifesting undue precocity, like the seed sown on rocky ground in the parable, which quickly'-sprang up ahead of the seed on good ground, but as quickly faded away under the heat of trial.

Again, the thought is suggested of an ideal realized up to a point, but ever beckoning us onward and upward to greater heights of achievement. A very prominent ship-owner, on being asked to what he attributed his success, replied that for one thing, he never left his office desk at the close of the day with work unfinished that could have been completed. By that he did not mean, of course, that at the end of the first day he had nothing else to be done; none knew better than he that the next day would bring its own quota of further work, fresh undertakings to plan, new problems to solve; but the finishing up of each day's work prepared the way for still more fruitful effort each succeeding day.

(2) The second word to be considered has the significance of being *perfectly adjusted* for the end in view. It meets us first in the Gospels in very humble guise, as *mending* nets. The thought is clear. On the previous day, maybe, the nets had been cast into the Lake of Galilee as usual, but in the course of the day's fishing, had perhaps been entangled in some wreckage and sustained damage. Before the net could again be used, it would be necessary to remove the foreign body entangled therein and then repair the damage caused by it. This reminds us of the familiar terms, "putting off" and "putting on." Negatively, we must "lay aside every weight and the sin which does so easily beset us, and run with patience the race set before us (Heb. 12: 1); and positively, all deficiencies must be supplied, as expressed, for instance, by Peter (2 Pet. 1:5-8), "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance (self-control), and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love."

In the day of sailing-ships, a vessel was frequently away from its home port for two or three years at a time. During such period, it would experience many storms, and suffer loss and damage, both to the structure of the ship and its fittings. This would necessitate considerable refitting before the vessel would be ready to put to sea again after completing a voyage. And whilst making its way back to the

home port, the captain would notice that his ship was not making the same speed as when it started out, and being an experienced mariner, he would know the reason. In the course of time, barnacles had attached themselves to the hull, and the longer the voyage, the greater the number of barnacles. These would seriously impede the easy slipping of the hull through the water and thus retard its speed.

Thus at the completion of such a voyage, the ship would require to be dry-docked, to have the hull scraped and re-painted. Maybe, many of us would be greatly benefited by going into spiritual dry-dock and undergoing analogous treatment. Possibly, to part with our traditional barnacles would involve a painful process, almost like parting with part of ourselves, but sooner or later it must be done, if we are to make satisfactory spiritual progress.

III. HOW IS THIS PERFECTION TO BE ATTAINED?

We answer, first of all, that, as in all our dealings with God, it is all and only of Divine Grace. As the Apostle Paul says (1 Cor. 4:7), "What hast thou that thou didst not receive? now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" And again, (1 Cor. 1:30, 31), "But of God are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; so that, according as it is written, 'He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.'"

(1) We are *kept (guarded)* by God's power, through faith (1 Pet. 1:5; Jude 24), as the Psalmist says: "As for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped" (Psa. 73:2); and we may be sure that times without number and unbeknown to us, we have been in a similar position. But God sets our feet upon a rock and establishes our goings (Psa. 40:2).

(2) We are made perfect *through suffering*, as Peter says, "after ye have suffered awhile, the God of all grace make you perfect" (1 Pet. 5:10). In this respect we must tread in the footsteps of our Head, who, though a Son, "learned obedience by the things he suffered, and being made perfect, became the Author of eternal salvation to all those who obey him" (Heb. 5:8, 9).

(3) In conclusion, we are made perfect by means of *our ministry on behalf of one another*. See Eph. 4:11-16. Herein we learn that not only is there the ministry of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers provided for the perfecting of the saints (Eph. 4:11-14), but the whole body is fitly joined together and compacted 'by that which *every joint* supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of *every part* (Eph. 4:16). Do you say, You can do so little, your contribution is so negligible, that it is really not worth making? It is always the one talented person who is tempted to bury his one talent, never the ten-talented one. In our local class there was for many years an aged sister of Danish extraction and speaking only broken English, who was too deaf to follow the class studies. She lived to be 80 years of age, and many under such circumstances would have sat back and not made the required effort to attend the meetings regularly. But in all weathers that sister was regularly in her place up to the time of her last illness, and her joy in the fellowship and loyalty to the class throughout the years was in itself a continual source of inspiration to us all. Of her it could be truly said, "She hath done what she could." Can the same be said of you and me? "Others may do a greater work, but you have your part to do; and no one in all God's heritage can do it so well as you."

May we, in the words of Epaphras (Col. 4:12) "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." Amen.

- A. A. Hart, Aust.

Show Me Thy Face

"Show me thy face -- one transient gleam
Of loveliness divine,
And I shall never think or dream
Of other love than Thine;
All lesser lights will darken quite,
All lower glories wane,
The beautiful of earth will scarce
Seem beautiful again.

"Show me thy face -- my faith and love
Shall henceforth fixed be,
And nothing here have power to move
My soul's serenity.
My life shall seem a trance, a dream,
And all I feel and see,
Illusive, visionary -- Thou
The one reality.

"Show me thy face-I shall forget
The weary days of yore;
The fretting ghosts of vain regret
Shall haunt my soul no more.
All doubts and fears for future years
In quiet trust subside;
And naught but blest content and calm
Within my breast abide.

"Show me thy face-the heaviest cross
Will then seem light to bear;
There will be gain in every loss,
And peace with every carer
With such light feet the years will fleet,
Life will seem brief as blest,
'Till I have laid my burden down
'And entered into rest."

The Weekly Prayer, Praise, and Testimony Meeting

"We went ... where prayer was wont to be made." - Acts 16:13.

AUGUST 2 -- PSA. 95:6

"O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker."

When the Lord's people become overcharged with the cares of this life, instead of realizing their danger and seeking the help of the Lord to order the affairs of life differently, the suggestion comes that they are too weary to pray, or that another time will be more favorable; or perhaps they are so fully engrossed that reverence and acknowledgment to the Lord, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, is entirely forgotten; or perhaps sin lieth at the door, and they seek not to think of the Lord, and therefore avoid the throne of grace; or perhaps coldness has come in from some other cause and the Lord seems afar off, and prayer becomes a mere formality and is by and by abandoned. The child of God who is in a proper condition of heart-harmony will desire to commune with his Creator -not only to hear his Word, but also to offer thanksgiving and worship; as surely as he will desire natural food and drink for the sustenance of his natural body. Whoever has not this experience should seek it; and according to our Lord's promise, he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

The church of Christ alone, at this time has the special privilege of coming to God in prayer; for the great antitypical High Priest has made a satisfactory Sin-offering of himself. Whosoever will, through faith in him and under the covenant relationship of sacrifice, may draw near to God in prayer, nothing doubting.

But while only the consecrated class, the under priesthood, the new creation, are thus encouraged to approach the throne of grace with confidence and courage, very evidently all who in any proper sense belong to the "household of faith" may to some extent enjoy the privileges of prayer, the privileges of thanksgiving and intercession, and may rejoice in the peace of God, in a realization of the forgiveness of sins, through faith in the atonement.

-Reprints, pp. R2502; R5201.

AUGUST 9 -- MATT. 6:23

"If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

The question arises, Is it possible for any of us, after passing from darkness into the Lord's marvelous light, to again get into the dark-to go out of the light? The Scriptures answer that it is possible ... that disloyalty to the Lord and to the principles of his teaching tends in this direction ... The divine purpose is not only to call out the single hearted, the single-eyed, and to instruct and guide them, but also to test and to prove them. Thus we read, The Lord your God doth prove you to know whether ye do love, the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. (Deut. 13:3) The test of obedience is the divine law-supreme love for God and absolute justice to your neighbor -- to love him as ourself. Additionally, the consecrated have the New Commandment to love one another as the Redeemer loved them-to the extent of sacrificing, laying down anything and everything on behalf of each other, for each other's welfare and assistance. If this test be faithfully endured, it means that the individual has not only reached the mark of perfect love, but has stood tests thereat and has demonstrated his worthiness of eternal life under divine terms and conditions.

If any fail to go on in the development of the spirit of love, the spirit of holiness, the spirit of God, they will surely retrograde, and the light that is in them will become darkness-great darkness. Instead of the spirit of love exemplified by our Lord, who laid down his life for us, a spirit of hatred, envy and malice will come in; a spirit of murder which, although hesitating to do outward violence and come under the ban of the law, will not hesitate to assassinate character and to say all manner of evil against those toward whom they become embittered. By such fruits ye shall know them. Such thorns do not grow on the grapevine,' nor on the fig tree.

- *Reprints, pp. R4445, R4446.*

AUGUST 16 -- 1 THESS. 5:18

"In everything give thanks."

"We thank thee, Lord, for raiment, and we thank thee for our food,

We thank thee for our shelter, O, thou Giver of all good;

We thank thee for the day on which our eyes first saw the light.

We give thee thanks for every sense, for hearing and for sight.

We thank thee, blessed Father, for the gift of thy dear Son,

We thank thee and we praise thee for the victory he won.

We thank thee for his righteousness, his robe so pure and white,

We praise thee that, when clothed in it, we're blameless in thy sight.

We thank thee, oh, we praise thee for thy good and precious word,

We bless thee for the wondrous faith its promises have stirred.

We thank thee for the glorious hope of immortality

Our hearts are longing, Lord, with thee to dwell eternally!

- Reprints, p. R5572.

AUGUST 23 -- 1 COR. 13:13

"And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

In this letter to the church at Corinth, the Apostle, after discussing various gifts, says, "And yet I show unto you a more excellent way." Then he proceeds to point out the super excellence of the fruit of love. Whoever has the holy Spirit must have a measure at least of this fruitage, whether it be the little flower that -- contains the fruit bud or whether it be the partly developed fruit, the fully developed fruit or the ripened fruit. God our Father who looks upon the heart, knows how his holy Spirit in the heart is seeking to control the flesh, to guide the mind and all the words and actions. We are not able to judge one another's heart ... Our faith and our hope in the Lord lead us to earnest endeavor to develop the fruitage of love in all its varied and beautiful phases.

Why is this quality of love made so prominent in the Word of God? We answer, Because it is the first thing, the most important thing. It is the fulfilling of God's law; and indeed, the sacrificial love enjoined upon God's saints of this age goes even beyond the requirements of the perfect law ... It is because no other quality of character is so lovely, so beautiful, so productive of happiness and joy, so great a blessing to all upon whom it operates. It is the very essence of God's character "*God is love!*" This quality particularly represents his personality. While God is all-just and all powerful, we do not say that God is justice or God is power, but that God is love. He uses his great power only as love dictates and approves. He uses his justice only in fullest harmony with his glorious attribute of Love. Love is the mainspring of his doings.

Whoever, therefore, would be godlike must be loving, must have love as the dominating quality of his character and his life. Love and righteousness are inseparable. Love is to continue to all eternity; and only those who become the active embodiment of this gracious quality of character will live eternally. Hence we see the paramount importance of its development in every life.

-Reprints, p. R5668.

AUGUST 30 -- MATT. 5:16

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven."

We notice that our Lord's statement in this text draws a particularly sharp line of demarcation between the church and the world. He is not their Father but our Father; it is not their light, but our light. The Lord was addressing the Apostles in particular and all the "overcomers" of that time. But he gives us elsewhere to understand that we who believe the testimony of the apostles are counted in as the same class, so that these words are applicable to us also today. This statement implies that the class which the Lord acknowledges as his disciples have some special light that marks them out as light bearers ... We are to set our light upon a candlestick that all within the house-our own family, our own household, our neighbors-may see it burning; that they may all know that we have a light upon the character and plan of God; that we see the difference between sin and righteousness, justice and injustice.

The latter part of the text says, "and glorify your Father which is in heaven." How would men glorify our Father? We answer, there is a difference between vicious, worldly people and well-meaning worldly people. We are inclined to believe that the majority of mankind, who are in alienation from God and who have no ear to hear the message of the "narrow way," have

nevertheless, an appreciation of righteousness. And if without too much cost they could be righteous, just, generous and all that is noble, they would like to be so. Many of the world have an appreciation of nobility in others. They would like to have it themselves. The difficulty is that the cost of righteousness is more than they are willing to pay.

This Gospel Age, the present life, has become the "day of our visitation," when in the divine favor it is the time of forgiveness of our sins and of our being brought into relationship with the Father. But those who do not share in this "day of visitation" will have an opportunity of coming into harmony with God later.

If they cannot be reached by the gentle methods mentioned and the visitation by which God is calling out the special class now, they will have an opportunity in the next age, when judgment will be laid to the line and righteousness to the plummet; when all the righteous recompense of reward will be brought to bear, to give each one according to his course.

-*Reprints*, pp. R4992, R4993.

SEPTEMBER 6 -- PSALM 91:10

"There shall no evil befall thee."

Applying this to our Lord, we see that no evil befell him as a new creature.

To be fitted for the priestly office to which he was called, our Lord must be proved beyond all peradventure. His loyalty was put to the extremist test in the Garden of Gethsemane. Possibly he himself did not realize the strength of his righteous character until brought face to face with this last trial. There he was tried and proved to the uttermost and under the trial his character-always perfect to the full measure of its testing gained, by divine grace, its glorious perfection of completeness.

And so we also must suffer if we would be footstep followers of the Lamb. Character cannot be developed wholly without trial. It is like a plant; at first it is very tender; it needs an abundance of the sunshine of God's love; frequent watering with the showers of his grace; much cultivating through the applied knowledge of his character, as a foundation for faith and an inspiration to obedience. Then, when thus developed under these favorable conditions, it is ready for the pruning hand of discipline, and is also able to endure some hardness. And little by little, as strength of character is developed, the tests applied to it serve only to develop more strength, more beauty, more grace, until it is finally fixed, developed, established, perfected through suffering.

We are to recognize that there are two classes of spirit-begotten ones, and that our text has reference to only one class of these. There is the body of Christ-Jesus the head and the church his body. They have kept nothing back of their love and devotion; things may happen disastrous to their fleshly interests; but they remember that they are "not in the flesh, but in the spirit," and realize that no outside interest can mar their real interest as new creatures, nor hinder them, if faithful, from attaining to the glories of the kingdom with their Lord and Head. They have entered into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, and do not withdraw; they "abide in the secret place of the Most High"; They will continue unto the end. It is to this class, and of all the things that befall them, that the assurance is given -- "There shall no evil befall thee."

- *Reprints*, p. R4767.

SEPTEMBER 13 -- PSALM 133:1

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

The Psalmist proceeds to compare this unity of the brethren, the church, with the precious ointment poured upon the head of the king and of the high priest on their induction into office. The significance of the illustration evidently is that the anointing oil typified the holy Spirit, and that as it ran down the high priest's beard, and even to the skirts of his garment, it anointed the entire body of the priest. That priest typifies Melchizedek, the royal priest-Jesus the Head, and the church his body. Throughout this Gospel Age the anointing of the holy Spirit, which came to the church, the body of Christ, at Pentecost, has continued, and gives an unction, or anointing, to all of his true members. And by this anointing these members may be recognized as one with Christ, "For by one Spirit ye were all anointed into one body." - 1 Cor. 12:13.

- Reprints, p. R5235.

The Question Box

Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? - Rom. 9:21.

Question:

What is the lesson to be drawn from St. Paul's words here?

Answer:

Amongst the writings of St. Paul there are some things which the Apostle Peter says are "hard to understand." (2 Pet. 3:16.) This, doubtless, is one of them. Not only have scoffers failed to grasp the import of these words, but sincere Christians have been puzzled, and not only puzzled but burdened, by them. They have seemed to shut out hope. Instead of being a part of, or at least in harmony with, the glad tidings that God has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezek. 33:11), these words seem only to proclaim his absolute sovereignty. Not in these words as St. Paul meant them, but in their misunderstanding, lies the germ of all that is most repulsive in the Calvinist doctrine of election. It is in a similarly wrong conception of this and related passages that the Mohammedan finds justification for his acceptance of the will of Allah as a destiny which he cannot understand, but to which he must, perforce, submit.

To get our bearings on the question we must go back to the time of Jeremiah. It was in a dark and troublous time that Jeremiah was called upon to serve as the Lord's mouthpiece. His counsel went unheeded; his ministry seemed a failure. In fact, he was put in the stocks by the false leaders of his time. In these circumstances his spirits sank; he decided to preach the word of the Lord no more. (Jer. 20:9.) It was while he was in this mood that there came to him an inner prompting in which, either then or later, he recognized "the word of the Lord." (Jer. 18:1.) Acting on that impulse, he went "down to the potter's house," and watched him at work molding clay into form and fashioning it according to his purpose. When he began his task, the potter had a design or pattern in mind, which Jeremiah knew not. That lump which the potter had taken shapeless into

his hands might be for honor or dishonor; a vessel for the king's table, a vase for fruit or flowers, a basin in which men might wash their hands or feet.

The Prophet looked and saw that here too, as well as in his own experience, was apparent failure. "The vessel that he wrought was marred in the hands of the potter." The *clay* did not take shape; there was some hidden defect that seemed to resist the plastic guidance of wheel and hand. The Prophet stood and gazed -- quite possibly was beginning, in his mind, to criticize the potter for his lack of skill-when he looked again and saw what followed. "So he [the potter] returned, and made it another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it." It was not a lack of skill which Jeremiah saw, but skill in its highest form -- a skill not baffled by seeming or even by real failure-triumphing over difficulties. And *then*, by one of those flashes of insight which the world calls genius, but which we recognize as inspiration, he was taught to read the meaning of the parable. "Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel." - Jer. 18:5, 6.

Did this "word of the Lord" as it came rushing in on his mind, crush him as with the sense of a destiny arbitrary, supreme, not necessarily righteous, against which men struggled in vain, and in whose hands they had no freedom and therefore no responsibility? No indeed! Quite to the contrary. To Jeremiah that which he saw was a parable of wisdom and love, working patiently and slowly; the groundwork of a call to repentance and conversion. Hear him further: "At what instant I [the Lord] shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." (Jer. 18:7,8.) That "word of the Lord" we must believe, was one that brought light and hope into the thick darkness in which the Prophet's mind had before been wrapped. *

* It had as its necessary complement that which, dealing with the case of apparent failure which frustrated the purpose of the Divine Craftsman, involves what seems a change of another kind in that purpose. "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them." (Jer. 18:9, 10.) But this, no less than the other, showed that what seemed to the Prophet the one great lesson taught by the parable of the Potter and the Clay was not that the decrees of God are irreversible, but that man is free to choose, and that though God may be constrained to punish, he delights rather to forgive.

As in thought he thus passed from the potter and his wheel to the operations of the great Master Workman, as seen in the history of nations, Jeremiah saw in them the vessels that were being molded, as on the wheel of Providence. Here was clay, indeed, but with one important difference--they were not masses of dead, inert matter. Each was, as it were, instinct with a self-determining power, which either yielded to or resisted the plastic workings of the potter's hand. The urn or vase designed for kingly use refused its high calling, and chose another and less seemly shape. The Supreme Artisan, who had determined in the history of mankind the times before appointed, and the bounds of men's habitations, had, for example, called Israel to be the pattern of a righteous people, the witness of Truth to the nations, a kingdom of priests, the firstfruits of humanity. That purpose had been frustrated. Israel had refused that calling, had chosen to be as the nations round it, in its worship, its sensuality, its greed of gain, the tyranny of its oppressors. It had, therefore, to be brought under another discipline, fitted for another work: "He returned, and made it another vessel." The pressure of the Potter's hand was to be harder, and the vessel was to be fashioned for less noble uses. Shame and suffering and exile -- their land left desolate, and they themselves weeping by the waters of Babylon -- this was the process to which they were now called on to submit. *But at any moment in the process, repentance, acceptance, submission might modify its character and its issues.*

True it was that a little later on in the Prophet's work the teaching of the parable was carried one step further, to a tragic conclusion. This time it was not enough to point to the potter's patient skill. The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah again, "Go and get a potter's earthen bottle, and take of the ancients of the people, and of the ancients of the priests, and go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom" (Jer. 19:1) and there in their sight he was to break the bottle as a witness that, in one sense, their day of grace was over, that something had been forfeited which now could never be regained. Israel and Judah had been unfaithful to the ideal of their national existence. Never again was that form of their existence to be renewed. The form and use of this vessel of the Master Potter were to be altered altogether. But did this mean that the purposes of God had been frustrated? By no means. Israel had still a calling and an election. They were still to be used by God as witnesses to the nations, stewards of the treasure of Truth. In that thought the Prophet's heart could and did find hope and comfort. He could accept the doom of exile and shame for himself and for his people, because he looked beyond it to that remolded life which might be theirs after the period of servitude and desolation had expired. Those who, instead of accepting it, were rebelling and resisting, questioning the wisdom or the righteousness of God, were as the thing formed saying to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?

The age in which St. Paul lived was like that of Jeremiah, a dark and troublous time for one whose heart was with his brethren, the children of Abraham according to the flesh. Once again the potter was fashioning the clay to high and noble uses. Israel might have taken their place as the first-fruits of the Church of Christ, as the prophets and teachers of mankind. God started, one might say, speaking as men, in the hope that it would be so. "To the Jew first," was the rule invariably followed. But here, also, there was apparent failure. Blindness, hardness, unbelief, these marred the shape of the vessels made to honor. Because this was true, did St. Paul cease to believe in the righteousness and faithfulness of God? Did he see no loving purpose behind the seeming severity? No-the vessel would be made for what men held to be dishonor -exile lasting through the centuries, dispersion over all the world; but this would prove to be but the preparation and discipline for the far-off future, fitting them in the end for nobler uses. The gifts and calling of God were without repentance, and the wisdom of the great Master Workman would eventually be made manifest, when, "in that day" he who had concluded all in sin and unbelief, should have mercy on all. Did any Israelite, zealous, impatient, eager to anticipate the purpose of him who sees the end from the beginning, question yet once more the wisdom or righteousness of God in this discipline -for him the Apostle had the answer:

"Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Hath not the potter power over the clay?"

We have spoken thus far on the bearing of the parable on God's dealings with the nations -- especially that of Israel. That, obviously, is what was prominent in the thoughts of both Prophet and Apostle in their interpretation. But we need not shrink from accepting it as it bears on the individual life of every one of us. *The lesson to be drawn is a lesson of the matchless skill and infinite love and patience of the Master Potter.* One less skilled and less patient, less inclined to mercy and forgiveness, would have discarded this wretched *clay* long ago. But not he! *This* Potter would fain return and mold and remold till the vessel is fit for some use in the great house of which he is the Supreme Head. By the discipline of life, by warnings and reproofs, by failures and disappointments, by prosperity and success, by sickness and health, by varying work and ever-fresh opportunities, he has been educating us in the school of Christ, leading us to know and to do his will. Who is there of us who does not realize that this is a true account of the various experiences of life through which we pass? May not the language of our hearts continue to be, as the hymn-writer has so well expressed:

"Have Thine own way, Lord,
Have Thine own way,
Thou art the potter,
I am the clay.
Take me and mold me
After Thy will,
While I am waiting,
Yielded and still."

- P. L. Read.

"The Tone Of Voice"

"It is not so much what you say
As the manner in which you say it;
It is not so much the language you use,
As the tones in which you convey it.

"Come here!" I sharply said,
And baby covered and wept;
'Come here,' I cooed, and he looked and smiled
And straight to my lap he crept.

"The words may be mild and fair,
And the tones may pierce like a dart;
The words may be soft as summer air,
And the tones may break the heart.

"For words but come from the mind,
And grow by study and art,
But the tones leap forth from the inner self
And reveal the state of the heart.

"Whether you know it or not,
Whether you mean or care,
Gentleness, kindness, love and hate,
Envy and anger are there.

"Then, would you quarrels avoid,
And in peace and love rejoice,
Keep anger not only out of your words,
But keep it out of your voice."

Recently Deceased

Sr. Ethelyn Archer, Ottawa, Kans. - (July)
Sr. Rosa Callaway, Wausau, Wis. - (July)
Bro. H. H. Eddy, Providence, R.I. - (July)
Sr. May Hastings, Tacoma, Wash. - (June)
Bro. J. Krasinski, St. Charles, Ill. - (June)
Bro. P. C. Petersen, Portland, Ore. - (June)
Bro. Hector Poirier, Montreal, Que. - (July)
Sr. W. Sharpies, Bury, Lanes, Eng. - (July)
Sr. B. A. Taylor, Mattoon, Ill. - (July)