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Jesus - the Father's Faithful Workman

"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." - John 9:4.

THE brevity of human life and the proper use of its brief span, is a subject of solemn importance to every sober-minded person. Since life is a gift from God and all are accountable to him for this gift, it is not surprising that we find the Scriptures constantly counseling its proper valuation. Again and again the righteous are reminded of the value of the fleeting days of stewardship soon to end in approval or disapproval, and the unrighteous are likewise warned of the issues involved in wasted time. The same Scriptures teach that within the limits of man's "threescore years and ten" lie possibilities that are eternal in their importance; for the present infinitesimal moment of time has been made by the great Creator the determining factor in deciding our portion or station in a boundless, eternal existence beyond the grave. God, who possesses all time, "from everlasting to everlasting," has chosen to give us but one day at a time out of his unlimited ages, to teach us the value of these fragments of his eternity.

"SO TEACH US TO NUMBER OUR DAYS"

The great characters of Scripture, such as Moses, David, and Solomon, recognizing the brevity of the present life, have furnished us with conclusions, admonitions, and prayers, that find a response in our own meditative considerations of life's stewardship responsibilities. Like them, we must acknowledge that life is "but a shadow" that quickly passes by. Therefore "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest." Then like Moses we pray, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." (Psa. 102:11; Eccl. 9:10; Psa. 90:12.) Such considerations as these are intended by the Lord to impart a sober-minded understanding of the great purposes of God in bestowing upon us the gift of life, and entrusting us with the stewardship of so great a boon.

Thus we see that the prayer of Moses to God for wisdom to live faithfully the few days of earthly life is in every way a proper one for us. Obvious though it be to all, that the days of our stewardship are few, yet only God can permanently teach us this lesson. And by his diversified means of correction, instruction, and grace, he does teach us, and leads us in wisdom's ways, always ready

to assist us to become workmen needing not to be ashamed when the duties of life's little day have ended.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS, OUR EXAMPLE

In thus instructing us God would surely direct our attention to Jesus, the One in whom he was well pleased, admonishing us to observe his life of service, and his faithful application to the work for which he came into the world. With him it was always the "Father's business." "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." His aim in life is clearly stated: "*I must work* the works of him that sent me, *while it is day*; the night cometh when no man can work." Let us therefore observe the service that gained for our dear Redeemer the Father's approval, that we may likewise have the joy of eventually finding our brief day of service rewarded with his sweet "Well done."

First of all we note that Jesus recognized the shortness of his day. He takes the position of a day laborer whose day of service will be over with the coming of night. He speaks of his life as a mission, a task, which had to be fulfilled within the limits of the time assigned by his Father. He began his ministry with forty days of inquiry respecting the Father's will, learning from types and shadows and prophetic utterances the time allotted and the nature of the work to be done. When he ends his day of service, with the coming of night, he is able to say, "I have finished the work thou gayest me to do." There have been no omissions, no neglected duties, and there have been no departures from the clearly defined commands of his Father. Surely he was a servant worthy of God's approval, and to his Church, a perfect example that all should prayerfully seek to follow.

It is in this way that he teaches us how to "apply our hearts unto wisdom." As his pathway had all been arranged for him in the Father's wisdom, so he would have us understand that our path has likewise been clearly set forth in the Word of God. As he recognized that "obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams," so he would have us remember "that no man is crowned except he strive lawfully" that God's approval will be given to the one who has "been faithful over a few things," rather than to the one who may come laden with spurious works of his own choosing.

Although Jesus knew that his time on earth was short, and although he would have us remember that the same is true of our work-day, yet he was in no feverish haste. With a calmness, and a steady, even deportment he went about his work. There was a time to work, and a time to pray; a time for the multitude, and a time for the disciples alone. He could not be hurried into any action by the solicitation of his friends, or the taunts of his enemies. When his brethren urged him to go up to the feast and make himself known, his reply was significant: "My time is not yet come; but your time is always ready." It was as though he had said, yours is the worldly mind-they who do their own work, who seek their own glory, are the masters and disposers of their own time, but *my time is not yet*.

"ABOUT MY FATHER'S BUSINESS"

What an example he is to us in all this! How he rebukes our impetuosity by his implicit obedience! How forcefully he teaches us that "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength" -- yes, and our safest, wisest course. To follow him thus "imparts to our present life an unspeakable solemnity; it endows it with an infinite preciousness and value. And while at first sight we may feel overpowered by the thought of the short space given us for our labor, and inclined to feverish haste and to impatient self-made work, a truer insight will teach us that as the approach of night is altogether beyond our calculation and control, so it behooves us, with

calmest faith and implicit surrender of our own will, to look upon each day's work and each day's trial, as portioned out to us by divine wisdom and love. How much of false zeal, self-chosen work, and self-appointed times, is there in our own private and public Christian life. We run before we are sent; we choose the kind of usefulness and work for which we fancy we have inclination and adaptation; we select the time and method for accomplishing our task. We pursue with spurious zeal and self-sustained energy aims of our own choice; we hurry impatiently our own souls and those of others, and are satisfied with forced results, till experience teaches us, to our deep humiliation, that grace also has its nature and law, and that in God's work 'it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God, that showeth mercy.' Happy indeed will be our lot if we may say with Jesus at the end of our day of labor, "I have finished the work *Thou gayest me to do,*" and there are no works of wood, hay, and stubble to be burned.

Next we note the emphasis that Jesus puts upon the necessity of working while it is called day. "*I must work* the works of him that sent me." This seems to have been a thought deeply impressed upon his mind early in life, and in all after-years it is the keynote of his obedient service. At twelve years of age he said, "Wist ye not that I *must* be about my Father's business?" From Jordan to the cross this "I must work" was the motto of his life. "I must preach the Kingdom of God." He *must go up* to Jerusalem. The Scriptures *must* be fulfilled.

WOE IS ME IF I PREACH NOT THIS GOSPEL

This view of his responsibility to God is of vital importance to us. It was because he recognized that his was the place of a servant commissioned with the responsibility of completing a task laid upon him, that he so humbly takes this place under a servant's "I must work." This lesson he also wove into many of his private and public discourses for us: the vineyard left in the care of servants; the steward put in charge of his master's goods; the one, two, and five-talented servants, were all illustrations of the lessons of this unavoidable "I must work," in our relationship to him as his servants. Again and again, would-be followers are cautioned to consider carefully the requirements of discipleship before undertaking its obligations. But once the step has been voluntarily taken, then he would have all such remember that from henceforth they are bond-slaves of his. Paul realized this to be so true, and his future so dependent upon it, that he declared, "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel."

This "I must work" of Jesus' should therefore ring in our hearts with all its solemn significance. The talent preserved in a napkin, the neglect of duty while the lord of the household is absent, the forgotten privileges of service, will some day make necessary the Master's word-"Thou wicked and slothful servant, . . . thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury." (Matt. 25:26, 27.) "Depart from me, I know you not" - you live in the midst of priceless opportunities, you were surrounded with the crying want of those who represented me in their need, and you served me not, but followed your own self-chosen way.

IMMANUEL -- GOD WITH US

This brings us to the third striking feature of our Lord's day of service; namely the fact that the work he did was wholly the Father's work through him, as he himself reiterated. By this he meant to teach that since he was solely the Father's representative, whatever works he performed, or whatever revelations he gave to men, were merely what the Father himself would have performed or given had he chosen to appear amongst them. True to the name he bore, Immanuel, he was "God with us," so much so that to his disciple he could say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. . . . The Father that dwelleth in me, *he doeth the works.*" "Blessed Son of God! What

sublime humility, self-abnegation, and love was thine! You came to reveal the Father, to teach us that to know God was eternal life, and now we learn that the humiliations of man's estate, the years of earthly life and absence from the heavenly courts, the poverty and homeless wanderings, the acts of compassion that brought healing to the sick and life to the dead, the patient submission to indignities and shame, were not *your own works*, but things the Father himself would have done for us had it been possible. His love he has revealed through you. Oh *teach us*, that we too may be God's true witnesses in the earth, revealing his love and sympathy for the poor groaning creation; then no more will we ask for fire to destroy, but pray for more of the grace and love."

In this connection then let us take note of the circumstances under which Jesus made the statement contained in our text: A man born blind had appealed for aid, and apparently both Jesus and his disciples had been particularly interested in this case. The disciples, being familiar with the Law of Moses, naturally concluded that his affliction might be traceable to the sins of a previous generation. "Who did sin, this man or his parents that he should be born blind?" Jesus not only corrects their mistaken inference, but he also reveals his own attitude toward the affliction of this poor man, and toward all similar afflictions of mankind. While the disciples would be concerned to ask, Who is to blame? Jesus would ask, Who is to relieve and help? While they were thinking of guilt and punishment, Jesus was thinking of healing and restoring. The salvation-works of God were his meat and drink. He came not to condemn the world, but to save it. He came not to judge the world, nor to analyze and tirade against sin, but "to preach good tidings unto the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to give the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." He came to seek and to save that which was lost; to teach that God has no pleasure in the punishment of the wicked, but that angelic choirs break forth in pans of praise over one sinner that repenteth and returns again to the Father's home; to teach us that the wandering sheep recovered from its perilous plight, is a subject of greater rejoicing than the ninety and nine safely sheltered in the fold.

JESUS THE EXCELLENT REVELATION OF LOVE

Ah yes, there has never been any lack of philosophers and theorists who could describe the ulcerous canker of sin in its myriad forms; there has been no absence of schemes and panaceas for the relief of mankind; but the world has seen only *one* Jesus, one Great Physician competent to help, one "Lamb of God, which *taketh away the sin of the world.*"

Let us observe "the wonderful union in Jesus of love to God and love to man. There is only one love. Love to God and love to man are united in their origin and their nature. They form one river flowing out of the eternal love of God." "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?" (1 John 4:20.) "Some of us find it easier to ascend to God with the wings of adoration and joyous contemplation, than to descend on the self-same ladder to our neighbor in the spirit, and with the service, of forgiving, comforting, and helping love. But in Jesus there was only one, deep, pure, divine love. When he healed the sick, and opened the eyes of the blind, when he fed the multitude, when he cast out devils, when he taught the disciples, and blessed the little children, he was doing the works the Father had given him to do. . . . We forget that when we behold Jesus forgiving the sinner, and receiving him with most tender compassion, when we behold Jesus permitting the woman to kiss his feet, we see the Father in him." We also forget that though he may frequently display the Father's indignation against hypocrisy, and speak in no uncertain sound against wrong practices, that these are the exceptions in and not the burden of his message and ministry. Both of these omissions in our memory are serious; for if we forget that "God was in Christ" in the work of our redemption, and allow ourselves to think of Jesus as beng

more merciful than the Father, we dishonor both. If on the other hand we think chiefly of Jesus as an expositor and denouncer of the sinner, we do violence to his definition of God, for he said, "God so loved the world" as to send me, not to condemn it, but to save it.

JESUS THE GREAT PHYSICIAN

When John the Baptist became somewhat disturbed by his imprisonment, wondering no doubt why Jesus did not attempt his release, we find him sending his disciples to Jesus with the question, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" How peculiarly Jesus answered this earnest inquiry. He did not send the messengers back with a list of Scriptural citations from the prophecies, nor did he acquaint John with some program of a campaign against prevailing errors, but he sent them back with a message void of any suggestion of kingly prerogatives, or of triumph over opposing forces, but a message full of the joy of a successful, happy physician. "Tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." Surely his servants of the present day will not overlook this lesson; for Jesus was a workman fully approved of God, and in all things, in all periods of the Age, an example to be faithfully and devoutly followed.

In conclusion let us refer once more to our Lord's appreciation of the privilege of giving a full day's service. There was no thought of ceasing to labor until the night interrupted his work. His was a life of fullness -- full of the spirit, full of compassion, full of loving service. "The thought of the approaching night sometimes exerts a paralyzing influence on man's energy and activity. It tempts us to anticipate our rest or to relax our effort. It often damps our enthusiasm. We are inclined to think that we have labored enough, and that we can add no more to our service, or to fear that our strength, our material, our opportunity, is exhausted. But Jesus was faithful to the end. As he approached the last sufferings in Jerusalem, his love and his zeal burned only with the greater intensity and brightness. To the very last in his warnings to Judas, in his final addresses to the Jews, in the good confession which he confessed before Pontius Pilate, in his words to the daughters of Jerusalem, in his patient and silent suffering, and in the seven words from the cross-he fulfilled his ministry; he was faithful -- the perfect servant of God.

HIS LOVE FOR THE DISCIPLES SEVERELY TESTED

"His love to his disciples was never more severely tested than during his last days. He never faltered. He never relaxed his faithful, anxious care of the men whom the Father had given him to keep. He prayed for the disciples, anticipating the hour of temptation. On that night in which he was betrayed, and in which all the disciples were offended because of him, Jesus manifested his love more fully than ever. He called them friends; he spoke to them of the love with which they were loved, of the vital union between the true vine and the branches; he instituted the Memorial of his dying love; he prayed for them to his heavenly Father. In that prayer Jesus clings with the same love to the Father and to the disciples; and by the wonderful words, 'I in them, and thou in me,' he places believers in a position of glory, to which we can scarcely lift the eyes of our heart." Why did he do all this? Because he in his love and faithfulness would have us know "that the Father who dwelleth in me, he doeth the works."

"As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." "In this also we are called to follow Jesus. He is Lord and we are his servants, he is infinitely great, and we are but little. But to the least of us the exhortation is addressed, 'Be thou faithful unto death'; 'Occupy till I come'; work while -- as long as -- it is day. And to each one of us some peculiar talent is entrusted. We can *be*, we can *do*, we can *suffer* -- something, and in some way, in which no other person can take our place.... There is no measure that we can say, 'It is enough.' The only measure is the daily opportunity appealing to the heart, out of which are the issues of life. Only let our heart be loving, and it will be like the measure Jesus describes, 'Good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over.'"

- J. J. Blackburn

Half Hour Meditations on Romans

No. 34

Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord. - Jer. 9:24

IN OUR last Meditation we saw that in the Apostles view the *immediate* object of Christ's atoning sacrifice was to clear away all misunderstandings as to the righteousness of God -- misunderstandings which may have arisen on account of his long tolerance of sinners prior to Calvary. God had gone on "passing over" sin all over the world in loving forbearance, bearing with men's sinfulness that they might thoroughly learn the lesson of their own need of him and their inability to save themselves. But this very forbearance rendered Gods character liable to complete misunderstanding. He might have been supposed to be kind indeed, but indifferent to sin.

("These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself" - Psa. 50:21.) Thus seen, the *immediate* object of Christ's death was to rescue Gods righteousness from all misunderstanding -- to show his righteousness "be cause in his Divine forbearance he had passed over former sins" (Rom. 3:25 R. S. V.).

The Ultimate Object of Christ's Atonement Sacrifice

But in addition to this *immediate* object, God had in view an ultimate purpose which appears in the words we next consider: "And for an exhibition of his righteousness at the *present time*, in order that he may be righteous while justifying him who is of the faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26, Diaglott). The careful student will note that the ultimate purpose of God expressed in these words -- the *supreme end* and aim of the proprietary sacrifice of our Lord -- is here shown to be twofold: (1) a demonstration of the righteous character of God (" that he might be just") and (2) a complete provision for mans righteousness (" while justifying him who is of the faith of Jesus").

Thus Christ's atonement meets every need and satisfies every claim. In relation to God it vindicates his character, whether in failing to punish (in "passing over") sins done aforesaid under former dispensations or in forgiving sins done under the present dispensation; while in relation to man it provides nothing less than righteousness for him -- righteous ness instantaneously imputed to him on his exercise of faith and gradually imparted to him as he continues in the way of faith and obedience. "Herein lies the deep and precious meaning of the two statements of St. John: God is light, and God is love. If God were light alone, in the modern sense, there would be a danger of forgetting his righteousness. But in the Cross he is revealed as both Light and Love. All his attributes are blended, united, and correlated. Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other (Psa. 85:10)."

"Glorious paradox! Just in punishing, and merciful in pardoning men can understand; but just in justifying the guilty startles them. But the propitiation through faith in Christ's blood resolves the paradox and harmonizes the seemingly discordant elements. For in that God hath made him [who knew no sin] to be sin for us *justice* has full satisfaction; and in that we are made the righteousness of God in him, *mercy* has all her desire."

To Whom Was Christ's Atonement Sacrifice Offered?

It is worthy of notice, ere we leave this memorable passage, that the metaphors of "ransom" and "propitiation" are each complementary of the other and each serves to check the others misuse. The thought contained in the word "ransom" is that of a price paid by Christ in order that we might be set free. He gave his life a *ransom* for many -- he, the Lord that *bought* us (Mark 10:45; 2 Pet. 2:1). Again, the word propitiation suggests that the offering of Christ's life in sacrifice was the means to win for us forgiveness from God. Thus far both these metaphorical words have their clear, harmonious and usual meaning. But some, not recognizing the limitations which each word imposes on the other, have worked these metaphors out far beyond the thought of the Apostle.

Ransoms, they argue, are paid to those who have previously held the prisoners captive; consequently, it is maintained, the price must have been paid to the enemy who held us captive; that is to say, Christ's life was offered as a price to the Devil in order that *his* claim might be satisfied and we might be justly set free. Such an idea was advanced as far back as the time of Origen, and others since his time have sponsored it. But this extension of the scope of the metaphor of the ransom is wholly alien to the Scriptures.

Again, the word "propitiation" has suggested from time to time the blasphemous notion that the Son wrung from the angry Father the pardon which he was unwilling to give. Such an idea is wholly alien to the Scriptures. But in fact the two metaphors are mutually corrective and each tends to exclude the misuse of the other. The idea that Christ offered any thing to the Devil is corrected by the notion inherent in the word "propitiation," for it is propitiation (not of the Devil but) of the *Father*. What the Son offered was a sacrifice directed to the Father only. "Christ, who through the eternal spirit, offered him self without spot *to God*" (Heb 9:14).

On the other hand, the idea that the Fathers mind needed to be changed towards us is corrected by the suggestion inherent in the other metaphor -- ransom; for it is the Father himself who, because he loved us, gave his own Son to buy us out of the slavery of sin. He it was who "found" the ransom. (See Job 33:24.) It was the Father who *sent* the Son. (See John 3:16.) In the words of another: "Each metaphor suggests a single idea -- each complementary of the other, and corrective of its misuse -- and both combine to tell us of the one inseparable love of the Father and the Son, uniting in a sacrificial act which is ascribed to both, to redeem us from the tyranny of sin and to set the pardoning love free to work upon us, without obscuring the true hatefulness of sin or the true character of God." *

*For an exhaustive discussion of this phase of the subject of atonement we refer all to the masterly work of Charles T. Russell -- "The Atonement between God and Man," page E447 and following pages.

With Rom. 3:26 the Apostle brings to a close his development of the great fact of history by which justification (or righteousness) by faith is made available for mankind, namely the ransom sacrifice of Jesus. What a wealth of utterance has we seen contained in these six short verses (Rom. 3:21-26). Ere we pass on to the next passage let us reverently pause and with the spirit of prayer and devotion in our hearts take a last, loving, lingering, glance together at the dear, sweet, life giving, life sustaining words, calling to mind as we do so the lessons we have associated with them in the last seven "Half hours"; and as we listen again to their glad yet solemn music may they touch responsive chords in our hearts, the melody of which shall appear in lives manifestly controlled by him who bought us with his own precious blood. Listen:

"But now, apart from Law, a righteousness from God stands displayed, being witnessed by the

Law and the Prophets; even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no distinction, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being declared righteous, freely, by his grace, through the deliverance that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be propitiatory, by his blood, through faith, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; and for an exhibition of his righteousness at the present time, in order that he may be righteous while justifying him who believeth in Jesus." -- Rom. 3:21-26, Free Translation

Where, Then, Is the Glorifying?

The words we next consider give evidence of the intensity of interest with which, under the guidance and in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle had finished dictating the foregoing passage. *Where, then, is the glorifying? Shut out. By what kind of law? Of the works? Nay, but through the law of faith. Verses 27-31* There can be no doubt but that the boasting which the Apostle here says is shut out is that of the Jews.

Indeed some translators give "Where, then, is *thy* boasting?" as though a Rabbinit were actually in discussion with him. But it is of the mass of his unbelieving countrymen collectively, rather than to one of them representatively, that he is speaking. And what a psychological scene it is which is presented pictorially here before our minds eye! In the words of another: "We see the Apostle standing, as it were, on some elevated platform, and looking round and round inquisitively. He seems to be in quest of some object with which he has been familiar, indeed too familiar.

But he cannot see it in all that plane of things that is around him. He exclaims -- not in a disappointed but in a glad and jubilant tone -- *Where, then, is the glorifying?* -- that glorifying which is always so obtrusive of itself -- that glorifying which is scarcely ever absent when a Jew is present -- Where, I say, is this glorifying?" He does not, of course, mean that the Jews had ceased to glory; it is not the *fact* of their glorifying but their right to do so which he is discussing. Men may in fact glory when they have no right to do so. The Jews thus gloried. But it is the right which the Apostle disputes, and disputing, denies.

Others, however, besides the Jews have been and are guilty of improper glorifying. We need not suppose that in asking "Where, then, is the glorifying?" the Apostle allowed his mind to be utterly oblivious of corresponding tendencies in others. In the words of the writer last quoted: "We may reasonably suppose, on the contrary, that he gives expression to his thoughts and feelings regarding the glorifying of the Jews, because he realized that this element of the spirit of Judaism was too apt to be imported into Gentilism, *and would be in danger of infecting and infesting the Christian Church as a whole*. Men everywhere are too prone to haughtiness and self glorifying. . . . Pride is one of the disfigurements of humanity in general. *And even from behind a profession of faith in Christ, and of justification by faith alone, and of the abnegation of glorifying in the matter of justification, the forbidding lineaments of a supercilious spirit may lower forth*. Paul knew this; and hence we doubt not he had an aim that went far beyond the Jews when he asked, *Where, then, is the glorifying?*"

We cannot agree with those commentators who think the Apostle is speaking "after a kind of *insulting* manner." The associations of the word *insulting* lie on the line of malignity. And we are certain that no true follower of Christ, speaking under the guidance and in the power of the Holy Spirit, would malign any one.

For the same reason we would not say, with some others, that he is speaking *derisively*, but we do

not deny that, as one writer puts it: "there is a *jubilant* tone of logical, theological and ethical triumph" in his question, *Where, . . . is the glorying?*

It Is Shut Out

"It is," says the Apostle, "shut out." Moreover it is not shut out by brute force but by a law -- not that of works but of faith. The fact that the glorying is said to be "shut out" implies that it had tried to intrude. It had, as it were, struggled hard to get a footing. But it was unsuccessful. It was thrust out; and shut out. An interdict was laid upon it. It was put under a ban.

"And who can analyze or describe the joy and rest of the soul from which at last is shut out the foul inflation of a religious boast? We have praised our selves, we have valued ourselves on one thing or another supposed to make us worthy of the Eternal.

We may perhaps have had some specious pretexts for doing so; or we may have boated (such boastings are not unknown) of nothing better than being a little less ungodly, or a little more manly, than some one else. But this is over now for ever, in principle; and we lay its practice under our Redeemers feet to be destroyed.

And great is the rest and gladness of sitting down at his feet, while the door is shut and the key is turned upon our self applause. There is no holiness without that exclusion; and there is no happiness where holiness is not."

- P. L. Read

Emmaus-ward

Lord Jesus, in the days of old,
Two walked with Thee by waning light,
And love's blind instinct made them bold
To crave Thy presence through the night;
As night descends, we too would pray;
O leave us not at close of day.

Day is far spent and night is nigh;
Stay with us, Savior, through the night;
Talk with us, teach us tenderly,
Lead us to peace, to rest, to light;
Dispel our darkness with Thy face,
Radiant with resurrection grace.

The hours of day are glad and good,
And good the gifts Thy hand bestows --
The body's health, the spirit's food,
And rest, and after rest repose.
We would not lose day's golden gains,
So stay with us as daylight wanes.

Nor this night only, blessed Lord,
We, every day and every hour
Would walk with Thee Emmaus-ward,
To hear Thy voice of love and power,
And every night would by Thy side
Look, listen, and be satisfied.

- *British Bible Students' Hymnal, No. 222*

Enduring Hardness as Good Soldiers

"Thou therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." - 2 Tim. 2:3.

IN OLDEN times in battle, the leaders went at the head of their men. Our Lord Jesus was such a leader. His fulfillment of the Father's commission, led him to Calvary. He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Of all forms of death, that of crucifixion was the very worst. It was practised for only a comparatively short period under the Roman power, from a little before the beginning of the Christian era to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and was in operation therefore when Jesus died as the Savior of the world. This the Father foreknew. The Scribes and Pharisees and rulers of the Jews in their mad rage, not content with the Jewish method of stoning, as in the case of Stephen, forced Pilate, against his will, to inflict on the Son of God the utmost extreme of long, lingering agony, represented in this most horrible form of death.

In modern times when a country is at war, its young men are generally called up. They don the uniform of the soldier and are under orders to obey whatever commands they receive. Individually, the direction of their course may differ widely. Some *may* be drafted for active service abroad, others detailed for duties at home. There may be some required for duties of a non-military nature which they perform in soldiers' uniform. Each accepts the position assigned to him, as a matter of course.

To endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, entails difficulties of a like nature. Many of God's true people, particularly during the period of Pagan and Papal Rome's power, had to endure the severest persecution and suffer death in its cruelest forms. This gradually ceased after the Reformation, when the opposition encountered assumed more refined forms. The wicked still shoot at the righteous, but with arrows which are bitter words. Even here, however, generally speaking there is not much activity, but there is another sphere where we can endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

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

Sometimes this daily round is associated with particularly trying experiences. Some soldiers of the cross are called upon to endure hardness under conditions of chronic ill-health; others in connection with the burdens and changes which advancing years bring in the impairment of the mental and physical powers. To the aged and aging Christian there comes with special emphasis the injunction to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Restriction of movement, failing faculties, confinement to home, hospital or institution, may demand more soldierly qualities than ever before. To all such veterans our Lord, as the captain of their salvation, points to his own example. Confronted with the awful horrors of death by crucifixion, with all its dreadful agony and shame, and God-forsaken-ness, he replies simply, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" - John 18:11.

What is the cup of life's experiences that we find most difficult to drink: the most trying and testing? No matter what it might be, shall we not say with him, "The cup which *my Father* hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Not the cup which circumstances have poured, or which this or that has caused to come, but which my Father, too wise to err, too loving to be unkind, who himself suffers with me-the cup which *he* has poured, shall I not drink it?

Thus following closely in the steps of the Master, we shall "endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ."

- A. D. Kirkwood, Scot.

Israel Today

*"Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion; for the time to favor her, yea, the set time, is come."
- Psa. 102:13.*

Together with related Scriptures, the text quoted above is discussed in our booklet, *The Place of Israel in the Plan of God*. There, in response to the question as to whether there is any way to ascertain when "the set time" would be, it is suggested that "time prophecies are not to be measured from any one *particular year* to another, but from one era to another.... What we should be on the lookout for is not a thunderbolt from the skies, but *a noticeable change* in the *trend* of events. We should be watching and intelligently reading the signs of the times, and noting how they are fitting in with the prophetic forecasts."

Nearly four years have passed since these words were written. It is, therefore, proper to inquire: Has there been a noticeable change in the trend of events? We reply: No competent observer could be found today, who would question it.

Out of the maze of confusing and conflicting reports reaching us, two distinct trends are becoming increasingly evident. One relates to World Powers-the other to developments within Israel itself.

WORLD POWERS

Before World War II, there were a number of "Great Powers" - the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia and Japan. From that conflict, however, only two emerged, namely, the United States (which became the leader of the Western Countries) and Russia.

Moreover, as recently as 1956, an event took place which may prove to be one of the important turning points of history. In that year, Russia became a major power in the Middle East. This was an accomplishment which Great Britain had struggled, for years, to prevent. Since that time, it is not too much to say that, humanly speaking, the fate of Europe and, indeed, of the whole world, has depended on American policies in the Middle East.

On January 5, 1957, President Eisenhower, speaking before a joint session of Congress, stated that the peace of the world was being endangered by subversive activity on the part of Soviet Russia, by sending its agents to incite trouble in the Middle East countries. He asked that the United States provide both military and economic aid to any nation that requested it. Two months later, his request was embodied in a joint resolution, known as the Eisenhower Middle East Doctrine.

It was not long before this doctrine was put to the test-first, in Jordan, in the spring, and second, in Syria, in the fall. By the end of the year it was plain that the real struggle was between the United States and Russia.

Another six months have passed. What is the situation today? Today's ominous headlines speak for themselves. Listen: "Pro-West Government of Iraq Ousted; Regime Backing Nasser Set Up." That was last Monday. The next day they read: "5,000 Marines Landing in Lebanon." Russia, of course, "Demands U. S. Recall Troops." Instead, "U. S. Rushes Paratroops to Mid-East," and "British Paratroops Land in Jordan."

ISRAEL

The trend here can be understood only by looking at Modern Israel against the background of the Old Zionism from which it sprang.

Zionism has always meant different things to different people. In this connection one is reminded of a saying attributed to the American humorist, Mark Twain: "First get the facts straight; then distort them all you please."

The facts are that the Messianic concept with which the Zionist movement commenced under Theodore Herzl; that concept with which it was continued under Chaim Weizmann and, until recently, under the leadership of Ben-Gurion, is today, to say the very least, being challenged.

This Messianic concept, while including the purpose of a National Home in Palestine for the Jewish people, envisioned much more than that. It looked forward to the time when the theme of all the Hebrew prophets would be finding fulfillment; -- when Israel, having itself returned to the faith of Abraham, would become the leader of other peoples in the ways of truth and righteousness -- of justice and love.

When that time comes, as the Scriptures indeed assure us will one day be the case, Israel will have become a theocracy. But this will not come about until their great Messiah comes, not only to conquer their foes, but to subdue their hearts. (See *The Place of Israel in the Plan of God*, pages 17-21.)

Meantime Israel is operating as a democracy. Before Israel achieved political independence, it made no *practical* difference whether a Jew were a Zionist or not. Now the situation has changed.

As with Gentiles, so also with Jews, some believe in one form of religion, others in another, and some in none at all. The position of the Israeli Government is that, if it is to remain a democracy, church and state matters must be kept separate. Consequently, while making no attempt to interfere with orthodox Jews in the observance of their religious laws, it cannot grant their leaders the power to force observance of those laws on other Jews who do not subscribe to them. To quote from a recent speech of Ben-Gurion:

"The Israeli Declaration of Independence proclaimed freedom of religion and conscience. It does not say that the Jewish State is to be ruled by religious laws. On the contrary, it says that the State should not become a theocracy."

This question is not exactly academic. According to news dispatches which reached us only ten days ago, it brought about the resignation of two Cabinet members of Ben-Gurion's coalition government, namely, Moshe Shapiro and Joseph Burg. We are certain to hear more about it ere long.

The extent to which Modern Zionism has drifted from the Old Zionism is aptly told in the following paragraph, condensed from *Time*:

Even though the old Zionist, Socialist and religious ideals still rule, their appeal begins to fade as Israel changes.... Half the newcomers of recent years are Oriental Jews who never shared the peculiar Zionist and Socialist vision of Ben-Gurion's generation.... The Sabras, the native-born Israelis, who led the Sinai war, show signs of wanting to look out for themselves, as their more communal-minded parents never did.

- P. L. Read

Grace Unveiled

"The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." - John 1:17.

IN A recent Bible study *the* question arose as to *the* meaning of *the* word "truth" in *this* text. It was pointed out *that* whereas "truth" is often contrasted with "falsehood," *such* could not be the intention here, as the law is holy, just, and good. - Rom. 7:12.

That John is drawing a contrast between the code given on Sinai and the gospel which came by our Lord Jesus seems clear. But the "law" was itself "truth." Moreover, in types and symbols, it was not less certainly "grace." Evidently then, the contrast must lie not between "falsehood" and "truth," but between "symbol" and "reality." Indeed, Moffatt actually employs the word "reality" instead of "truth" in his translation: "Grace and reality are ours through Jesus Christ." So also in verse 14: "We have seen his glory ... full of grace and reality."

However, a still finer shade of meaning becomes apparent when we learn that the Apostle is really employing a figure of speech rarely, if ever, used in English, although its meaning may be verified in Webster and in other English dictionaries. It is known as "hendiadys" (from the Greek *hen dia dyoin* signifying one by means of two.) It is the expression of *one* idea by the use of *two* nouns joined by the conjunction "and," one of which, generally the latter, is to be understood as an adjective qualifying the other.

Instances of the use of this figure of speech may be seen in a number of Scriptures. For example, in Acts 1:25 when Peter, addressing the brethren on the occasion of their choice of Matthias to serve in the place of Judas, speaks of "ministry and apostleship," he means "apostolic ministry."

Again, in Acts 14:13 when Luke tells us that the priest of Jupiter, intending to offer sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas brought "oxen and garlands," he means "garlanded oxen"; that is, oxen made ready for sacrifice, having on the wreaths which were always put on such occasions round their heads.

Paul's "hope and resurrection of the dead" (Acts 23:6) means "the resurrection hope of the dead" or, which is the same thing, "the hope of the resurrection of the dead."

The expression: "through his philosophy and vain deceit" (Col. 2:8) means "through his vain, deceitful philosophy," for the Apostle does not for one moment admit that the dangerous views against which he is warning the brethren have anything of true philosophy in them.

"The power and coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:16) means "the powerful coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here is an instance in which the first noun (instead of the second) becomes the adjective-a doubly emphatic form.

* Greek *parousia*, presence.

Returning now to our text, James Neil, an able scholar of other days, suggests (as opposed to symbol) the adjective "unveiled," making the phrase read: "grace unveiled."** And surely it is a true representation of the matter that whereas grace came in symbols and types by Moses, real grace or *grace unveiled* came to us through *Jesus Christ*.

** Note his fine use of these words in the poem below.

A comparable figure of speech in which *three* nouns are employed (instead of *one* noun qualified by *two* adjectives) is that of hendiatis. It may be seen in the well-known words of Jesus: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." (John 14:6.) Here *Jesus* is not speaking about his being "the truth," or "the life," but is replying to the question put by Thomas: "How can we know *the way*?" Under the figure of speech termed hendiatis, the last two nouns are to be understood as adjectives qualifying the first noun. Thus understood, the phrase reads: "I am the true and living way." To make his meaning unmistakable our Lord immediately adds: "No man cometh unto the Father but by me."

-P. L. Read

The Bridal Song

"*Thy name is as ointment poured forth.*" - Song of Solomon 1:3.

Sweet the costly fragrance pour'd
O'er the guest at royal board;
Sweet the sacred oil, I trow,
Shed o'er kingly, priestly brow;
Thine hath bade Thy very name
Perfume's choicest breath proclaim.
More than myrrh and cassia's scent

All Thy garb hath odour lent;
For the Spirit's might hath shed
Joy unmeasured o'er Thy head.
Grace in shadows fades away,
Fades in light of noon-tide day;
Grace unveil'd, no tongue can tell,
'Noints Thee Christ, Emmanuel!

"*Therefore do the virgins love thee.*" - Song of Solomon 1:3.

Nor 'tis only I that love,
I alone this passion prove;
All below, the pure, the mild,
On Thy face serene have smil'd;
Round the Lamb, the virgin throng,
Seal'd to sing redemption's song;
Thee, the pure in heart and true
Love as they alone can do.

- James Neil, Scot.

John - the Beloved Disciple

"We all, with unveiled face receiving and reflecting the glory of the Lord, into the same image are being transformed, from glory to glory." - 2 Corinthians 3:18, Rotherham.

HOW exactly these words written by Paul fit the experience of John, the Apostle, who was especially near to the heart of the Lord Jesus, *"one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved."* They are descriptive of a transformation which is inevitable in the experience of every true lover and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. They speak to us of change and progress.

Many are the misconceptions which exist in the minds of Christian people concerning the character of John and his fellow-disciples. How often the expression has been heard: "I like Peter; he seems to have been so like I am -- impetuous, always making blunders -- but in spite of everything loving his Lord." We thank God for Peter and all the records concerning him, but how needful it is to remember that many of the faults so faithfully recorded in Holy Writ were his *before* he received the Holy Spirit. The Peter of the Gospel records is not the Peter seen through his epistles. He, too, "receiving and reflecting the glory of the Lord was being *transformed*, from glory to glory." Let not the child of God compare himself with Peter as he was before the transforming influence of the Spirit began its work in his heart and life. Christian experience should have progressed beyond that.

The prevailing impression concerning John is somewhat different; it is that of one who was ever gentle and good -- so good, so gentle that Jesus could love him in a somewhat more intimate way than any of the other disciples, and therefore he could properly be described as "The beloved disciple." But is that a correct and Scriptural picture of John? Was it an inherent goodness in John which attracted Jesus to him and called forth the special love of the Master? If it was, the question comes to each of us: "What hope is there for me; what assurance have I that Jesus loves me?" O how needful it is to be often reminded that neither John nor we have any goodness of our own which could draw forth the love of the Lord. How applicable are the words of the Prophet of old: *"All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."* (Isa. 64:6.) The Lord Jesus came to earth *"to seek and to save that which was lost"*; not to draw "good people," but "bad people" to himself. It was "while we were, yet *sinner*s that Christ died for us" -- he came *to save the ungodly*. A careful reading of the Gospels leaves a clear impression that those who drew forth the love of the Lord were most conscious of their sinful state and of their need of *a Savior*; that is why he so loved Peter and John, and many others.

The brief record in the Gospels concerning John is very revealing. The name "John" is not found anywhere in the Old Testament, but its equivalent there is Johanan or Jehohanan, meaning "Jehovah's gift" or "Jah is gracious." In the New Testament it is first applied to the Baptist, and was given by the direct command of God. He was the forerunner of the Messiah. The frequency of the name at this period was possibly an indication of the expectancy and longing of many in Israel for the coming of the great Deliverer -- *"Jehovah's Gift,"* the embodiment and symbol of their Messianic hopes. John, the Apostle, was the son of Zebedee, and followed his father's calling as a fisherman. His mother's name was Salome. (Compare Matt. 27:56 and Mark 15:40.) Little is known concerning her, but a brief reference reveals a trait of character which was inherited by John. It was "the mother of James and John" who requested of Jesus that the chief places in his Kingdom should be allotted to her sons. - Matt. 20:20, 21.

SONS OF THUNDER

A glimpse of the character of John is seen at the time Jesus chose him to be one of the twelve Apostles. Our Lord's choice of him was quite deliberate, for it was after a whole night spent in prayer that Jesus chose "the twelve," and they were the men that God had given him. Among them were "*James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he named them 'Boanerges,' which is, 'The sons of thunder.'*" (Mark 3:17.) That was how Jesus saw John when he called him to be an Apostle -- a *son of thunder!* The expression aptly describes his vehemence, his intensity, and his zeal. It displays a quality which can be powerful for either good or evil, and in the unregenerate heart brings sorrow and destruction in its train. The evil effects are vividly portrayed during his association with Jesus, *yet* it must be noted that the incidents recorded concerning him arose out of the intensity, the thunder-like quality, of his love for the Master. John never lost that intensity of love through all his long life; but what a transformation took place in his heart as "with open face he beheld the glory of the Lord, and was changed into the same image from glory to glory." But first let us see him as he was.

It seems probable that his first introduction to the Master was by John the Baptist, and that he was one of the two disciples who heard those wonderful words as the Baptist pointed them to Jesus saying: "*Behold the Lamb of God.*" (John 1:36.) "*And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.*" (John 1:37.) There was the commencement of John's devotion to the Lord, and never did it waver throughout the remaining sixty or seventy years of his long life. It is impossible to read the records concerning John and to meditate upon his wonderful writings, and not be impressed by his love for the Lord and his burning zeal. There was nothing lukewarm about him; once he had chosen to follow the Master, there were no half-measures with him, neither was there any spirit of compromise so far as his allegiance was concerned. To him, perhaps more than to any other disciple, there could be no neutrality between Christ and anti-Christ."

WHOLE-HEARTED CHARACTERS USED BY GOD

Such are the characters the Heavenly Father is pleased to use. He seeks those who are "out-and-out," and wholehearted in whatever they undertake. Wishy-washy characters are of no use to him. Whatever blunders John made, no one could be under any misapprehension concerning his love and loyalty to the Lord Jesus, and should it not be so with every follower of Christ? Is it not sad that any Christian should move among his fellow-men day by day without leaving a clear and unmistakable impression that he or she is wholeheartedly for Christ! How many nice people we meet in our daily contacts, yet there is an uncertainty concerning their allegiance to Christ. May it never be so with us! It is in this respect that the Apostles John and Paul are so much alike; and is it just coincidence that it is to these two intensely devoted men we are indebted for the greater portion of our New Testament? How little would be left if it were deprived of the writings of John and Paul!

These same characteristics, in the unregenerate heart, produce an intolerance which will brook no opposition, and is the cause of great sorrow and suffering to others. It was so with Paul when he was "Saul of Tarsus." Can anything better describe the intensity and zeal of this man than the opening words of Acts, chapter 9: "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest," etc. Such was the man God chose to be "chief of the Apostles." And John -- hear his words: "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us." (Mark 9:38.) What intolerance! What presumption! "*WE forbad him, because he followeth not us!*" Truly indeed he was jealous for the Master, but he had not yet caught the Master's spirit. Yet, in some

measure at least, he "with open face beheld as in a glass the glory of the Lord" when he heard the reply: "Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against me is on our part" - Mark 9:39-40.

REFLECTING THE GLORY OF THE LORD

Let us see to it, brethren, that our love for the Lord does not make us intolerant of those who "follow not with us." John remembered those words when, many years later he wrote: *"Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God, and every one that loves the parent loves the child."* (1 John 5:1, R. S. V.) He had "received" and now was "reflecting" the glory of the Lord.

Here is another glimpse into the disposition of "the beloved disciple" prior to the outpouring of the holy spirit upon him. The record is in Luke 9: "And it came to pass, when the time was come that Jesus should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples, James and John, saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that *we* command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?" A "son of thunder" indeed, yet who could doubt his love for the Lord? Note again his presumption: "Wilt thou that *we* command fire to come down?" And vindictiveness! He would have consumed those who rejected the Lord he loved! Yet again, he sees something of "the glory of the Lord": *"But Jesus turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village."* Maybe we do not wish to consume, but do we long to save those who reject the Lord we love? That is the spirit which "reflects the glory of the Lord."

Again, the Gospel story reveals the pride and ambition of John. "And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to Jesus, and said to him, Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you. And he said to them, What do you want me to do for you? And they said to him, Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." - Mark 10:35, 37, R.S.V.

CHARACTERS IN CONTRAST

From those brief records is seen the character of John as he was-zealous to the point of intolerance; vindictive and unloving; presumptuous, proud, and ambitious-John the beloved disciple. It is in contrast with his character that "the glory of the Lord is revealed," for in his dealings with John our Lord manifests the beauty of his character. How it shines forth in words of love and tenderness, mercy, and compassion! In spite of all his many faults, he who could read the hearts of men, knew the intensity of John's love for him-so real and sincere that he treasured in his heart every word that Jesus spoke.

He was not "a forgetful hearer"; he hid those words away in his heart and pondered over them, catching the spirit of the message until it became a part of his own character-so much so that in his writings none can fail to see a reflection of the Lord's glory. His Gospel reveals how he was continually receiving of the Lord's glory; and what a wonderful reflection of that glory shines forth in his epistles. His intense personal affection is clearly seen in his Gospel. Others record mostly the discourses and parables of Jesus to the multitudes, but John treasures up and records every word and accent of our Lord's more personal conversations and dialogues. He is very close to his Master -- with him to the end. He is present with him on the Mount of Transfiguration, in

Gethsemane, at the mock trials of Jesus, and at the foot of the Cross during his dying hours. He, with Peter, were the first of the Apostles to receive the news of the Lord's resurrection. (John 20:2.) He also is first to recognize the Master during the lovely incident by the seashore, recorded in John 21: *"It is the Lord!"*

O how great is the transformation which was taking place as "with unveiled face he beheld the glory of the Lord!" One has written of him: "The image mirrored in his soul is that of the Son of man who was also the Son of God. He is the Apostle of Love, not because he starts from the easy temper of a general benevolence, nor again as being of a character, soft, yielding, feminine, but because he has grown ever more and more into the likeness of him whom he loved so truly."

LESSONS LEARNED AT THE MASTER'S FEET

What lessons there are for the followers of Christ, and what an example in the life of John! He had lived so close to the Master that he had come to know God himself. It is John who recorded these words of Jesus: *"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"*; and in his epistles he tells what he had learned: "God is Love." Yes, he had seen it all in Jesus. The love of Christ had been shed abroad in his heart, and is reflected in such words as these: *"Love is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love."* (1 John 4:7, 8.) How deeply he had imbibed the words spoken by Jesus during his last discourse to his disciples, and to the end of his life he continually stresses the importance of the "new commandment," that we should love as Jesus loved.

Jerome, one of the early fathers of the Christian Church, relates that when John had come to old age and was too feeble to walk, he was carried into the gatherings of the Lord's people by younger men. He was no longer able to give long discourses, but constantly he would repeat the words: "Little children, love one another." When asked for the reason for his repetition, his reply was: "Because it is the command of the Lord, and enough is done, if this is done." The writings of John suggest that there was much truth in this testimony by Jerome, and thus it is evident that to the end of his long life John was continually reflecting the image of his Lord. Of him it is written: "When all capacity to work and teach is gone; when there is no strength even to stand, the spirit still retains its power to love, and the lips are still opened to repeat without change or variation the command which summed up all his Master's will: Little children, love one another!"

How different would have been the history of the Christian Church if professing followers of the Lord had paid equal attention to this commandment; how altered would be present conditions among even enlightened Christians! The tragedy of every organized section of the Christian Church has been that they have failed to give heed to this fundamental commandment concerning which John said: "Enough is done, if this is done."

HOW OUR LORD'S DISCIPLES ARE IDENTIFIED

Again, it is John who treasured the words of Jesus, and, catching their spirit, records them many years later: *"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, If Ye Have Love One Toward Another."* (John 13:35.) Have we who profess to be followers of the Lord Jesus today, faced up to the challenge of those words which were spoken during the closing hours of his earthly life? Surely it is a challenge to each and every one who names the name of Christ! Not without foundation has been the jibe or taunt of unbelievers: "See how these Christians love one another!" How few indeed are those who can escape the condemnation of those words. *Is it that we have not received sufficiently of "the glory of the Lord"? Is it that we have not gazed upon him sufficiently-"beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord"? Or is it that the "mirror" has been*

beclouded by dogma and creed and all our varying interpretations of Scripture? So often have we loved those who accept our particular interpretation, accounting such only as "disciples of the Lord" and rejecting others whose love for him is equally sincere. So often have we made "knowledge" the test of discipleship; hence the barriers which have divided Christian from Christian, and the spirit of sectarianism which Paul has described as "carnality."

O how we need to examine ourselves afresh concerning this matter, and to "face up to" the challenge of these questions, for so much is at stake. Again it is John who writes: *"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth." This is the real proof that we are "in the truth." "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him."* (1 John 3:18, 19.) The Lord Jesus placed but one test upon our discipleship: the keeping of his commandments, all of which are summed up in the great commandment to LOVE. Thus has John so wonderfully reflected "the glory of the Lord" in his writings.

As the beloved disciple, John, opens his first epistle, he reveals the great desire which is in his heart, that his readers should see what he has seen, and thus share his experience of fellowship with the Father and with the Lord Jesus Christ. The first three verses are a practical example of Paul's meaning of the words: "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord." *"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."* - 1 John 1:1-3.

How easy it is to see that John is obsessed, not with a theory, *but with a person-the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.* His Gospel opens with the same strain. Without any preamble he presents to our gaze a vision of the Logos, "the Word" - our Lord as he was "before the world was." *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men."* (John 1:1-4.) And John in the closing book of the Bible sees "Jesus only" as he opens his "Revelation of Jesus Christ" - Jesus, in all his resurrection glory. How marked is this distinction in the writings of John! In the Gospel the Apostle introduces Jesus as he was in his prehuman existence -- the Word in whom was life. In his Epistle he immediately draws attention to the Jesus he had seen "in the flesh" "the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it." In the Revelation he begins with a vision of "this same Jesus" Christ raised and exalted -- "he that liveth and was dead" -- but *always it is Jesus!*

Is it not this that explains so much concerning the transforming influence in his life? He grew like the One he lived with, and shall it not also be with us?

- Edwin Allbon, Eng.

The Question Box

"For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after any skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." - Job 19:25-27.

LAST month in our discussion of these verses, we spent a little time examining their context, and realized that to job had been revealed the glorious hope *of life beyond the grave*. Little wonder that he should desire to share this hope with his fellow-men -- that his words concerning it should be written in a book, or graven in the rock to minister comfort to all generations.

But all this is only preface. The Inscription itself, as we have already noted, is contained in Job 14:25-27. According to one scholar, "In the Hebrew it is written throughout in the true monumental, or lapidary style, the style appropriate to words which were to be so laboriously hewn and engraved. The thought is crushed into the fewest possible phrases, the phrases into the fewest possible words; and, as might be expected in so memorable a sentence, a sentence designed to quicken thought and hope in *many* generations, at least some of the words are capable of a double sense, and the full intention of the whole is not to be arrived at save with labor and pains." Let us take this remarkable Inscription, then, word by word.

"I know"

According to the scholars, the Hebrew word denotes absolute perception, absolute cognition, absolute certainty of knowledge. It is no mere guess, speculation, yearning, that we are to hear from job, but that of which he is profoundly and unalterably convinced; the very best and surest thing he has to tell us.

"My Redeemer"

In Hebrew the word is *Goel*. This word Goel was the name for the next of kin who, among the Hebrews, was bound to redeem a kinsman who had fallen into debt or bondage, and to avenge his blood if he had been slain in a quarrel. It is no mere man, no human kinsman, that Job had in his thoughts. The best men he knew had already turned against him. It is God himself that Job has in mind who will be his Goel, that God of whose eternal justice he was so fully persuaded as to believe that he would raise and vindicate the very man whom he himself had smitten to the earth. [In the light of the New Testament *we* know, what Job could not have known, that the Son would be the Father's active agent in this, as in all other matters (1 Cor. 8:6); that the Umpire, Daysman or Arbiter for whom, in Job 9:32-35, he had expressed himself as longing, was to be none other than the Messiah -- our Lord Jesus, in resurrection glory.]

"My Redeemer liveth"

Job's Goel liveth. That is to say, this Goel did not come into existence centuries later, but was already existing, when the Book of Job was written, and when job himself was living. This much, at least, the word implies; this much, at least, was in job's mind.

"And he shall stand"

Job's Goel will rise up even after he himself has gone down into the grave; rise up, as the word hints, like a conqueror, a redeemer -- a redeemer being always a conqueror; for how should he deliver the captive save by subduing his captor?

"At the latter day"

Scholars tell us that the original word is ambiguous, and may be taken substantively or adverbially. Those who take it in the first way render it by the word "Survivor" or the "Last One." They understand Job to mean that this *Goel* who *lives* and who is to appear for him, is absolutely the "Last One"; and that, as Job's Survivor, he is bound to vindicate and avenge him. Most scholars, however, hold to the view that the more common Hebrew usage requires the word to be taken adverbially, and render it by "at last." Such understand that Job, either because he did not know (or did not wish to say) when his deliverance should come, left the time of it indefinite. He simply throws it forward to some distant date, in "the world of tomorrow."

"Upon the earth"

Here, again, commentators tell us that we have an ambiguous phrase, capable of more than one sense. "Upon the earth" is the rendering of both *Authorized* and *Revised Versions*, and is, perhaps, as good and probable a rendering as any. *Rotherham*, however, and several others translate: "Over (my) dust." Whichever translation be accepted, it could hardly be taken literally. Job could scarcely have meant that his victorious Goel would literally stand upon the earth, whether over his tomb or elsewhere. It seems better, therefore, to take the phrase metaphorically, and to understand it as equivalent to "after my death."

Perhaps without adding anything to the sense of the words, the contents of the verse may be summarized thus: "I, for my part, *know* (though I know not *how* I know) that my Goel already exists, and is preparing to take up my cause; that God himself will be my Goel, that *he* will do a kinsman's part for me, both redeeming me from my miseries and wrongs, and avenging me on those who have inflicted them upon me. *When* he will come I know not, nor *how* nor *where*; but this I know, that at last, long after I have sunk into the tomb, he will appear for me, clad in robes of victory and of judgment."

"Though after my skin worms destroy this body"

There seems no reason to doubt that Job fully expected a speedy death, fully expected, therefore, that his deliverance would not take place until after his death. This conclusion is put, one would suppose, wholly beyond question, when we combine with this phrase the final clause of the previous verse: "And he shall stand at the last over this dust." And yet there are some scholars who gravely maintain these phrases to mean no more than that Job believed that he should be reduced to a skeleton before God appeared to save and clear him, that his rehabilitation would therefore take place in this present life! Even Albert Barnes, in his justly celebrated "Notes," came to the conclusion (he confesses with great reluctance) that the passage does not refer to the Messiah and the resurrection of the dead, but merely to "an expectation which Job had that God would come forth as his vindicator in some such way as he is declared afterwards to have done," at the close of this present life.

But if Job meant no more than that, he surely took the strangest way of conveying his meaning. Any man whose body is torn to pieces, devoured, destroyed, reduced to dust, could not be other than dead, if words have any force or significance. Moreover, if Job intended to predict only an occurrence so common as the restoration of life, health, and wealth, to one emaciated by disease and broken by misfortune, why does he introduce his prediction with such an amazing pomp and emphasis? Why speak as though he had made some grand discovery of truth so invaluable and transcendent that it deserved to be cut deep in the rock, to abide for ever? The whole tone, no less than the express words, of the Inscription, demand a far larger interpretation than this.

"Yet in my flesh"

Once again, according to the scholars, we have an ambiguous expression. For the Hebrew word is translated variously, "from," "in," "out of," "without" my flesh -- "from" being the literal translation.

Whether Job would be in a body of flesh or without such a body when, at last, he would "see" God, he, of course, did not know. However, it seems most unlikely that, at the time he uttered these words, he even concerned himself with such a question. He had just reached the positive conviction that after his death, God himself would vindicate his integrity and that he, Job, would see him do so. With such a hope suddenly invading his mind and taking instant but full possession of it, it seems most unlikely that he would at once begin to wonder as to what the nature of his body at that time would be; whether flesh or some other substance.

In the light of the New Testament, *we*, the Gospel-Age Church know that in Job's case, it will be in his flesh that he shall see God.

"Shall I see God"

Job must *see* his Goel, for any vindication of which he were to be unconscious would have no value to him. A deliverance of which he remained insensible, would be no deliverance to him. No! -- he must *see* God.

On this point he is insistent, referring again and again to it, even in this brief inscription. For example, note the very next words: "Whom I shall *see*"; and, moreover, see "*for myself*"; that is to say, as the *Revised Version* makes clear, see "*on my side*"; redressing the wrongs which he himself has inflicted, and clearing the character which he himself has brought under suspicion; no longer an adversary, but a champion; no longer *against* me, but *for* me.

So, also, in the next clause of the verse: "*And mine eyes shall behold, and not another.*" Here, again, while he does not mean to assert that no one but himself will be aware of his vindication, he does surely mean that when his vindication comes, he himself, will know it. Not (only) the eyes of others shall see his Vindicator (and know that he is indeed Job's Vindicator), but *his own eyes shall see him*.

In speaking of a time to come when in his flesh he will "see" God, we are not to understand Job's utterance to be in conflict with the teaching of New Testament writers, who inform us that "No man hath seen God at any time"; "whom no man hath seen nor can see" (John 1:18; 1 Tim. 6:16). Rather we are to understand Job's words to be in harmony with such expressions as "all flesh shall *see* the salvation of God"; "*look* unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (Isa. 52:10; 45:22); or, as Christians today sometimes remark: "*I see* God's hand in this, that, or the other matter."

Conclusion

To summarize then: Job had lost confidence in the doctrine he had once held, and which his comforters (?) still urged upon him, that in this present life every man receives his due. *That*, since it is contradicted by the most intimate facts of his own experience, is no longer credible to him. But he has not, therefore, lost confidence in the justice of God; he is simply driven to the belief that the divine justice is of a larger scope than he had hitherto conceived; that it covers a wider space and demands longer periods of time for its full development, periods which stretch beyond the narrow span of this present life, into the "world of tomorrow."

He knew and was sure that God would appear for him and redeem him; but he did not know how or when. And having come to this happy conclusion, the cry of his heart was "How long, O Lord, how long!" This we may gather from his closing words: "My reins be consumed within me," or, as another translates: "My heart pines away within me." His very hope evidently filled him with a sick, an almost heartbreaking, longing for its fulfillment; such a longing as filled the heart of St. John who, on hearing the words of Jesus: "Surely, I come quickly," responded (as have all the footstep followers of the Master since), "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

- P. L. Read

Recently Deceased

Bro. Frank Gentile, Sydney, N. S. - (June)
Sr. Clara Haderler, St. Louis, Mo. - (June)
Bro. George E. Lodge, Chicago, Ill. - (July)
Sr. A. B. Maynard, Temple City, Cal. - (June)
Sr. Mary A. Olson, Wauwatosa, Wis. - (May)
Bro. James A. Perrine, Canton, Ill. - (June)
Sr. H. A. Thomas, Springfield, Ohio - (June)
Bro. John Weinz, Wauwatosa, Wis. - (June)