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## The Blessedness of Longing

*"My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord:  
my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." - Psalm 84:2.*

AMONG the many paradoxical expressions of the Lord's Word, perhaps few are more of this nature than the frequent reminders that to hunger and thirst represents a state of blessedness. This seeming contradiction of thought appears in the repeated promises that those who thirst for God, "shall never thirst" after they drink of the living water he supplies. Yet Christian experience seems to contradict that expectation; for is it not true that a greater and yet greater thirst is created by that wonderful living water? Will not the testimony of all who drink deeply of that water agree that it produces a soul-thirst such as our text clearly teaches? How, then, can it be said that such "shall never thirst"? To be filled with a longing such as this text represents would seem suggestive of a rather unhappy or unsatisfied state of mind and therefore the very reverse of blessedness, yet how many there are who will readily confess that

"Of all the myriad moods of mind  
That through the soul come thronging,  
Which one was e'er so dear, so kind,  
So beautiful, as longing."

In spiritual life, longing is a sign of a healthy state of the soul, whereas satisfaction frequently gives evidence of disease. The very best evidence of heart relationship with the Lord, according to his own Word, is to be found in being possessed of so intense a love for him, that he alone can satisfy the deepest longings of our soul. Thus viewed, our text is not suggestive of a heart painfully unsatisfied, seeking for some unfound source of delight and joy, but of a heart that *has found a* source so completely satisfying that nothing else could possibly supply its need. This thought is contained in several of the Psalms. In the sixty-third we find it expressed in these words, "My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land" (v. 1). And again we read, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God" (Ps. 42:1). In both of these sublime expressions of the heart's longing after God, we are shown that "there is something deeper and more urgent than the intellectual craving for the Infinite, the

natural desire and impulse of the human mind to seek a perfect object for its thought. It is something more even than the aspiration of a sinful and self disappointed soul towards moral beauty and sinless holiness. It is the personal longing for intimate communion with the living God. To come into vital contact with God, not as a Remote Thought, but as a Living Person; to feel that he who made the universe is not only the Eternal Wisdom but the Wise God, not only the Infinite Love, but the Loving Father; to be assured by touch of soul that he is an ever present reality, and to perceive the gentle flow of his affection within the channel of the heart-this is the water of everlasting life, the only draught that can truly quench the craving of the spirit. The assurance of immortality alone is not enough. For if we are told that we are to live forever and still be left without God, eternity stretches before us like a boundless desert, a perpetual and desolate orphanage. *It is divine companionship that the spirit needs first of all and most deeply.*"

### **WHAT IS LONGING?**

This, then, is the larger meaning of our Lord's statement, "Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6). Just so long as such longing continues to be an active factor in the life, just so long will the search after God be continued. As the heart expands through the knowledge of God, so will the capacity to enjoy him also continue to expand. The thirsty yet happy satisfied heart, well knows that "of all the myriad moods of mind" there is nothing "so dear, so kind, so beautiful, as longing" after the living God.

A divine law always operative in God's dealings with his people is given us by the Apostle James (James 4:8): "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." Our hearts must be reaching out with intense desire for the enriching knowledge of God ere he will reveal himself to us. The door to this intimate fellowship stands open to all who desire to enter, and once really entered, it will reveal boundless fields waiting our survey and exploration. There is therefore no condition of heart more to be sought after than this desire to draw nigh to God, since his law or requirement is that we furnish this evidence of a genuine longing for the special blessings he desires to give us. This being true, we must agree that "the highest state is one of hunger and thirst, intense desire for more life, more holiness, more power, closer communion with God, more of the divine likeness in the soul.

"The Gospel promises rest to those who come to Christ. Peace was one of the benedictions the Savior left for his people. Contentment is one of the graces and duties enjoined upon the Christian, but spiritual hunger is not incompatible with either peace or contentment. It is not unrest; it is not anxiety or worry: it is not murmuring discontent: it is a deep longing for more and ever more of all blessings -- calmer rest, sweeter peace, more perfect contentment, with richer heartfulness of Christ, and more and more of all the gifts of the spirit. It is depicted in the Psalms as an intense thirst for God, not the bitter cry of an unforgiven soul for mercy, but the deep, passionate yearning of a loving spirit for closer, fuller, richer, more satisfying communion with God himself. We find it in the life of the greatest of the Apostles, who, wherever we see him, on whatever radiant height, is still pressing on, with unsatisfied longing and quenchless ardor, toward loftier summits and more radiant peaks, crying ever for more intimate knowledge of Christ, and more and more of the fullness of God. The ideal Christian life is one of insatiable thirst, never pausing in any arbor of spiritual content, but ever wooed on by visions of new joys and attainments."

### **ASK AND YE SHALL RECEIVE**

How wonderful it is that God should leave it to us to determine the measure of happiness we shall enjoy. Though the storehouse of his gifts is full to overflowing, and though opening the windows

of heaven to flood us with blessings beyond our capacity to contain does not in any way diminish its supply, yet for all that, the measure we receive will be proportionate to our asking in faith. As in the case of the widow whose supply of oil was replenished by the Prophet just in proportion to the number and size of the vessels she brought to him, so with us, as we come desiring more of God, more of the holy spirit, according to our faith and the intensity of our longing, it shall be given unto us. Longing, therefore, is the very soul of true faith expecting answers to prayer. Certainly we really desire nothing more than we are eager to ask for. There are many who pray for a closer walk with God, and for a more definite experience of his presence, but all such praying is profitless if it does not represent a consuming desire, a longing to enter into such a joy and fellowship. Mere desire will of itself open none of the windows of heaven to us, take us into no greater experiences of the power of Christ in the heart, give us no verification of promises actually fulfilled to us, wherein God has pledged himself to reward our never ceasing desire to know him better. Without effort, prayer is null and void. Inactive daydreaming is not prayer. Only when there is that peculiar combination of experience, earnest longing and consistent effort, illustrated in the various expressions of the Psalmist which we are now considering, does the Lord have any interest in our petitions. Only let our longing be such as will make it possible for us to truthfully say, "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God," and there will be no vagueness of conviction about 'the meaning of God's promise to open heaven's windows.

### **BECOMES A TRANSFORMING POWER**

The hunger of heart of which the Bible speaks, must, like every holy aspiration, have its origin in God. This very longing of our heart, therefore, is nothing more nor less than the life of God imparted to us and yearning within us to grow from glory to glory up into the full stature of Christ. Under God's gracious hand this hunger becomes a transforming power, purifying these characters of ours, changing them little by little, and day by day, into the likeness of his own dear Son. In other words, we are "transformed by the renewing of our mind, proving [experiencing] what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Thus Scripture teaches us that, "as a man thinketh in his heart so is he." The heavenly ideal ever kept before the mind, and longed after with intensity of desire, carves it into the soul. What an incentive to great ideals and large expectations! Who would think it sufficient to sit down contented with present attainments of knowledge and grace, or to merely sigh for a greater measure of the more abundant life? Properly understood and acted upon, our every longing after God should at once begin to fill us with an impulse as effective as thirst impels the hart to search for the water brooks. As the poet has very well expressed it,

"I will not waste one breath of life in sighing;  
For other ends has life been given to me --  
Duties and self-devotion, daily dying  
Into a higher, better life with Thee,  
My God, with Thee."

As we find our heart's cry for the living God being answered by his drawing nearer and nearer to us, what results may be expected? Will there be any tangible evidence that life and character do change under the influence of an enlarging revelation of God? Surely so! If in truth it can be said, "A man is known by the company he keeps," and who can dispute it? then if we keep company with God and Jesus, will there not be a manifest evidence of it? Surely there will be. If keeping company with Jesus affected men so manifestly years ago, so that their none too sympathetic contemporaries were ready to acknowledge that "they had been with Jesus and learned of him," can it be otherwise today? It cannot be. As they were molded by his presence, so we will be.



## **DWELLING WITH THE ROSE**

Very beautifully has this truth been set forth in familiar verse, and who can read it without feeling a strengthening impulse to keep very much closer to him whose garments are "perfumed with myrrh and frankincense:

"In memory's halls there wakes, the while, a legend, quaint and old.  
How once upon a time, one day, a sage picked up, we're told,  
A lump of common clay, so redolent with perfume rare,  
He marveled, and the question wondering asked, 'Whence dost thou bear  
Such fragrance, O, thou lump of clay?' In tones of deep repose  
There came the sweet reply, 'I've been dwelling with the rose.'

" ... From my heart of hearts I cry,  
'Thou lovely Rose of Sharon, may I ever dwell with Thee,  
So closely that the fragrance of Thy love shall cling to me!  
Oh, fill me with the spirit of Thy sweet humility,  
Then all shall see and know, dear Lord, that I have learned of Thee;  
And let mine earthly pilgrimage, until its blessed close,  
Each day and hour bear witness, I've been dwelling with the Rose!"

A daydream, surely! An impractical idealism, likely to vitiate the real business of Christian life! Yes, so some might think. Must we then conclude that the Psalmist in the texts we are considering cannot be regarded as a personification of practical devotion? God's blessed Word answers in numberless ways, No, that cannot be! From a vast multitude who have in all ages known what it means to long after God with heart and flesh like the Psalmist, will come an emphatic, No! it cannot be. Many such bear testimony to having oftentimes fainted for the courts of the Lord, with heart and flesh crying out for the living God, and have gratefully appropriated to themselves the words of the Psalmist so expressive of longings that only God centered hearts *can* know, and heaven-inspired language can express. Oh! "Great is the mystery of godliness!" -- "Christ in you the hope of glory!" The "life of Christ manifest in our mortal bodies." "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the holy spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"

What real possibilities lie in these "spirit and life" statements of the Word of God! If our crying after God is an intelligent searching after him, with a clearly defined objective before us, will not the ultimate result be a blessed verification of all the texts quoted above, wrought out in our lives? Surely so! and this alone is the only possible satisfaction to the soul athirst for God.

Brethren, to what we have already attained of these blessed verities, let us follow on by the same rule, until that which is perfect has come, until we see Him face to face, until we awake satisfied forever with his likeness. Praise his name for the assurance of such consummation to all who with thirsty, hungering, longing hearts, perserveringly "follow on to know the Lord."

- J. J. Blackburn

## My Ain Countrie

I am far frae my hame, an' I'm weary aften-whiles,  
For the langed-for hame-bringin', an' my Faither's welcome  
An' I'll ne'er be fu' content, until mine een do see  
The gowden gates o' heav'n an' my ain countrie.  
The earth is fleck'd wi' flowers, mony-tinted, fresh an' gay.  
The birdies warble blithe-ly, for my Faither made them sae:  
But these sights an' these soun's will as naething be to me,  
When I hear the angels singin' in my ain countrie.

Sae little noo I ken, o' yon blessed, bonnie place,  
I only ken it's Hame, whaur we shall see His face;  
It wad surely be eneuch for ever mair to be  
In the glory o' His presence, in oor ain countrie.  
Like a bairn to its mither, a wee birdie to its nest,  
I wad fain be gangin' noo, unto my Saviour's breast,  
For He gathers in His bosom witless, worthless lambs like me  
An' carries them Himsel', to His ain countrie.

He is faithfu' that hath promised, an' He'll surely come again,  
He'll keep His tryst wi' me, at what oor I dinna ken;  
But He bids me still to wait, an' ready aye to be,  
To gang at ony moment to my ain countrie.  
Sae I'm watching aye, and singin' o' my hame, as I wait  
For the soun'in' o' His fitfa' this side the gowden gate:  
God gie His grace to ilka ane wha' listens noo to me,  
That we a' may gang in gladness to oor ain countrie.

- *Mary Lee Demarest (1860-1881)*

## The Opened Hand of God

*"When thou openest thy hand, they are filled with good things." - Psalm 104:28 (R.S.V.).*

IN THE Scriptures there is much written concerning God's hand. Hand especially signifies God's power, his care, protection, or providence. The Scriptures unanimously testify that man is not an independent creature and that without God's help he cannot exist. The very existence of man is dependent upon God. "For in him we live, and move, and have our being"(Acts 17:28). In Psalm 104 the inspired writer mentions a variety of creatures. Beginning from verse 24, we read: "The earth is full of thy creatures ... living things both small and great ... these all look to thee, to give them their food in due season. When thou openest thy hand, they are filled with good things" (R.S.V.). The Scriptures repeatedly declare that without God's help man cannot properly order his ways. At every step man is confronted with certain needs, though it is but rarely that he knows or realizes the extent of these needs.

The importance of this need is not brought home to the heart and mind of man because of the universal generosity of Almighty God. Only if God withdrew his activities from this planet entirely, would man come face to face with the absoluteness and universality of his needs. If God kept back the rains which fall impartially upon the just and the unjust; if he withheld the fruitful seasons (Acts 14:17) with their bounteous harvests; if he locked up his winds in their treasuries, then man would realize the utter helplessness of his position in the scheme of things.

The effects of local famines have been serious and have brought ruin and destruction to man and beast. But these famines have usually been localized. There has generally been abundance elsewhere, and relief has usually been dispatched from the region of abundance to the place of want. God has never withheld his gifts worldwide. He, has never caused the universal harvest to fail. So unfailingly, yet naturally, has the bountiful God bestowed his gifts, that men sow, doubting not for a moment but that they will reap, and call the sowing and reaping Nature's common round. But should God withhold or close his hand, their sowing would be vain. Man may plant, and man may water, but without God there would be no increase, no gathering or harvest.

### **GOD'S ABILITY AND WILLINGNESS TO GIVE**

The other side of the question, obverse to man's need is God's ability and disposition to give. These two factors in universal life are linked together inseparably. God is the Giver of every good and perfect gift and the source of unfailing abundance, man is the creature of unending need. - James 1:17; 10-18.

This is no less so in the religious life of man. Here again the persistently reiterated theme of Holy Writ is man's utter helplessness and universal need. Again the other side of the question, obverse to man's need, is God's ability and willingness to give.

The beginning of God's generosity to fallen man dates from Eden days, when in the act of imposing the sentence required by his broken Law, God promised that mother Eve's seed should eventually bruise or crush the Serpent's head. Such generosity He repeated to Noah, in that he promised summer and winter, seedtime and harvest.

To Abraham God gave the most wonderful promise which is the basic feature of the whole Plan of Redemption. By the gift of his promise God also gave hope to fallen man. God said to man; "I

will bring blessing to you." Man, musing on the promise, said: "God will bring blessing to us some day," and so hope and expectancy was born.

### **GOD'S GREATEST AND BEST GIFT**

In due time God gave to man his greatest and most precious gift, his well-beloved Son. This was the gift that lay dearest to his own heart. This beloved Son of God came to earth bearing the tidings of the Almighty's great love for men, especially for those who were the children of God's friend, Abraham (James 2:23; Isa. 41:8). What tremendous possibilities God set before that generation in Jerusalem when Messiah came to them (Dan. 9:25). In the first place God purposed to give through his Son repentance to Israel for their national sins (Luke 1:68-79; Acts 5:31). God desired to touch the deeper springs of their hearts by the ministry of his beloved Son, and thus to lead them to repentance.

Jesus was destined to be a bringer of light to his people. God desired to bestow the gift of understanding to that generation, so that it would comprehend what his higher purposes were, that the heavenly things were to begin to displace the earthly carnal things. To those who were responsive to the new teachings, God gave an understanding of the mysteries of the kingdom. "Unto you it is given to know" what was "hidden" from other ages and generations. - Matthew 13:11; Mark 4:11.

### **THE LIFE-GIVING BREAD**

God gave Jesus to that people, to be to them as Bread of Life. In a manner similar to the Wilderness days when God strewed the earth morning by morning with manna, so again "Today" (Heb. 4:7) God provided Living Bread for the children of Abraham (John 6:27-65). In some supernatural way the words of the Lord would have sustained their deeper life (John 6:63), and eventuated in eternal life. In some super-mundane way his flesh would sustain the life of the world. God gave Living Bread to those who would eat (John 6:32). Again to sustain life, everlasting life, God gave Jesus as the Water of Life, of which if anyone should drink, it would satisfy his thirst forever. - John 4:10-15.

God gave Israel a Shepherd, who would have guided and pastured the flock of God in paths of righteousness (John 10:1-16). But there was no beauty about him; nothing that would please them. They wanted a king, a conquering Messiah. Jesus came as a sufferer, a Man of Sorrows, an offering for sin. The nation rejected him, but to as many as received him, God gave the privilege to become his own sons (John 1:12). To those whose hands were open to take, God gave many other gifts along with and through his beloved Son. God was giving generously and regularly to all those who knew their need and were ready to receive. Indeed God is the Giver of every good and perfect gift. "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift." - 2 Cor. 9:15.

Even after they despised and crucified his Son, God still kept the door of opportunity open for all who needed more than the ritual and ceremonial sacrifices of the Temple. To many of them the words of Jesus had opened a new world of possibilities. He told them of opportunities and privileges which their fathers had never heard (Matt. 13:35). He set new longings in their hearts. But because they had been powerless against the Sanhedrin and the priests and had not been able to prevent their fearful deeds, Jesus had been slain. But how readily they listened on that wonderful morning, when "Peter stood up with the eleven" and told the people that God had raised Jesus from the dead, and again desired through him to give repentance to Israel. - Acts 2:14; 5:31.



But only a remnant were found willing to repent and accept the gift of God. To fill the place vacated by this hardhearted race, God turned to the Gentiles to take out of them *a people for his name*. To these also God gave repentance unto salvation. "Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us [the true Israelites], who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?" or "How could I stand in God's way," said Peter in his own defense (Acts 11:17). "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" was the response of those who listened to his preaching. Was then repentance a gift of God? Yes indeed! They who received the word of Truth into honest and good hearts, were those whose hearts the Lord had "opened" (Acts 16:14). No man comes to the Son except he whom the Father draws (John 6:44, 65). The "faith" that saves is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8) through the operation of his Word (Rom. 10:13-17) and his holy spirit in our hearts. The "peace" that guards our hearts comes also from God (Phil. 4:7; John 14:27). This is a precious gift to the dwellers in this evil and tempestuous world. Perfect peace is bestowed upon all who dwell upon the Rock of Ages. - Isaiah 26:3, 4.

### **GOD'S LOVE IS SHED IN OUR HEARTS**

Love, that most desirable Godlike quality, is shed abroad in our hearts by the invisible power of God, his holy spirit, which he gives to us (Rom. 5:5). We cannot add one inch to our spiritual stature by worry or anxiety. It is possible to spend much time talking over the necessity for our growth in love and yet be forgetful that love is a fruitage, manifested by an abundance of good works (Gal. 5:22, 23). And this is as much a matter of the husbandman's [God's] concern as that of the branch in the vine itself. God is more willing to give the holy spirit to those that ask him than any earthly father is to give his children food (Matt. 7:11). The more the holy spirit is in our hearts the more love we shed abroad in this life. This love also is a gift from God, for we love him because he first loved us. - 1 John 4:10.

The bestowment of the holy spirit in our hearts is the basis of character development (2 Cor. 3:18), and is also God's pledge of the inheritance we hope to receive. It is the assurance that God has taken us into his family and into his service; and that if we faithfully discharge our present duties, our promised final reward will be sure. Therefore the Apostle's advice is: "Look to yourselves, that you may not lose what you have worked for, but may win a full reward" (2 John 8, R.S.V.). "God hath sealed us, and given the earnest of the spirit in our hearts. - 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5.

This gift of the holy spirit is an energizing power. It is not a spirit of fear or timidity, but is of cool, reasoned courage, and of a sound mind. It produces a sense of sanctity blended with sanity in our minds, a well-balanced and properly ordered sanctification of life. This, too, is a gift from the great and benevolent Giver, and is by no means the outcome of psychological self-attainment. It is God who develops and prepares us for our resurrection change (2 Cor. 5:5). The transformation is accomplished by the power of his spirit. "We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18-R.S.V.). For the day-to-day struggle, He giveth grace and strength to such as draw near his Throne of grace, humbly beseeching assistance in their time of need. - Heb. 4:16; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5.

Thus the whole range of the Christian's life and experience is called into being and sustained by the opening of God's hand and by bountifully bestowing his gracious gifts; but it does not end even there, for he will give us the complete victory over death and the grave. When that which is mortal is swallowed up in victory, the faithful followers of the Lord will see him as he is and be with him for evermore. "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."-1 Cor. 15:57.

- J. Muzikant

## Gallery of Witnesses

SINCE the Apostles "fell asleep" a number of Christian scholars, particularly those living during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, testified to their belief in a hope which extended beyond the grave—that probation for eternal life does not end for all mankind when this present earthly life ends. While such scholars, in other respects, were not fully aware of the truths in the Divine Plan which have been unfolded in the clearer light of our day they, nevertheless, did see and preached this hope.

Albert O. Hudson, editor of the *Bible Study Monthly*, well and favorably known to our readers, addresses himself to this subject in his new book *Future Probation in Christian Belief*. With his permission, we present below the fifth of a series of seven articles excerpted from that book.

- Editorial Committee

That probation after death is provided for in the Divine purpose has been and is asserted by a goodly number of ministers and theologians both in sermon and in book. The basic principle is perhaps nowhere better stated than by Archdeacon R. H. Charles already partially quoted. "The idea that forgiveness is impossible in the next life has only to be stated in order to be rejected; for till absolute fixity of character is reached, repentance and forgiveness, being moral acts, must be possible under a perfectly moral Being ... thus this conception" (that men after death are incapable of further ethical progress) "is mechanical and unethical if judged in the light of Christian theism. It precludes moral change in beings who are under the rule of a perfectly moral Being, who wills not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." "The theology of the New Testament with its doctrine of the Fatherhood of God," he says, in *Religious Development Between the Old and New Testaments*, "demands some form of future probation"; there are those who "simply cannot relegate it to the region of God's uncovenanted mercies, seeing that it affects so deeply the character of God himself."

At the opposite extreme from the calm logic of Dr. Charles stands the warmhearted spiritual insight of Dr. Paterson Smyth, onetime Professor of Theology at the University of Dublin and Rector of St. George's, Montreal. "Our goal is to grow into the likeness of God ... how many of us are even in sight of that goal when we die? ... If there be no growth or purification in the waiting life, what hope is there ever for any one of us of fitness for the presence of the all-holy God? Think that the great majority of those who die, even though penitent and striving after right, have much of evil clinging to them -- that many, after a whole life of ingraining their characters with evil, have brought sorrowfully to Christ at last their poor defiled souls—that even the best is not without many faults and stains. If nothing that defileth shall enter Heaven, if growth is a law of life as far as we know it, are we not practically compelled to believe that the growth and purification needed to fit us for God's presence shall take place in the great waiting Life? ... We are bound to believe that in that judgment no man will be lost till the Father has, as it were, put his arms around him and looked him in the eyes with his 'unutterable love and been finally rejected.'"

Something of this principle, that growth and development must continue in the future life, was obviously in the mind of Dr. Samuel Cox, c. 1870-1890, Baptist Minister and onetime Editor of the *Expositor*, when he wrote, "It is not reasonable to expect that, while we are in this chrysalis and initial stage of our being, we should be able to comprehend what the final stage of our career will be like, if indeed there can be a final condition to finite creatures who are to live, and to grow, forever, and who must therefore, one should think, be ever reaching forth to that which is before and above them." From this reflection Dr. Cox goes on to consider the unsatisfactory state

of man's experience in this life, with no guarantee, in so many cases, of any real opportunity to know the gospel. "It seems hard and unjust," he says, "that a man's salvation, a man's life, should hang on the age into which he is born; that the sinners of Sodom, for example, should have had a worse chance than the greater sinners of Capernaum. There are thousands and tens of thousands in this Christian land today who have never had a fair chance of being quickened into life. Conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity, inheriting defects of will and taints of blood, cradled in ignorance and vice, they have hardly heard the name of Christ save as a word to curse by. And there are thousands more to whom the faith of Christ has been presented in forms so meager and narrow, or in forms so fictitious and theatrical, that the only wonder is that so many of them care to worship him at all. ... What shall we say then? For myself I can only say that I see no way out of the difficulty, no single loophole of escape, so long as we assume what the Bible does not teach, that there is no probation beyond the grave, that no moral change is possible in that world towards which all the children of time are traveling.... In an immense variety of ways the New Testament teaches us to believe that men who die in their sins will be adjudged to a state in which for an age, or for ages if need be, they will be exposed to a corrective discipline far more searching and severe than that to which they are now exposed, and by which we may hope they will be recovered to righteousness and life." So he sums up with, "For the great mass of our fellowmen, we may hope and believe that those who have had no chance of salvation here will have one there; that those who have had a poor chance will get a better one; that those who have had a good chance and lost it will get a new but a severer chance, and even as they suffer the inevitable results of their folly and sin will feel the hands that reach through darkness, molding men."

By far the most notable protagonist for this conviction at the turn of the century was Charles T. Russell, of New York City Temple and founder of the Bible Student movement. Of Congregational origin, but strongly imbued with Adventist expectations, it was inevitable that he should bring the then current Congregational leaning toward future probation into focus with Adventist views regarding the nature and purpose of the Second Advent and in consequence he was one of the first, with his Anglican contemporary Dr. C. A. Row, of St. Paul's Cathedral, to perceive clearly that the Messianic reign of Christ over the earth commencing with the Second Advent is in fact the era of future probation for the entire race of mankind. C. T. Russell, like others of his time, already perceived the essential difference between celestial and terrestrial natures and that the Church of this Age is called to celestial salvation, to be the evangelists and tutors of the remainder of mankind in the final time of probation, the Messianic Age. Similar views in a less matured form had been advanced previously by others, but it was Russell who saw clearly and laid down the fundamental principle that although the death of Christ on the cross is adequate for the salvation of every man, without exception, no man can attain that salvation without deliberate and intelligent repentance and acceptance of Christ and consequent reconciliation with God; hence it must logically follow that in some way and at some time before the final judgment every man must have a full and complete opportunity to learn, understand and accept the offer of salvation in Christ. "There is," he said in *The Divine Plan of the Ages*, "an immense aggregate who went down into death without faith and hope in the only name given in heaven or among men whereby we must be saved. The vast majority of these never knew or heard of Jesus, and could not believe in him of whom they had not heard. What was to become of this vast multitude, of which figures give a wholly inadequate idea? What is, and is to be, their condition? Did God make no provision for these, whose condition and circumstances he must have foreseen? Or did he, from the foundation of the world, make a wretched and merciless provision for their hopeless, eternal torment, as many claim? Or has he yet in store for them, in the heights and depths and lengths and breadths of his Plan, an opportunity for all to come to the knowledge of that only Name, and by becoming obedient to the conditions, enjoy everlasting life?"

"To the view that God excuses many of them on account of ignorance the majority of Christians of all denominations assent, from a feeling that any other view would be irreconcilable with justice on God's part. But do the Scriptures support this view? Do they teach that ignorance is a ground of salvation? No. The only ground of salvation mentioned in the Scriptures is faith in Christ as our Redeemer and Lord. Justification by faith is the underlying principle of the whole system of Christianity. When asked, 'What must I do to be saved?' the apostles answered, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.' There is none other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved.

"The Bible, which is full of the missionary spirit, does not teach that there are several ways of salvation -- one way by faith, another by works, and another by ignorance. While it shows every other door of hope closed against the race, it throws wide open the one, the only door, and proclaims that whoever will may enter into life, and it shows that all who do not now see or appreciate the blessed privilege of entering shall in due time be brought to a full knowledge and appreciation. The only way by which any and all of the condemned race may come to God is not by meritorious works, neither by ignorance, but by faith in the blood of Christ which taketh away the sin of the world (1 Pet. 1:19; John 1:29). This is the Gospel, the good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

"The thought that so many of our fellow-creatures should at any time be lost from lack of having had the knowledge which is necessary to salvation would be sad indeed to all who have a spark of love or pity. In the light of the past and present as the only opportunities, laying aside all hope through restitution in the coming age, how shall we understand the statement 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish' (John 3:16)? Would it not seem that if God loved the world so much he might have made provision, not only that believers might be saved, but also that all might hear in order to believe? The key is found in the text, 'Who gave himself a Ransom for all, to be testified in due time' (1 Tim. 2:5, 6). God has a due time for everything. The prevailing opinion is that death ends all probation, but there is no Scripture which so teaches; and the above, and many more Scriptures, would be meaningless or worse if death ends all hope for the ignorant masses of the world."

Dr. C. A. Row, Prebendary of St. Paul's Cathedral c. 1870-1900, raised the same question in his book *Future Retribution*. "How then stands the case with the overwhelming majority of mankind, who have lived and died in the condition in which they were born and educated, and who never heard of Jesus Christ, his Gospel, or his Father as revealed in him? The same question may with equal justice be asked with respect to those vast multitudes in nominally Christian countries, in which the gospel which has been proclaimed has failed to set forth Jesus Christ in the loveliness of his Divinely attractive character, or the character of God as a God who is holy, loving, just and true. The former have never once had the opportunity of catching a glimpse of the rays of Him who is the sun of the spiritual and moral world, and of receiving those vivifying influences which flow from the steady beholding and contemplation of him. Can the latter be said to have rejected him, when perhaps what they have rejected has been some miserable caricature of his Divinely attractive Person? For according to his own declaration, it is only to those who have been guilty of rejecting him that the following utterance (John 12:48) is applicable.... What then will be their fate? One thing is certain. The righteous judge of all the earth will condemn no man for not having accepted a gospel of which he has either never heard, or of which he has heard only an imperfect version. Will then this overwhelming majority of mankind be simply annihilated? It is difficult to believe that they will be so in face of the reiterated declarations both of the Gospel and the Epistle that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world, and of our Lord's declaration, 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.' But it is certain that an overwhelming majority of the human race have lived and died in a state of spiritual and moral degradation, and

therefore that they have not possessed the life spoken of in the utterances which we have been considering. What then awaits them? ... I can only conceive ... a condition of things beyond the grave in which they will enter upon a more favourable state of probation than has been vouchsafed them here; for the wrath of God can only abide on those whose sinful condition is the result of their own voluntary act. St. Paul assures us that Christ's Messianic reign will continue until he has put all enemies under his feet, and that he will not resign the kingdom to the Father until all things have been subdued unto him; and he elsewhere tells us that God has highly exalted him 'that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.' What then, I ask, is there in Scripture which implies that for the persons above referred to probation will not be continued during the whole period of Christ's Messianic reign?"

Dr. F. W. Farrar, chaplain to Queen Victoria, and Dean of Canterbury, held the same belief. While declaring his inability to accept the Universalist position, his heart was large enough to wish that all men might ultimately be saved, but his understanding of Scripture told him that salvation depends upon conversion and faith, as witness this quotation from *Mercy and Judgment*: "I cannot but fear, from one or two passages of Scripture, and from the general teaching of the Church, and from certain facts of human experience, that some souls may be ultimately lost; that they will not be admitted into the vision and Sabbath of God. I trust that by God's mercy, and through Christ's redemption, the majority of mankind will ultimately be saved. Yet, since they die unfit for heaven -- since they die in a state of imperfect grace -- I believe that in some way or other, before the final judgment, God's mercy may reach them, and the benefit of Christ's atonement be extended to them, beyond the grave." Dean Farrar's personal convictions are well revealed in two short passages from *Eternal Hope*, a record of five sermons on the subject of future probation preached in Westminster Abbey during 1877: "Is it not almost blasphemous to suppose that He who made a human being with such rich capacities will in one moment throw it from him into everlasting darkness?" and again, "While admitting the immense importance attributed by all Scripture to life as a period of probation, and the certainty that future retribution will be proportionate to the willingness and heinousness of our earthly sins, neither Scripture, nor the Church, nor anything that we can learn from any source within or without us respecting God, in any way sanctions the popular dogma of an irreversible doom at the moment of death."

## Landfall

*"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven." - Psalm 107:30.*

IT HAS been well said that "A Christian in the world is like' a ship in the ocean-the ship is quite safe in the ocean, as long as the ocean is not in the ship!"

One wonders why this apt comparison has not been used more frequently and extended further. For, in some ways at least, there could be no more instructive allusion to the Christian's journey through life, under his Heavenly Father's and his loving Savior's guidance and control.

"Launch out into the deep," said the Master and Leader of men to his first disciples (Luke 5:4). For those lives which have been surrendered to him and devoted to his Father, *sailing* instructions are often *sealed* instructions -- to be opened and read only *after* we have launched out in response to his call and have entrusted the frail vessel of our lives to him. Having done so, let us have confidence. He will bring us eventually in safety to the Port he has invited us to seek. He will employ his heavenly powers -- infinite, limitless, and unfathomable-to guide us to the end. For "He is faithful that promised" and "We are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." - Hebrews 10:23; 3:14.

A ship putting out to sea needs various things. First and foremost, it must be soundly and completely equipped. And so we have the like figure: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished [completely equipped, as another translation has it] unto every good work." - 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

It would never do if a ship voyaging into the deep, to a destination far over the horizon and out of sight, left harbor without a compass and chart, without navigation lights, rudder and steering wheel, to direct its course!

"God's Word is thy Compass, Christ is thy Light," once said an inspired commentator. God's Word, of course, is more than the compass by which we guide -- it is also the chart by which we plot our course. The chart gives the direction in which a ship *should* travel -- the compass shows the direction in which *it is* traveling. But how, in this vast tumbling waste of waters, do we know the distance traveled and exactly where we are?

"All I ask is a tall ship, and a star to steer her by," read the lines of a once well-known and well-loved song, "Sea Fever," by John Ireland.

Yes, we need in addition to compass and chart, a Celestial Guide, and this we have in "the bright and morning star" (Rev. 22:16) for

"I looked and saw my star of hope,  
My Sun of Righteousness,"

and we can continually check and verify our position by him.

Consider -- He is not only our bright and morning star -- he is also our Pilot who, if we gladly invite and welcome aboard, will keep his hand on the wheel besides ours, to check, control, and continually guide our course.

"My barque is wafted to the strand by breath divine,  
And on the helm there rests a Hand other than mine."

So the first thing to ensure is that we have our Pilot aboard with us -- that he is not (changing the metaphor scripturally) "standing outside and knocking" for admission but that he is fully and completely with us -- not only aboard but inside the ship of our life, and that *everything is* shared with him.

"If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him. He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:23,21). "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood" [as we do in symbol at the annual Memorial and in practice all the time] "shares my life and I share his" - as the beautiful Phillips rendering of John 6:56 puts it.

So first, last, and all the time, let us be sure we have the Pilot aboard. "Ask the Savior to help you; he will carry you through." And this we *know* -- *our* Pilot steers! "My presence shall go with thee," both he and his Father alike say, "and I will give you rest." So our ship forges steadily onward through the tumbling waste of waters, its position checked and verified by the Word of God *and* the Star.

Now a star, though steadfast, fixed and sure, and an infallible guide, may not always be discerned. Mist and cloud alike can temporarily obscure it, and one must be very swift to catch the needful glimpse when it is given to firmly plot one's exact position from that sight, pending the next. Keep checking with the "morning star," brethren, and then, with his help, we shall set our course and position accurately.

There is a double metaphor in the illustration we have considered. First is the individual small ship of our lives; but then there is the large ship of all those lives devoted to the Lord, welded and compacted together by his grace -- in other words, Zion! This ship which set sail with us aboard when our lives were devoted to God -- although others, of course, had preceded us! And now it appears to us that we are approaching very close -- very close indeed-to the Land of Heart's Desire, the Kingdom of God in all its fullness, in earth as well as in heaven. The signs are unmistakable that at any moment He may suddenly appear for us and Oh! what will be the glory, not only for him, but for us who have so longed to see him glorified in the hearts and lives of all menhoned, loved, exalted!

Surely, infallibly, irresistibly, the ship is being guided to its destination and its Landfall!

- T. Ballantyne, Scot.

Oh, sweet and blessed country,  
The home of God's elect;  
Oh, sweet and blessed country  
That eager hearts expect!  
Jesus, in mercy bring us  
To that dear Land of rest ...  
Humbly for Thee I wait  
To bring deliverance in --

E'en now springs wide the Eastern Gate  
And rays of Dawn stream in!  
Oh, hearken to my voice,  
Give ear to my complaint,  
Thou biddest the mourning soul rejoice --  
Thou comfortest the faint!

Glory to God above  
The 'whelming floods will cease,  
For lo! the swift returning  
Dove Brings back the sign of Peace!  
Though storms His Face obscure  
And dangers threaten loud,  
Jehovah's Covenant is sure  
His Bow is in the Cloud!



## Living by Faith

*"According to your faith be it unto you." - Matthew 9:29.*

THE PRINCIPLE laid down in the above statement has been generally recognized as being particularly applicable throughout the Gospel Age, though there are instances in the Old Testament records where the same principle applied. Abraham, Moses, Samuel, and Elijah, and many others of the Old Testament Worthies, received "according to their faith."

As we recall some of the many instances in which this principle was used by our Lord and his disciples at the beginning of the Age, we find in each case a practical demonstration of the power of God available to those who have the necessary faith. Not only so, but we also recognize that the divine power made available is limited only by the degree of faith manifest before God.

Meditating upon the foregoing, most of the Lord's people no doubt will agree that this doctrine is in full accord with God's Word, but in spite of the acceptance of it in a general sense, how many of us demonstrate in our daily life, and to what extent, that this principle is applicable to us? "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith," says the Apostle Paul. May we suggest that we do examine ourselves along that line? Let us examine our everyday conduct. When we are in the midst of sorrow or affliction, do we remember that our Lord said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"? And do we really go to the Lord with our burden, sincerely seeking his aid, and then confidently expecting to receive the help we need; or do we arise from our knees still trying to carry the burden alone, as though we had not asked his loving aid? Again, when we meet with the difficulties and perplexities of life, perhaps not knowing which way to turn, do we ask for the Lord's guidance and then trembling and almost afraid to move, go through the experience in dread of making a mistake? Or remembering the dear Lord's promise to lead all who earnestly seek his guidance, do we use our best judgment as to what would be most in accord with his will, going forward with an assurance of faith in his precious promise that he will guide us aright and that the outcome of the experience will be for our lasting good?

As we are made conscious of our great lack of wisdom and remember the admonition of the writer of the Epistle of James, do we ask God for the wisdom we need and really expect him to give us that wisdom liberally, as promised; or do we go on lamenting our lack of wisdom in mock humility, "being blown about with every wind of doctrine," not daring to take our stand for this or for that, lest we make a mistake? And last but not least, when we recall our dear Lord's assurance that our heavenly Father is more willing to give us his holy spirit than we are to ask or receive, do we really expect to be filled with that holy spirit when we pray for it? Many of us seem to go through our everyday life, and while admitting the promises are in the Holy Word (yet apparently not appropriating them to ourselves), we live as though those precious promises did not apply to us.

Let us review a few of those wonderful promises written for our benefit, upon whom the end of the Age has come: "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray believe that ye shall receive them" (Mark 11:24). "Ask and it shall be given unto you" (Matt. 7:7). "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name that I will do" (John 14:13). "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not" (James 1:5, 6). "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). These are only a few of the many precious promises given and well known to most of the Lord's people, yet how many fail to enter into the realities of such a life of faith, which God's Word indicates is possible even now to those who can really take God at his Word. Is it not true that if any of our experiences do not draw us closer to God, giving us a more earnest desire to have each experience work out in our heart the peaceable fruits of righteousness, the fault must be with us? "God cannot lie," and "all the promises of God are yea and

amen in Christ Jesus," we are told; but the extent to which we appropriate those promises to ourselves will be in direct proportion to the degree of our faith.

The habit of generalizing when speaking or thinking of the Word of God can cause one to miss that personal contact which we believe is essential to a full realization of the relationship that is the present heritage of the children of God; and it does not tend to instill in us or build us up in our most holy faith. We must admit that though the promise, "according to faith," is a general promise in that it applies to all of the Lord's people, it is also quite personal in its working principle. It was the personal faith of the woman who for twelve years had a hemorrhage, that enabled her to receive that healing grace from our Lord, as he said, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole" (Luke 8:48). It was the personal faith of the Centurion that caused our Lord to heal the sick servant without going to the house where the sick servant lay (Luke 7:2-10). It was the personal faith of Abraham which enabled him to be the father of the promised Seed which is to bless all the families of the earth (Rom. 4:19-22). In contrast, it was because of a lack of that same faith that our Lord did not do many mighty works in his own town (Matt. 13:58). Again, it was the personal faith of Peter, John, and Paul that enabled them to do many wonderful works in Christ Jesus' precious name, throughout their Christian journey, and gave them the victory over the world, the flesh, and the Adversary.

Seeing we are encompassed about with so great a company of witnesses, and are assured of the power of God through faith, and knowing that we began our walk with Jesus through a wholehearted faith in our Lord's precious sacrifice on our behalf, surely we can take God at his Word and confidently expect that he will supply that promised grace sufficient for our every need. "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord [by faith], so walk ye in him." Then we *shall* be kept from falling and be presented faultless before the presence of his glory. We *shall* be kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time, in direct proportion to our wholehearted appropriation of that wonderful assurance: "According to your faith be it unto you."

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen."

- *H. J. Barlow*

Lord, what a change within us one short hour  
Spent in thy presence will avail to make!  
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take,  
What parched grounds refresh, as with a shower!  
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;  
We rise, and all, the distant and the near,  
Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear;

We kneel, how weak!-we rise, how full of power!  
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong  
Or others, that we are not always strong,  
That we are ever overborne with care,  
That we should ever weak or heartless be,  
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,  
And joy, and strength, and courage are with thee?

## **If Ye Do These Things**

*"If ye do these things ye shall never fall." - 2 Peter 1:10.*

THE WORDS quoted above are peculiarly appropriate at the present time. Are we not reminded by them of the very solemn warning with which Jesus brought to a close his discourse, which is generally referred to as "the Sermon on the Mount" (Matt. 7:24-29). On every side there appears to be a fatal tendency on the part of the Lord's professed followers to ignore the plain meaning of the Master's solemn words. The words in verses 21-23 should be carefully studied until we know that we understand their meaning. "Not every one who says to me, Master, Master, will enter into the Kingdom of the heavens; but he who performs the will of that Father of mine in the heavens. Many will say to me in that day, Master, Master, have we not taught in thy Name? And in thy Name expelled demons? And in thy Name performed many wonders? And then I will plainly declare to them, I never approved of you. Depart from me you who practice iniquity." - Diaglott.

Perhaps all the brethren in Present Truth are more or less familiar with these words, but their designed effect cannot be accomplished, because we have learned to apply them to the nominal systems. We think the warning is not for us, but for others. We say, in effect, if not in words, that having been brought into Present Truth, we have only to hold fast certain beliefs which separate us from others and all will be well. On the other hand, if the words were intended to warn all true believers that holiness alone would meet with the Master's approval, how all-important it is that we should have a clear understanding of them and not to rest in a delusive sense of security which accompanies the belief that what we *know is* of greater importance than what we *are*. It is true that knowledge is important, but wisdom is of far greater importance. We do not read that Christ is made unto us knowledge, etc.; but that Christ is made unto us *wisdom*, and righteousness, and sanctification, and deliverance.

The close of the last century was marked by tremendous advances in knowledge, both secular and religious. In a very true sense these advances were the climax of years of patient study and research by students of science and religion. It would be most unfair and unwise to forget the labors of these students, and to think that we could have stepped into the clear light we enjoy apart from the valuable help contributed by each generation of truth-seekers since the Lord raised up the Reformers in the Sixteenth Century.

Let us, however, assume that we are living in the Apostolic Age, when Peter wrote his letter to those who had obtained an equally precious faith with him (2 Pet. 1:1). Let us ask the question: Were these Christians deficient in the knowledge of the broad outlines of the Divine Plan of the Ages? Would their knowledge of the Divine Plan compare favorably with the knowledge possessed by the brethren in Present Truth? If we allow ourselves to be guided by the words of the Apostles, we must conclude that the Church of God at that time was not deficient in the knowledge of the broad outlines of the Divine Plan of the Ages, and further that the knowledge that believers possessed would compare favorably with our own at the present time. If this be admitted, then it is clear that the knowledge we have obtained and now enjoy, has only put us on equal terms with the brethren who lived during the Apostolic Age of the Church. We know from Church history that when the Apostles fell asleep, error more or less rapidly displaced the Truth, until just before the Reformation almost complete darkness had settled down upon the professed Church of God. During the interval between the Reformation and our own day, Truth has been gradually restored to God's people, and today we enjoy the Truth as it was taught by the Apostles, with the added advantage that the pilgrimage of the Church is nearly ended, and the establishment of the Kingdom is very near.

It seems clear then that the Truths which separated believers in the Apostolic Age from all others, are the same Truths we now appreciate. However, as the believers in the Apostolic Age were exhorted to make their calling and election sure, so are we. The knowledge they enjoyed would not entitle them to a share in the Kingdom, and the knowledge we enjoy will only add to our confusion, if we fail to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure. "If ye know these things, happy [blessed] are ye if ye do them." It should be clear to us all that the greatest danger to those in Present Truth is modern gnosticism. It is far easier to claim to be superior to your brother on a point of knowledge, than to prove your superiority by the excellence of your character.

Our great Adversary divided the early Church along these lines, and he is still successfully pursuing the same policy. Should we not consider one another to provoke unto love and good works? If we have a difference of opinion on one or more points of doctrine, we may not conclude that, because we believe- we are right, the Lord has ceased to love our brother. This being so, should we not love our brother still more, for is not his need of love and forbearance greater? How could we hope to win our brother by any other means? From the limitless fountain of our Lord's love and compassion we all draw freely, and we may not overlook his words, "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy."

It may be profitable for us all to note the experiences and the example of the Apostle Paul as recorded in the letter known to us as 2 Corinthians. Paul's activities in Corinth are described in Acts 18. Guided by a vision from the Lord he labored much in the city and many of the citizens became Christians. At the time of writing his second letter to the Church at Corinth much opposition to Paul had arisen, and his reaction to this is of the greatest value to all the brethren in Present Truth. Paul did not freeze up. Read his words in 2 Corinthians 6:11, 12 (Diaglott): "Our mouth is opened toward you, O Corinthians! Our heart has been enlarged. You are not straitened in us, but you are contracted in your own tender affections." In similar circumstances many good Christians would feel justified in showing marked coolness and reserve. Why did Paul act differently? The answer is, Paul was here knowing that he spoke truly when he said, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Paul never forgot that Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it. It was therefore the spirit of Christ in Paul that overlooked every cause for complaint, and continued to exercise the love that covers all things; believes all things; hopes all things; endures all things.

"Savior like a shepherd lead us.  
Much we need Thy tender care."

The present is a very solemn time for all in Present Truth who are looking forward to meeting our great Pilot face to face. It cannot be doubted that when this thought dominates our hearts, the differences which separate brethren in Christ seem far less important, for we believe that we shall then share on equal terms all the excellencies of wisdom and knowledge. Nothing of our present human imperfections will mar our equal appreciation of all the delightful things provided by an Omniscient Creator and ministered by the glorious Bridegroom to his faithful and adoring Bride.

Surely it is only through the wily one, Satan, that any of us at the present time would dare to think that our present differences are due to insincerity on the part of any. We may not condemn one another. The oneness for which our Master prayed will soon be ours, and to the eyes of our hearts an eternity of glory and blessing is ever drawing nearer.

*-D. W. Black*

## **Our Fellowship in Christ**

THE Scotch have a saying that some things are better felt than telt, and perhaps this is especially true of Christian fellowship. Difficult to describe, it is easy to enjoy.

As illustrating this, a story is told of a mother who taught her children that each day they should make it a point to do something for others which would greatly please Jesus. At the end of one day her twelve-year-old daughter reported that her good deed had been to read aloud to a blind lady. The nine-year-old boy had visited a schoolmate who was in bed with a broken leg. When it came the little four-year-old's turn to render her account she could think of nothing. However, in response to prompting, she remembered that across the street there was another little girl her own age whom she had seen sitting on the steps of her house, sobbing bitterly. Not knowing what else to do she had crossed the street, thrown her arm around her and, "Mother, I cried too."

Ah! she could not define fellowship as it is done in the dictionary, and knew nothing about analyzing it; but she knew how to weep with those who weep. And who shall say that she had not learned the very essence of the matter at the tender age of four?

### **BIRDS OF A FEATHER**

Sometimes we hear the expression: "May we have fellowship with thus and so?" Or, "Do you think we ought to have fellowship with so and so?" Such questions indicate that those who ask them do not fully understand what the word fellowship means. Suppose the reply were: "Yes, we may have fellowship with thus and so"; would that reply bring fellowship about, where before there was none? Or suppose the reply were: "No! -- we ought not to have fellowship with so and so"; would that reply hinder, in any way, a fellowship which really existed? You know very well it would not.

Let me give you another illustration of true fellowship, this time from the birds. All of us will recall the proverb: "Birds of a feather flock together." Now we know that this proverb is true. Birds of a feather do not hold a meeting to discuss the matter, and pass resolutions as to whether they shall or shall not, but by nature they actually do flock together.

This is true also of men. A man who is of a generous mind never, under any circumstances, longs after, and seeks out, the company of a miser; a humble-minded man never, by any chance, delights himself in the company of a man who is proud in heart. It just isn't done.

### **ALL ONE BODY WE**

Fellowship never constructs fences. It is true that from time to time, while endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace, the Lord's people have found themselves separated by fences which others have constructed. But to these footstep followers of Jesus has been given God's own holy spirit, and those who yield themselves to its sweet influence find themselves possessed of a strange wisdom, a wisdom which knows how to climb over the walls of separation others might build, which knows how to reach through the fences others might construct, and clasp in warm and loving greeting the hand of a brother Christian. Such have been able always truthfully to sing: "We are not divided, all one body we."

## **DOCTRINAL DIFFERENCES**

The question is sometimes asked: In what respect does an understanding of doctrine affect fellowship? To this I reply: It all depends on the individuals concerned.

I find in myself and in others a natural disposition to give attention to doctrine rather than to conduct, whereas, what attention we give to doctrine should ever be with a view to a closer walk with God. There is in this a great danger. One may hold the most accurate views regarding the fundamentals of Christian doctrine, may be able to state them in the most precise formulas, may be thoroughly instructed in dispensational and prophetic truth, and may know familiarly the teaching embodied in the types, and yet be barren of fruit. There may be little life where there is much light.

Brethren, let us thank God that our faith is not in a creed, not in a statement of belief, but in a Person, our blessed Lord Jesus, whose personality embraces every grace, in loyalty to whom we can all find fellowship and unity, yea, and if it did but know it, a distracted world could find its life.

If Jesus stood in our midst today so that we could see him with the eyes of flesh, I venture the assertion that he would identify himself with none of us; but with what gladness-nay, in what a delirium of delight, would we identify ourselves with him!

## **TOGETHER**

One more little story: A few years ago three of us stood on a station platform waiting until the train, in which another friend was to take a journey, pulled out. As we stood there, the train conductor came along. He was one of those kindly, genial-faced men, who had grown gray in the service of the public. As he walked down the platform near to where we stood, the engineer of the train, also one whose face showed his kindly character, walking a little faster, caught up with him. Said the engineer to the conductor: "Are you going with me today, or am I going with you?" The smiling face of the conductor remains with me still, as I remember his reply: "Let's go," said he, "*together.*"

- P. L. Read

## **Entered Into Rest**

John Galecki, Milwaukee, Wis.

Marie Giangone, New Haven, Conn.

Anna F. Piper, Madison, Wis.

Arthur Polychronis, Somersworth,

N.H. Dudley R. Rogers, Waycross, Ga.

Emil Sadlack, Germany