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Has Judgment Day Begun?

*"God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing,
whether it be good, or whether it be evil" - Eccles. 12:14.*

THOUGHTFUL people in many lands are asking this question. World-shaking events with strong overtones of destruction emphasize in their minds the Apostle's words, spoken from Mars' Hill in his celebrated discourse to the men of Athens:

"He [God] hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." - Acts 17:31.

Some have expressed the thought that we may have already entered *a* judgment Day, if not *the* Judgment Day of our text, and have asked the question: Has Judgment Day begun?

Before attempting an answer to this question, let us consider the two terms "judgment" and "day" and see how they are employed in the Scriptures.

The term "judgment" signifies more than merely the rendering of a verdict. It includes the idea of a trial, as well as a decision based upon that trial. And this is true not only of the English word "judgment" but also of the Greek word which it translates.

The term "day," both in the Scriptures and in common usage, though most frequently used to represent a period of twelve or twenty-four hours, really specifies any definite or special period of time. Thus, for instance, we speak of Noah's day, Luther's day, Washington's day; and thus in the Bible the entire time of creation is called a day, where we read of "the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens" (Gen. 2:4) -- a long, definite period. Then we read of "the day of temptation in the wilderness" - forty years (Heb. 3:8, 9); also of the "day of Christ," the "day of judgment," and "His day": terms applicable to the Millennial Age, in which Messiah will reign over, rule, and judge the world in righteousness, granting trial as well as rendering sentence.

Those who will carefully consult a complete concordance of the Bible with reference to the Day of judgment, and note the kind and amount of work to be accomplished within that period, will soon see the absurdity of the common view of a twelve-hour or twenty-four-hour day, and the necessity for giving to the term "day" its wider significance.

The Scriptures make mention of a number of judgment days. Two of these relate to the human race as a whole. Between these two, several others are stated as taking place.

The first of the world's two judgment days was at the beginning, in the Garden of Eden, when the whole human race was judged representatively in Adam, its head. Some have been disposed to resent this judgment, insisting that Adam misrepresented rather than represented them, but God, whose wisdom is infinite, states the contrary to be true.

The second and final judgment day for the world is yet future, when each will be judged individually.

WHO WILL BE THE JUDGE?

We are further informed that, when God gives the world this individual trial, it will be under Christ as judge, whom God will thus honor because of his obedience even unto death for our redemption. God has highly exalted him, even to the divine nature, that he may be a Prince and a Savior (Acts 5:31), that he may be able to recover from death and grant judgment (including trial) to all whom he purchased with his own precious blood. Since it is the plain declaration of Scripture that "God has committed all judgment unto the Son," and has given him "all power in heaven and in earth," there is nothing to dread, but on the contrary there is great cause for rejoicing on the part of all, in looking forward to the judgment Day. The character of the judge is a sufficient guarantee that the judgment will be just and merciful, with due consideration for the infirmities of all, until the willing and obedient are brought back to the original perfection lost in Eden. With this conclusion *all* the prophetic declarations agree. It is written: "With righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity." - Psa. 98:9.

BY WHAT LAW WILL THE WORLD BE JUDGED?

This coming judgment will be on exactly the same principles as the first. The same law of obedience will be presented, with the same reward of life and the same penalty of death. And as the first trial had a beginning, progressed, and culminated in a verdict and sentence, so also will the second; and the sentence will be life to the righteous and death to the unrighteous. The second trial will be more favorable than the first because of the experience gained under the results of the first trial. Unlike the first trial, the second trial will be one in which every man will stand the test for himself alone and not for another. None will then die because of Adam's sin or because of inherited imperfections. It shall no more be said, "The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge." "But ... every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge." "The soul that sinneth, it [and not its children] shall die." - Jer. 31:29, 30; Ezek. 18:4.

Under the reign of Christ, mankind will be gradually educated, trained, disciplined, until they reach perfection. And when they have reached perfection, perfect harmony with God will be required, and any who then fall short of perfect obedience will be cut off, being judged unworthy of life. God had a right to demand perfect obedience of Adam, since he was created perfect; and he will demand the same of all men when the great work of restoring them is complete. None will

be permitted to have everlasting life who then in the slightest degree falls short of perfection. To fall short of perfection, then, will be to sin willfully against full light and perfect ability.

I do not wish to be understood as ignoring the present responsibility of the world, which every man has, according to the measure of light enjoyed, whether it be much or little, whether it be the light of nature or of revelation. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good," and "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Prov. 15:3; Eccles. 12:14). The good and evil deeds of the present time will receive a just recompense of reward, either now or hereafter. "Some men's sins are open beforehand ... and some they follow after" (1 Tim. 5:24). No others than the Lord's favored "little flock" have as yet sufficient light to incur the final penalty, the second death. I here merely broach the subject of the world's present accountability, leaving its fuller discussion for another occasion.

JUDGMENT OF TWO SPECIAL CLASSES

Between the world's two judgment days, discussed foregoing, a period of about six thousand years intervenes. During this long period, God has been selecting two special classes from among men, and specially trying, testing, disciplining, and training them to be his honored instruments during the second of the world's judgment days.

These two classes are respectively designated by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews as the "house of sons" and the "house of servants" (Heb. 3:1-6), the former being composed of those overcomers tried and found faithful during the Christian dispensation (the Gospel Age), and the latter being composed of the faithful overcomers who lived before the Christian dispensation. Those who successfully pass the trial for either of these special classes will not come into judgment (including trial) with the world, but will enter upon their reward when the world is coming into its second judgment day. They will be God's agents in the blessing of the world; in giving to men the instruction and training necessary for their final testing and judgment. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" - 1 Cor. 6:2.

JUDGMENT OF THE NATIONS

The world's second judgment day is immediately preceded by a judgment of the nations, as such. They are to be judged politically, ecclesiastically, and socially. Many Scriptures make this clear. However, while noting these, it is important to bear in mind the difference between national judgment and individual judgment. While the nation is composed of individuals, and individuals are largely responsible for the courses of nations, and must and do suffer greatly in the calamities which befall them; nevertheless the judgment of the world, as individuals, will be distinct from its judgment as nations. The day of individual judgment for the world will be the Millennial Age, as previously noted. Then, under the favorable conditions of the New Covenant, and granted a clear knowledge of the truth and every possible assistance and incentive to righteousness, all men individually, and not collectively as nations, will be on trial, or judgment, for eternal life.

The judgment of the nations which precedes this individual trial is a judgment of men in their collective capacities. The civil institutions of the world-social, political, religious-have had a long lease of power. And now, as the "Times of the Gentiles" come to a close, they must render up their accounts. And the Lord's judgment, expressed beforehand by the Prophets, is that not one of them will be found worthy of a renewal of that lease or a continuance of life. The decree is that the dominion shall be taken from them and that he whose right it is shall take the kingdom, and

the nations shall be given to him for an inheritance. - Ezek 21:27; Dan. 7:27; Psa. 2:8; Rev. 2:26,27.

Let us listen to a few passages from the writings of other Prophets which bear directly on this subject: "Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people . . . for the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies" (Isa. 34:1,2). Again: "The Lord is . . . an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation" (Jer. 10:10). "A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with the nations' . . . Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind [that is, intense and complicated trouble and commotion] shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth." - Jer. 25:31-33.

In calling attention to this subject, it is not my intention to arouse a mere sensation or to seek to gratify idle curiosity. Nor can I hope to produce in the minds and hearts of men such a condition of repentance as would work a change in the present social, political, and religious order of society, and thus avert the calamity. All the powerful causes which produce the trouble have been long at work; and no human power is able to arrest their operation and progress toward their certain end. No hand but the hand of the Lord. could stay the progress of the present current of events, and his hand will not do so until the bitter experiences of this conflict shall have sealed their instruction upon the hearts of men. Our only object, therefore, in mentioning the subject at all is to forewarn, forearm, comfort, encourage, and strengthen the "household of faith," so that they may not be dismayed, but be enabled to look beyond the severest measures of divine disciplining in the chastening experiences of the world, and see by faith the glorious outcome in the precious fruits of righteousness and enduring peace.

HAS JUDGMENT DAY OF THE NATIONS BEGUN?

As we look about us and note the conditions in the world today, it is difficult to escape the conclusion-especially when these conditions are considered in connection with time prophecies-that the nations have already entered their judgment day, that they are even now being weighed in the balances and found wanting. Indeed, for years it has been seen that the gathering of the nations and assembling of the kingdoms, preparatory to pouring upon them his indignation, "even all his fierce anger," as yet another Prophet (Zephaniah 3:8, 9) graphically describes it, has been in process.

Modern discovery and invention have made the remotest ends of the earth neighbors to each other. Travel, mailing facilities, the telegraph, the telephone, the radio, and television have brought all the world into a community of thought and action hitherto unknown. Truly, the nations are "assembled" in a manner not expected, yet in the only manner in which they could be assembled, namely, in common interest and activity; but alas, not in brotherly love, for selfishness marks every step of this progress. The spirit of enterprise, of which selfishness is the motive power, has prompted the construction of the railways, the steamships, the airplanes, the telegraphs, the cables, the telephones, the radios, the television sets. Selfishness regulates commerce and international relationships, and every other energy and enterprise except the preaching of the Gospel and the establishment of benevolent institutions; and even in these it is to be feared that much that is done is inspired by motives other than pure love for God and humanity. Selfishness has gathered the nations and has been steadily preparing them for the predicted, and now fast approaching, retribution which is so graphically described by the Prophet as the "fire of God's jealousy," or anger, which is about to consume utterly the present social order. Yet this is speaking only from the human standpoint. From the standpoint of the Prophet,

this gathering of the nations is ascribed, not to man's own efforts, but to God. Both standpoints are true; for while man is permitted the exercise of his free agency, God, by his overruling providence, is shaping human affairs for the accomplishment of his own wise purposes. And therefore, while men and their works and ways are the agents and agencies, God is the great commander who now gathers the nations and assembles the kingdoms from one end of the earth to the other, preparatory to the transfer of earth's dominion to him "whose. right it is" - Immanuel.

The Prophet tells us why the Lord thus gathers the nations, saying, "That I may ... pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger," This message would bring us sorrow and anguish only, were it not for the assurance that the results shall work good to the world, overthrowing the reign of selfishness and establishing, through Christ's Millennial Kingdom, the reign of righteousness referred to in the words of the Prophet: "Then will I turn to the people a pure language [their communications with each other shall no longer be selfish but pure, truthful, and loving, to the intent], that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent."

CLOSING THOUGHTS

We see the deepening clouds of trouble. We hear the thunder tones of judgment that call the earth "From the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof" (Psa. 50:1) -- from the east to the west. We see the lightning flashes of truth and righteousness, and observe how the whole earth is now in the shaking process which will eventuate in the complete overthrow of all existing institutions, systems, and governments. Present events indeed speak in trumpet tones. "A sound of battle is in the land, and of great destruction" (Jer. 50:22). How shall we regard these things? Surely, my brethren, it will be with thoughtful and reverent hearts! In this eventful period everything that can be shaken will be shaken, that only the unshakable things of truth and righteousness may remain (Heb. 12:25-29). Every one called to a share in the coming kingdom must be a lover of righteousness, one who will courageously and loyally exercise an influence which is always favorable to righteousness, justice, mercy, and peace. All others will be shaken out. In the end only the true will remain. "Seeing that we look for such things, [let us] be diligent that we may be found of him in [inward] peace, without spot, and blameless," as the Apostle exhorts. - 2 Pet. 3:14.

When our Lord was here in the flesh, the destruction of Jerusalem and the utter ruin of Palestine were close at hand. In those days our Savior forewarned his disciples against laying up treasures for themselves on earth. His counsel and advice to them was to lay up their treasures in heaven, and in the end they would find them there. The Lord's true people of today occupy a similar position. The great symbolic burning day is near. Christendom is about to be destroyed. In this great symbolic conflagration the possessions of earth will be valueless. The opportunities for laying up treasures in heaven will soon be gone. Let us, therefore, brethren, heed the Master's words, dedicating, or rededicating, as the case may be, our all of earthly life and fortune upon his altar, and seek to employ time, talent, and ability in the service of him who hath called us from darkness to light; of him who will at last welcome the faithful to the place that he has gone to prepare, in the Father's house of many mansions. For there we shall find the heavenly treasures that can never fade, never tarnish, never rust, and the glory and luster of which *will* abide throughout all time. - *P. L Read*

"WHAT IS TRUTH?"

This question is one which every sincere Christian should ask and seek to answer. We should learn to love and value truth for its own sake; to respect and honor it by owning and acknowledging it wherever we find it and by whomsoever presented. A *truth* presented by Satan himself is just *as true* as a *truth* stated by God.

Perhaps no class of people are more apt to overlook this fact than the Christian. How often do they in controversy overlook and ignore *truth* presented by their opponents. This is particularly the case when arguing with an *infidel*. They feel at perfect liberty to dispute everything he says on religious subjects. This is not the correct principle. Many infidels are *honest* -- as anxious to speak and believe the truth as are Christians -- and if in converse with them we ignore truths which they may advance, we not only fail to convince them of our *truths*, but put an end to all hope of reaching them; for our failure to admit the evident truth which they advance begets in them contempt for the one who is not honest enough to admit one truth because he does not see how it can be reconciled to another. Accept truth wherever you find it, no matter what it contradicts, and rely for ability to afterwards harmonize it with others upon 'The Spirit of truth, which shall guide you into all truth,' as Jesus promised.

Making Our Calling and Election Sure

"Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall; [the things previously specified namely, giving diligence, adding to your faith virtue and knowledge temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, love, which things being in us and abounding, we shall be neither barren -- idle -- not unfruitful;] for so an entrance shall be administered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." - 2 Peter 1:10-11

In this election we see that the important steps belong to God; namely, (1) The predetermination to have such a New Creation; (2) The invitation to some to develop the necessary character; (3) The arrangement of matters so that the invited ones might be able to attain an acceptable condition in conformity to the call.

On the other hand, important steps must be taken by those who become the elect: (1) It is for the called ones, for whom all these preparations and arrangements have been made, to accept the call -- making a full consecration. (2) They must become so imbued with the spirit of their calling and so appreciative of their blessings that they will with zeal conform to the conditions and limitations attaching thereto.

We have already seen that these conditions and limitations are, briefly, heart-likeness to God's dear Son; but, analyzing this likeness more particularly, we find it to mean, as the Apostle Peter here points out, that we should have the fruits of the spirit of holiness. God is holy, and the elect are to have his spirit, his disposition of love for righteousness and opposition to iniquity. The Apostle in the above scripture shows up the various elements of this holy Spirit of God, and points out the fact that we do not attain to his perfect likeness (the perfection of love) at the beginning of our course; but, rather, that it is the mark or standard which indicates the end of the course. Love as a general expression covers all these elements of character which are really parts of love. Meekness, gentleness, brotherly kindness, godliness, are all elements of love.

Some one has suggested that these fruits of the spirit of God might be defined as below, and we heartily agree:

- (1) Joy -- Love exultant.
- (2) Peace -- Love in repose.
- (3) Long-suffering -- Love enduring.
- (4) Gentleness -- Love in society.
- (5) Goodness -- Love in action.
- (6) Faith -- Love on the battlefield of life.
- (7) Meekness -- Love in resignation.
- (8) Temperance (moderation) -- Love in training.

When we started in the racecourse, resolved to do so because God had justified us by his grace and had invited us to run in this race for the prize of the high calling of the New Creation, we said, first of all: We will lay aside the weights and hindrances of earthly ambitions by consecrating our wills to the Lord and resolving that this one thing we will do; namely, we will seek for, and by the Lord's grace attain, the blessings to which he has called us. At the same time we concluded that we would put away, so far as we might be able, our easily besetting sins -- whatever they might be -- whether ours were the same as others in the racecourse or not; and that we would run faithfully in this race for the great prize.

The entering of the racecourse corresponds to our consecration. That was the start. We consecrated ourselves to the Lord -- to be controlled by his spirit of love; yet we realized that by reason of the fall we sadly lacked in those elements of character which the Father would approve. We run, however, and

persevere in the attainment of this character-likeness of his Son -- which is his will respecting us, and the condition of our fellowship with him. In this respect we differ from our Lord, for he being perfect could not attain one step or degree after another in the development of love.

He was filled with the spirit from the beginning -- he was at the mark from the beginning; his testing was to determine whether or not he would stand faithful at that mark of perfect love to God, and to his people, and to his enemies. We, however, need to run, to strive, to attain unto that mark.

We might divide the racecourse into four quarters, and say that in the first quarter we recognize love as a divine requirement and seek to have it, though able to apprehend it only from the standpoint of duty. We feel a duty-love toward God because, as our Creator, he has a right to demand our obedience, our love, our devotion; a duty-love toward our Lord Jesus, also, because he loved us and we ought, in justice, to love him in return; and a duty love toward our fellows, because we realize that this is the will of God.

The second quarter of the racecourse brings us a little further along, a little nearer to the "mark," so that those things which we at first sought to do from a duty-love, we gradually considered in an appreciative manner and not merely as a duty. We thenceforth saw that the things which God commands us as right and duty, are good things; that the noblest principles of which we have any conception are identified with the Justice, Love and Wisdom which the Lord commands and sets before us, and which from that time we began to appreciate. We began to love God not merely because it was our duty toward our Creator, but additionally and especially because we saw him possessed of those grand elements of character enjoined upon us -- the personification of every grace and goodness. Those who attain to this two-quarter mark love the Lord not merely because he first loved us, and because it is our duty to love him in return, but because now the eyes of our understanding have been opened wide enough to permit us to see something of the glorious majesty of his character, something of the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the Justice, Wisdom, Love and Power of our Creator.

The third-quarter mark on this racecourse we will call -- love for the brethren. From the first we recognize a duty-love toward the brethren even as toward the Father, only in a less degree, because the brethren had done less for us; and we recognized them chiefly because such was the Father's will. But as we got to see the principles of righteousness, and to appreciate the Father, and to see that the Father himself loveth us, notwithstanding our unintentional blemishes, our hearts began to broaden and deepen toward the brethren; and more and more we became able to overlook their unwilling imperfections and blemishes and mistakes, when we could see in them evidences of heart-desire to walk in the footsteps of Jesus and in accord with the principles of the divine character. Love for the brethren became distinctly marked in our experiences. Alas! evidently a good many of the Lord's dear people have not yet reached this third-quarter mark on the race course toward the prize of our high calling. There is much need of developing the brotherly kindness, the long-suffering, the patience, which the Scriptures inculcate -- and which are necessarily tried and tested more in our connection with the brethren than in our connection with the Father and our Lord. We can see the perfection of the Father and the Son, and that they have no imperfections; we can realize their magnanimity toward us and our own shortcomings toward them: but when we look toward the brethren we see in one this weakness, and in another that weakness; and the temptation is, alas, too common to say to a brother: "Let me pick out the mote from thine eye" -- instead of realizing that such a picking and nagging and fault-finding disposition toward the brethren is an evidence that we still have a large beam of impatience and lovelessness of our own to contend with. As we near this third-quarter mark, we gradually get the beam out of our own eyes -- we get to see our own blemishes, and to appreciate more and more the riches of our Lord's grace toward us; and the influence of this upon our hearts is to produce in us a greater degree of the spirit of meekness, patience, and gentleness toward all -- and this again enables us to overlook or cover a multitude of sins, a multitude of imperfections in the brethren,

so long as we realize that they are surely brethren -- so long as they are trusting in the precious blood, and seeking to run this same racecourse for this same prize.

The fourth or final quarter-mark of our race is Perfect Love -- toward God, toward our brethren, toward all men -- and is the one we are all to seek earnestly to attain to, and that as quickly as possible. We are not to dally at the quarter marks, but to run on patiently, perseveringly, energetically.

There is a sense in which we are to "love not the world, neither the things of the world"; but there is a sense in which we are to love and to "do good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially unto them who are of the household of faith"; (Galatians 6:10) -- a love which includes even our enemies. This love does not annul or diminish our love for the Father and the principles of his character, and our love for the brethren, but it intensifies these; and in that intensification it enables us to include in the love of benevolence and sympathy all of the poor groaning creation, travailing in pain and waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. "Love your enemies, do good to them that persecute you and hate you," is the Master's command; and not until we have attained to this degree of love -- love even for enemies -- are we to think for a moment that we have reached the mark which the Lord has set for us as his followers.

Not until we have reached this position are we copies of God's dear Son.

We must reach this climax of love before we can be counted worthy of a place in the New Creation, and we are not to expect that each one of the Lord's followers will reach this mark just at the moment of expiring in death.

Quite the contrary. We are to expect to reach it as early as possible in our Christian experience, and then to remember the words of the Apostle, "Having done all -- Stand!" (Eph. 6:13) We require testings in love after we have reached the mark; and our exercises while at the mark -- striving to maintain in our lives that mark, or standard -- will be very strengthening to our characters. In this, especially, our experiences will correspond to those of our Lord; for while he did not need to run to attain the mark, he did need to fight a good fight of faith at the mark -- not to be turned from it, not to be overcome by the various besetments of the world and the Adversary. "I press down upon the mark," says the Apostle; and so must each of us hold fast that mark after we do attain it, and see to it that in all the testings which the Lord permits to come upon us we shall be accounted of him as overcomers -- not in our own strength, but in the strength of our Redeemer's assistance.

Besetments will come against us to turn us from the perfect love toward the Father, to induce us to consent to render less than the full homage and obedience due to him.

Temptations will come to us in respect to the brethren also, to suggest that we do not permit love for the brethren to cover a multitude of faults -- suggestions that we become provoked with those whom we have learned to love and appreciate, and with whose weaknesses we have learned to sympathize. Besetments will come against us in respect to our enemies, after we have learned to love them -- suggesting to us that there are exceptional cases and that our magnanimity toward them should have its limitations. Blessed are we if in these temptations we hold fast, bearing down upon the mark, striving to retain that position which we have already attained -- fighting the good fight of faith -- holding firmly to the eternal life which is counted ours through Jesus.

- C. T. Russell

FAULTLESS

-- JUDE 24 --

Faultless in his glory's presence!
All the soul within stirred,
All my heart reached up to heaven
At the wonder of that word.

Able to present me faultless?
Lord, forgive my doubt, I cried;
Thou didst once, to loving doubt, show
Hands and feet and riven side.

O! for me build up some ladder,
Bright with golden round on round,
That my hope this thought may compass,
Reaching faith's high vantage-ground!

Praying thus, behold, my ladder,
Reaching unto perfect day,
Grew from out a simple story
Dropped by some one in the way.

Once a queen -- so ran the story --
Seeking far for something new,
Found it in a mill, where, strangely,
Naught but rags repaid her view --

Rags from out the very gutters,
Rags of every shape and hue;
While the squalid children, picking,
Seemed but rags from hair to shoe.

What then, rang her eager question,
Can you do with things so vile?
Mould them into perfect whiteness,
Said the master with a smile.

Whiteness? quoth the queen, half doubting;
But these reddest, crimson dyes --
Surely nought can ever whiten
These to fitness to your eyes?

Yes, he said, though these are colors
Hardest to remove of all,
Still I have the power to make them
Like the snowflake in its fall.

Through my heart the words so simple
Throbbled with echo in and out:
Crimson -- scarlet -- white as snowflake --
Can this man? and can God not?

Now upon a day thereafter,
(Thus the tale went on at will),
To the queen there came a present
From the master at the mill.

Fold on fold of fairest texture
Lay the paper, purest white;
On each sheet there gleamed the letters
Of her name in golden light.

Precious lesson, wrote the master,
Hath my mill thus given me,
Showing how our Christ can gather
Vilest hearts from land or sea;

In some heavenly alembic,
Snowy white from crimson bring;
Stamp his name on each, and bear them
To the palace of the king.

* * *

O what wondrous visions wrapped me!
Heaven's gates seemed opened wide,
Even I stood clear and faultless,
By my dear Redeemer's side.

Faultless in his glory's presence!
Faultless in that dazzling light!
Christ's own love, majestic, tender,
Made my crimson snowy white!

The Crystallization of Character

"Till we all come ... unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." - Ephesians 4:13.

NO CHASTENING for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby," says the writer of Hebrews at the end of that very comforting statement beginning with the 6th verse of the 12th chapter to the effect that the very fact of our being sons of God means that we are to expect chastening from the hand of our Father. And yet we read of Paul and Silas singing praises unto God when they had been thrown into prison at Philippi; and Peter exhorts: "If any man suffer as a Christian let him glorify God on this behalf." - 1 Peter 4:16.

The explanation of this apparent mutual contradiction is to be found in the root meaning of the Greek word translated "chastening." This meaning is "child," and the original meaning of the word itself, "paideia," is "rearing of a child." This meaning is exactly in harmony with the preceding thought expressed in the passage in Hebrews-the chastening of sons or children. This is obviously something apart from "suffering as a Christian," and seems to be restricted to something between God and his children in connection with the formation of character, the analogy of rearing the child being maintained. We all know that our parental chastening was not a pleasant experience at the time, but we know that it worked out in us the desired after result. The word "afterward" in the passage in Hebrews seems to be the key to the correct understanding of the verse.

In our grown-up lives in which we are the children-God's sons how many, many times do we not have experiences which leave us humbled in the dust because of our abject failure to come up to the desired standard of conduct, and we feel terribly discouraged. Paul wrote to Timothy (1 Tim. 1:5) that the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart; and years before that the Psalmist had prayed in anguish after he had committed a terrible sin: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psa. 51:10). Finally, Jeremiah said, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9). We do not know our own hearts, and when God in answer to our prayers to create in us clean hearts or to help us in the renewing of our minds, gives us experiences which show us some of the dark things in our hearts of which we were unaware, we seem to ourselves to be so hopelessly bad that there is a very strong temptation to become discouraged and give up. This is where we have to trust God to the utmost of our power, and keep on casting *all* our care upon Him. What does it all mean?

In the chemistry laboratory at school when we wished to obtain some copper sulphate crystals, we took a solution of copper sulphate -- a beautiful transparent blue solution -- and boiled it down to about half its volume. After all that boiling there seemed to be no difference at all, for it was still a clear transparent blue solution. However, the solution was put aside. Next morning we would take up the glass containers with the copper sulphate solution which the day before we - had put away as nothing but a solution, and there lying at the bottom of the container were the beautifully formed crystals we were wanting. These had gradually formed as the solution cooled off after its drastic boiling down process.

So it seems to be in these painful experiences we have in our Christian walk. Before we know where we are, we get into a state of turmoil-a sort of mental ebullition -- our pride or something else we thought we did not have or had overcome long since, comes up to the surface and boils over, and goes on boiling over, perhaps for hours or it may even be for days, and at the end of it

all we are humbled and realize that we have failed. There seems to be nothing to show for all our careful walking with God, our studying, and our fellowshiping with others of like precious faith. We certainly feel very chastened. The days go by and the experience becomes a memory; and then another experience comes to us, and to our joyful surprise we find that what affected us so seriously in the previous experience has no effect now. We are quite strong on the particular point -- that portion of our character has crystallized. How has this happened? It is the "nevertheless afterward" portion of the statement in Hebrews which has been quietly working in us. The chastening parts of the experiences are the conscious parts and are of the utmost importance, for it is only as the conscious mind is rightly exercised by the experiences that the subconscious mind can do its quiet, unseen work of yielding the peaceable fruit of righteousness. It is another of those divine paradoxes: the failure part of the experience is necessary that there may be the ultimate triumph; or using our Father's own words: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness" - 2 Cor. 12:9.

- *Contributed*

The Christian's Rest

"Come unto Me, all ye that labor... and I will give you rest." - Matthew 11:28.

"REST" is one of the treasured words connoting comfort and ease of body and mind to a sinful and distraught world. Particularly is this so in the present days of world-wide unrest and discontent. The Astronauts who visited the lifeless moon, on their return journey to planet earth were struck with the contrast in appearance between it and planet earth. To their eyes the earth presented a picture of colorful beauty. Had they a close-up view of its inhabitants, it probably would have resembled a huge ant hill in feverish activity and disorder.

A closer view of the ant hill would reveal an objective order, an instinctive compulsive working toward the perpetuation of the species. However the restless human race struggling in its fallen state with the problems attendant upon sin, sickness, and death, selfishness and greed plus an insatiable desire for wealth and power, finds itself in a state of frenzy, fear, and frustration.

Our great Creator, foreseeing the need for periodic cessation from activity, made provision for it in the Law given to Israel through Moses. In memory of his own rest (Genesis 2:1-3) the Lord prescribed a seventh day of rest for his people. Since that ancient day the tempo of human activity has greatly accelerated both in population growth and increase in knowledge, a condition foretold by Daniel (12:4), a prophecy which fittingly describes our day. The present means of travel carry multitudes to every part of the earth, one aspect of the restlessness which marks the human family. But of greater moment is 'the growth in restlessness of mind, the real source of 'present instability. It is to this mental condition we would direct our thoughts, guided by Holy Scripture.

WHERE TRUE REST IS FOUND

How well our Heavenly Father knows our real needs! Therefore in his Word are found such appropriate gems as "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him." "My presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest." "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

Since the knowledge of God does not reach the vast majority, there exists no check on the emotions generated by envy, hate, and violence due to Man's imperfect social arrangements. The true knowledge of God would instill in all hearts an attitude of peace, patience, and rest.

Our Master foretold the conditions we now see in the earth. From Luke 21:25, 26 we quote in part: "Upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity: the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth."

Christians, witnessing these fulfilled predictions, are not victims of the pervading fearful restlessness which grips those not aware of God's ultimate purpose for their blessing; who see only a challenge to an established way of life protected by the governments under which they function. These arrangements, the best man can devise, are nevertheless part of the Adversary's world-kingdom, doomed to disappear before the incoming eternal kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This Kingdom of Righteousness began almost 2000 years ago when there was born "a Saviour which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11), whose mission was to take away the sin of the world. This

phenomenal and far reaching event took place at a time in Israel's history prophesied in the words "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined," - Isaiah 9:2.

The vast majority of the people, however, chose to remain in darkness and bondage rather than accept the simple but profound invitation from the lips of their Messiah: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." - Matthew 11:28-30. Blessed indeed were the few that accepted this invitation since for them the burden of the Law was lifted; transferred to One "who knew no sin but who was made sin [offering] for us;" "One who bore our sins in his own body on the tree." - 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24.

REST A PART OF THE LAW

If the blessings of Rest be gauged by the degree of reference to it in the Scriptures, then it is indeed an important part of our Christian experience. To Israel the command was "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." - Exodus 20:8-11.

In giving this command to Israel, God identified their keeping of a 24-hour rest period with his own rest on a larger and higher scale, suggesting that aside from Israel's physical rest and blessing, there was a typical lesson foreshown for the New Creation Class.

It is to be noted also that not only was there a seventh day Rest, but also a seventh month Rest and a seventh year Rest, all prominent under the Law. The seventh day was a cessation from toil; the seventh month was one in which atonement for sin was made, granting rest from sin for the ensuing year; the seventh year was appointed for release from bondage and servitude, as well as rest for the land. Then when 7 times 7 years had passed, came the great Jubilee year of restoration which pictured the "times of restitution of all things" during the Millennial reign of Christ.

Great benefits still come to all those who observe the sabbath rest, affording as it does recuperation from the toils of life -- rest for tired muscles as well as overtaxed minds and taut nerves. The rest, however, which means so much to the Christian is not respite from physical toil particularly, but rather the rest of mind and heart promised by the Lord Jesus to all who accept his invitation. This is a rest the world cannot give. It comes especially to those who have ceased from their own works; from a vain attempt to attain life thru obedience to the Law, which, because of human infirmity, was found to be unto death instead of the hoped-for life. These have found by faith that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness" and have thereby "entered into rest." - Romans 10:4; Hebrews 4:3. He is the source of rest also to those never under the law.

Not only is this rest, this peace of mind, a vital part of our relationship with God through our Lord Jesus, but it enters into our daily life as one of the many blessings enjoyed despite the surrounding restlessness in the world. It encompasses our reactions to the inequities, the unrighteousness, the violence which mark our present so-called civilization. The natural reaction to such conditions would be impatience, shock and condemnation. But for those whose minds have been transformed by the power of God and who are dwelling not in the flesh but in the spirit (Romans 8:5), there is in the Word very good instruction for governing our reactions.

THE PSALMIST'S VIEW OF REST

This is found in Psalm 37:1, 2: "Fret not [burn not with vexation] thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb."

How effectively does God dispose of this problem. First, through death in individual cases, keeping the condition measureably under control; also, by warning against envy of those who by evil practices attain an easy and prosperous way of life.

This beautiful Psalm not only warns against the unrest of mind induced by fretting and envy, but also offers an effective formula for peaceful tranquility through four suggestions conducive to a state of rest:

1. Trust in the Lord.
2. Delight thyself in the Lord.
3. Commit thy way unto the Lord.
4. Rest in the Lord.

Let us consider each in detail.

"TRUST IN THE LORD"

Psalm 37:3: "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed;" appropriate advice for God's typical people and good, too, for the antitypical, the New Creatures in Christ.

Christian experience should early have taught *us* the true value of this principle of action. Our emotions can rise to an undesirable pitch when we see cherished principles violated or disregarded and we feel like giving the offender "a piece of our mind." This is then the time to remember that the inexorable law of our Creator will exact just compensation for its infractions. Would it not be more appropriate to pray for the offender than to give vent to anger or fretfulness? "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man." "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." "Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." - Romans 12:19; Psalm 118:8; Proverbs 3:5; Isaiah 26:4.

There is no true solace or comfort to be found in leaning on the arm of flesh, whether it be the ordinary individual, or one who has the stature of a prince-who may have all the outward appearance of wisdom. Self, too, is untrustworthy unless fortified by "the wisdom that is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits." - James 3:17. He who possesses this wisdom and conforms thereto, will experience the comfort and encouragement granted to Moses in his heavy leadership role by the words "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." - Deut. 33:27.

"DELIGHT THYSELF ALSO IN THE LORD"

Psalm 37:4: "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." On the surface this may appear an open invitation to the gratifying of every human wish. However, a

thoughtful consideration of the passage will reveal that he whose heart's desires are filled is he who delights himself *in the Lord*.

"It is only when continued trust and responsive providence have ripened into a personal acquaintance and fellowship with God that we learn to delight in him. When heart answers to heart, when prayer brings recognized answers of peace, when divine care and love are especially seen along our pathway, when we come to feel that the Father and the Son have so clearly manifested themselves to us -- Oh, then it is when we begin to delight ourselves in the Lord. Then, however dark the way or however heavy the storm that rages about us, the balm of divine consolation is always there so that the child of God, though often troubled on every side, is not distressed. Though perplexed he is never in despair; though cast down he is not destroyed; though persecuted, he is never forsaken."

How readily such can enter into the disciplines which produce these responses: "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." "Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee." "Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." - Psalm 40:8; 119:97; 63:1, 3, 7.

These Scripture jewels reach the heart of those who are finding this coveted rest, because their hearts' desires are being fulfilled. Their delights are centered in Him who has drawn them to the true source of strength and stability of mind.

Let us consider now another way of delighting ourselves in the Lord and this, the way of fellowship with those of kindred minds and mutual experiences. The Psalmist here strikes a responsive chord in his words "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple." - Psalm 27:4.

To live in the house of the Lord is to know more about him; to learn more of his love and compassion, his patience and understanding, his forgiveness and comfort so reflected in Jesus-the One "altogether lovely, the chiefest among ten thousand."

Dwelling in the house of the Lord in the fullest sense will be realized beyond the veil as foretold in Psalm 16:11; a transporting reality the result of our present experiences in association with those who now constitute the visible dwelling place of the Lord among his people; the temple of the living God, each individually also the temple of God's holy spirit. - 1 Cor. 6:19, 20.

Having been purchased not with silver and gold but with the precious blood of Christ, it devolves upon each one to glorify God in their body and spirit which are God's. - 1 Peter 1:18, 19; 1 Cor. 6:20.

"COMMIT THY WAY UNTO THE LORD"

Psalm 37:5: "Commit thy way unto the Lord." In this admonition the Psalmist is directing our course in the way that will enhance our rest and lead us into a satisfying relationship with our Heavenly Father and his dear Son.

Nothing but a complete committal such as is set forth by the Apostle Paul in Romans 12:1, 2 can lead the enlightened one into the promised rest and peace of the mind that is being renewed, transformed into a center of spiritual thinking motivated by spiritual desires. The heart that is centered in God, trusting and delighting in him, cannot find complete satisfaction and rest short of complete consecration. Then it is that the problems and cares of this life come to be a "yoke that is easy and a burden that is light." Thus it is that "we cast all our cares upon Him who careth for us."

It may be thought that the initial step of consecration settled everything once and for all. However the human tendency continues to battle for supremacy over the new mind. Paul tells us that these two are at war with no possibility of reconciliation. It is a "battle to the death" with decisions made favoring one or the other aspects of our dual existence. Herein lies the danger of compromise which must be resisted with success if we are to have the promised rest. The interests of the new mind must be protected at all costs. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the spirit do mortify [put to death] the deeds of the body, ye shall live." - Romans 8:13.

In this struggle we learn that daily we must renew our consecration and daily take up the "whole armor of God." His grace and strength will then make us stand in this evil day, cause us to come off "more than conquerors" in the conflict, and assure the victor's peace and promised rest.

The marginal reference to Psalm 37:5 reads "Roll thy way upon the Lord," suggesting a very effective way to rid ourselves of the burdens that inhibit full divestment of life's cares. "And He shall bring it to pass." Bring what to pass? Verse 6 suggests that our righteousness will emerge as the light. God's grace has provided it because of our faith in his dear Son. In this we rest from our own futile works. On this solid rock foundation "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart" (Psalm 97:11). This is the joyful portion to all who have committed their way unto the Lord.

REST IN THE LORD

Psalm 37:7: "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." Here the Psalmist reiterates his opening words "Fret not thyself because of evildoers." The disposition of the evildoer's case is in wise and good hands. Divine compensation will take its course, thus relieving others of the responsibility for punishment. There is therefore no need to fret and fume over the evils we see in the society of our day. "Wait patiently for Him" is the wise course for those who would rest in the Lord.

Rest and patience have much in common. It seems reasonable to expect then that the individual who is enjoying the "haven of rest" will be one who is exercising patience in connection with all the affairs of life, whether of lesser or greater importance. It may be that there will be failures along this line to the point of discouragement. Failures, however, can become stepping stones to maturity in letting "patience have her perfect work."

God's will having been accepted in place of our own, it remains for us to accept his will submissively and with delight. "I delight to do thy will, O my God" is the sublime attitude to be attained and maintained, if we would be pleasing to him. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." - Isaiah 40:31.

"Wait on the Lord: be of good courage and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord" (Psalm 27:14). The way then to the rest that cometh to the people of God is through faith for "We which have believed do enter into rest" (Hebrews 4:3). It is then comparatively easy to put our trust in Him, to find our delights in him in his Word, and in fellowship and communion with him and his Son. For "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). By extension we joy also in the fellowship of His people.

Trust in Him, delight thyself in him, commit thy way unto him these three injunctions lead to the fourth—rest in him. For "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." - Isaiah 26:3.

-J. B. Webster

The Divine Slowness

"Wait." - Hab. 2:3.

FROM THE above verse we have selected the one word "wait" as a guide for our thoughts. This is the word which divine wisdom often seems to utter in rebuke of human impatience. Man is eager, hurried, and impatient; God is never in haste. The divine proceedings are slow. In Holy Scripture men are often counseled to wait; to wait upon God, to wait for God: language which supposes delay and the need of patience. So frequently does this language occur that it indicates that power to be still, to wait for the set time of divine action, is a habit of soul not common, and of high value where possessed. And the early recognition of this broad principle, of the important element of time in all divine procedure, will assist to that quality in the Christian commended of the Lord and expressed in the words: "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." - Lam. 3:26.

Let us examine in detail the divine slowness as it is revealed in nature, providence, and grace; all media through which God reveals Himself to man. We will find in all these manifestations consistency and harmony -- the same God. This is a great fact, full of light which will contribute to guide us safely through many a season.

The History of the Earth

As regards the heavens and the process by which they were peopled with the brilliances we now see there, we know nothing. But as regards the history of the earth, we have some knowledge of the changes through which it had to pass to become a fitting habitation for man. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." We are not told how far back that beginning was, but we are informed of six days, or intervals, which gradually brought the earth to the state in which man found it. In the solitude of those far-off ages, progressive change gave existence to progressive life. Mysterious forces from below burst through the crust of our planet and determined, according to divine forethought, where the hills should rise. Gigantic vegetation appeared through which monster animals, now extinct, roamed in search of prey. All things were developing to that point where man was to appear, although for him there is long waiting. But the Creator is from everlasting, and eternity is His. He may well be slow. As the handiwork of God unfolded before the observing spiritual hosts, much may have seemed crude, futile, and meaningless; but the Infinite could wait, as He has waited often since, And He would have us regard the operation of His hands, so that we also may know how to wait. "Show me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me: for Thou art the God of my salvation; on Thee do I wait all the day." - Psa. 25:4, 5.

The Movement of the Seasons

These also remind us of this great principle of time in divine procedure. How slow, how gradual, how imperceptible are the changes of day and night! How gentle is the coming of light, and how slowly and silently does it give place to the darkness! There is a stateliness in the transition from the one to the other, which is as noiseless as it is gradual. These might have come with suddenness, as if from a hurried hand, but they do not. It is as if the will of a great King were being done, by powers which none can venture to resist.

We read the same lesson in the winter as it retires before the springtime; and likewise in spring as it in turn is succeeded by summer and autumn. This circle of change has been likened to a mystic

dance wherein the figures, gracefully moving, blend their colors together as in a garland. An Intelligence has said that it shall be so, and to that Mind there is majesty in slowness. And while the seasons pass before our gaze as a procession in honor of the Great King, we seem to hear them whisper, 'Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and bath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain; be ye also patient.' - Jas. 5:7, 8.

The History of All Life

There is that in the life of all things that teaches the same lesson. Life, whether in plants or animals, is a growth, at once silent and gradual, so gradual as not to be perceived. This is indeed a mystery. Everywhere life grows up, man knoweth not how. "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear"; these stages melt one into the other and cannot be marked. Once begun, life's course is a ceaseless onwardness towards perfection, and in each transition there can be nothing hurried or abrupt, but the end shall be attained with the steadiness and certainty of law. In all the marvelous handiwork of God and in the slow but sure development of living things, whether it be the flowers of the field or the smallest creatures of the air, our thoughts are lifted to the same Agency which works after the same manner, whether it be scattering gold dust over an insect's wing or shaping a world. "These wait all upon Thee." - Psa. 104:27.

Again in the individual life of man as it progresses from the apprehensions of childhood to the acquisitions of manhood, the wisdom of slowness is manifested. The human intelligence grows continuously to its three-score years and ten, but only by protracted toil in scholarship, science, and art, and through long waiting ere the goal sought for is attained. There is no perfection through haste.

And in the history of national life, how well is this same principle of slow development revealed. If the education of the individual be slow, much slower is the education of a people. The life of an individual soon runs its course, but nations live on through centuries. What labor, what self-sacrifice, what sad experiences must nations pass through to rise from barbarism to a state of comparative civilization. Much sorrow, many battlefields, many wretched prison-cells, and many bloodstained scaffolds have been the price paid by nations in the slow rise from rudeness and slavery to enlightenment and freedom.

These facts from nature and providence teach us to guard against impatience in judging the ways of God and to learn how to wait. "I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry." - Psa. 40:1.

The Divine Slowness in the Redemption

And as we turn to revealed religion we are more than ever schooled to wait. Consider the long interval which was to pass between the promise of a Savior and His advent. With the entrance of sin into the world with its disastrous effects, evil triumphs in the consequent dreadful downward path of mankind. Death begins its reign, and sorrow spreads its mantle everywhere. But a Deliverer is promised, a Seed of the woman who shall bruise the serpent's head. Had this course of things been entrusted to our hands, we should surely have been eager, in haste, to further the coming of the Redeemer and the overthrow of the Evil One. But the Divine Mind does not evince this eagerness, this haste. Four thousand years pass, and the Promised One does not come. True the Infinite speaks from heaven by voices and by messengers. He inspires prophets to reiterate His solemn pledge. He originates institutions to be shadows of the great things to come. But humanity has to wait through many centuries, for in this, the moral regeneration of the world, we find God exercising the same silent slowness which characterized the evolution of nature. The

work of redemption, like the work of creation, has its stages also. This is difficult for hurried man to comprehend, who is prone to murmur and complain, but the man of faith knows that long preliminary steps are necessary for the accomplishment of the divine purposes, and will patiently wait, for God's salvation. "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." - Hab. 2:3.

Again, in the manner of the Savior's first coming there was much to disappoint the man of impatience. The great work of deliverance began under humble and inconspicuous circumstances. Prophecy had depicted the advent in glowing colors. Were not the great kingdoms of earth to become tributary to Him, the greatest of kings in the greatest of kingdoms? But the Kingdom of God comes without outward show (Luke 17:20), and its Founder was to many as a root out of a dry ground, as one without form or comeliness. (Isa. 53.) How humble is His birth. He is homeless and poor. He attaches to Himself men from the humbler classes. He seeks not to be great. He is meek and lowly. Even with regard to His spiritual mission, the results are limited and unimposing and have stumbled many then and since. To ascribe salvation to so humble a source is offensive to human pride.

But all this is in harmony with the divine conduct as known elsewhere. God does not cause great things to become great at once. They must grow out of small things, and that by slow degrees. Atoms contribute to the formation of worlds, and substances change and become what they are destined to be in the process of ages. God's ways admonish us not to despair of the day of small things but to remember that under His rule the small is everywhere made to be as parent to the great. The Savior revealed Himself gradually and slowly to His disciples, for that was only in accordance with the divine law of things. The Church which is to fill the earth has its beginning in the hut of a fisherman and in the upper room in Jerusalem. The great forces of nature all move thus, without noise, without haste, so secretly that we never know their beginnings, and so slowly that we can never see their motion, though we know that they are moving. And so eventually God's salvation will be revealed to all. "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." - Isa. 25:9.

Slowness in the Christian's Development

In the spiritual history of the individual believer we learn again this same lesson of divine slowness. When we enter the Christian life, we naturally desire that it should mature speedily. But it does not so mature. We unlearn the evil slowly; we learn the good still more slowly. Weaknesses we hope to subdue quickly are not to be so overcome. Vanquished today, they return to the field tomorrow. The new and better habit of the soul does not settle and ripen as we had fondly expected. The sin most easily besetting us returns (it may be like an old associate offended and exasperated) from being resisted, spurned, commanded to be gone, and we even fall under it as Peter did and as many have done. All this is very humiliating and painful. "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord." - Psa. 27:13, 14.

Yes, the Christian must often feel that the conflict between flesh and spirit in his case might have been less protracted, less alternating, less painful. But in time he learns that the character derived from this personal conflict between good and evil would be much less complete and less fruitful of good were his lot an exception to that of his fellow Christians. The new life, in common with life everywhere, is a growth, and grows slowly, imperceptibly. The morning light shines steadily onward until day is perfected; so it is with the path of the just. But here, as everywhere, we are

schooled to wait. "Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually." (Hosea 12:6.) Call to mind the experience in this respect of the saints of old.

Noah waited long for the fulfillment of God's judgment on earth in the flood. Abraham must wait many years for the coming of the promised seed and still longer for his inheritance of the land and the eventual blessing of all nations. Joseph endured many years of affliction and imprisonment ere his dreams from God were fulfilled in his rulership over Egypt. So also must Moses wait forty years in the wilderness for God to call him in His own time. The lesson is taught over and over again, and must be learned by all who walk acceptably with God. The grandest revelation of this divine principle of slowness in operation is to be found in the development of the New Creation class. Two millenniums have been set apart for this greatest of God's works, and when it is accomplished, all intelligent beings will marvel. To each Christian is vouchsafed the individual privilege of humbly and patiently submitting to the Divine Power as it slowly transforms him from the image of the earthly to that of the heavenly. More than all else must he learn not to be weary in well-doing, for in due season he shall reap if he faints not. Let us all, therefore, take closer to ourselves this lesson of divine slowness and learn to wait. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." -- Isa. 40:30, 31.

- W. J. Siekman

A Life Well Spent

Softly, O softly, the years have swept by thee,
Touching thee gently with tenderest care;
Sorrow and death they've often brought nigh thee
Yet have they left thee but beauty to wear;
Growing old gracefully,
Gracefully fair.

Past all the winds that were adverse and chilling
Past all the islands that lured thee to rest;
Past all the currents that urged thee unwilling,
Far from thy course to the home of the blest;
Growing old peacefully,
Peaceful and blest.

Never a feeling of envy and sorrow
When the bright faces of children are seen;
Never a year from the young wouldst thou borrow -
Thou dost remember what lieth between:
Growing old willingly,
Thankful, serene.

Rich in experience that angels might covet;
Rich in a faith that has grown with thy years;
Rich in a love that grew from and above it,
Soothing thy sorrows and hushing thy fears;
Growing old wealthily,
Loving and dear.

Hearts at the sound of thy coming are lightened,
Ready and willing thy hand to relieve;
Many a face at thy kind word hath brightened
"It is more blessed to give than receive."
Growing old happily,
Ceasing to grieve.

Eyes that grow dim to the earth and its glory
Have a sweet recompense youth cannot know;
Ears that grow dull to the world and its story
Drink in the songs that from Paradise flow;
Growing old graciously
Purer than snow.

Entered Into Rest

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