

THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

VOL. LXX July / August, 1987 No. 4

To the Elect of God (in a Time of Trouble)

The elect of God do exist, even though no human being can individually identify them. They have a common "family" likeness, even though they are spread "throughout the world. They have one faith. In one aim and with one mind they follow different occupations while living in diverse parts of this world. We greet them in the name of the Lord, praying for them and wishing them the grace, mercy, and peace which can come only from God, our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

Beloved, you are known to God, even though men cannot identify you. You are scattered throughout the world, as in a dark and cloudy night. Your mark of divine approval consists in your belief in, obedience to, and love for the truth which God has set forth through Moses, the Prophets, and the Apostles. Having this mark you are precious to God. Your faith pleases him. He receives your free will offerings of obedience and sacrifice as a sweet smelling aroma -- in a time when the world ignores him. Your offerings are acceptable to him through the High Priest of our profession and they will be spoken of again when they will seem to have been all forgotten. The world thinks your works insignificant by comparison to its activity and confusion, but the world's judgment is impaired by fear and misconception as it watches the Lord's Arm tearing down this present order of human society.

I write to you about our common affliction. It is "common" in a much larger sense than my sharing every experience with you. I do not; nor do I write to you because I know you, because I do not. Oh, some of you, doubtless, I know; but no man knows you as "...the *Lord knows them that are his...*" (2 Tim. 2:19). A man cannot even know himself that well! As our beloved brother Paul says it, he judged not himself because he was judged by the Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 4:3).

We know the principles of divine salvation -- they have been revealed in the Word. We are not able to know (completely) just when and how these principles of salvation will have had their full work in an individual's life -- although it is easy to see when they are violated.

I write to you as to those whom the Lord loves, to those who band together in joy because of the coming of our Lord. I write as one having similar experiences and needs. Scorners might question

my authority to address you, but the right of brotherly love belongs to every heart that can rise to its privileges in Christ. Brotherly love leads us to brotherly concern, particularly respecting our standing in righteousness before God. We know that we are on a sort of spiritual probation -- God is testing our hearts and our wills. But we also know that our hope will be accomplished in us because he that promised is faithful (2 Tim. 2:13). Your present situation may be difficult; I know you too are cast down, because I also suffer like you; occasionally you may completely despair of God's promised grace. I write merely to remind you of the cause you have for encouragement and for joy.

Discouraged, Not Destroyed

Do you not feel unworthy at times? I know that I do when I consider the salvation to be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Yet only those whom the Lord esteems worthy will enter into that kingdom -- and a part of his consideration is about that same sense of personal unworthiness which now oppresses both you and I. God's favor is for those who rate themselves by God's standards; by these we are all unworthy. Jacob's words express, only too well, our feelings that we are unworthy of the least of all the mercy and truth which the Lord shows to his people (Gen. 32:10). What are we but worms of the earth? We were fashioned from his clay. He permits us to live a few years upon his glorious earth. Even the most righteous of men can only repeat the words of Job (whom God approved): "*Behold, I am, vile... wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes*" (Job. 40:4; 42:6).

Consider whether, if a righteous man could feel this dejection, is it strange that we should sometimes also feel broken in heart and contrite in spirit? This is proper; but do not be destroyed by this attitude. It is pleasing to God. He has more than once said that he is pleased by such honest humility.

Your sins distress you. It is right that they should. But be comforted in them. There is a sin that is not unto death. You are not callous toward the Lord. You do not run in the way that he has forbidden. You do not love the present world or run with it in all its ". . . *ungodliness and worldly lust...*" (Tit. 2:12) -- "*...the lusts of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.*}" (1 John 1:16). You do not deny God and live in deliberate disobedience of his commandments. On the contrary, you love his name and his word! You believe his testimonies and rejoice in his institutions. You love, look forward to, and long for the appearing of his Son -- whom he has promised to send to you. What's more, you are trying to do his will to the best of your understanding.

Do you not fail frequently? I know I do! We do things that we know we should not and we are distressed because of our actions. It is right to be distressed. But do not forget God's providence! Christ has taken away our sins! We are washed in his blood. He stands in the presence of God, not only as our accepted sacrifice but as the appointed high priest for his house. He lives to make intercession for us -- according to God's will (Heb. 7:25). God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to forgive us all of our iniquity -- if we confess our sins (1 John 1:9). If we walk in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sins. God forgives us for Christ's sake.

Selfless Disciples

Are you oppressed by your own unsuitableness? How could you be promoted to honor and power in the kingdom of God? Do you not know that it is God's plan to choose from such? "...not *many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called...*" (1 Cor. 1:26). Jesus spoke of this, saying "*Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight*" (Matt. 11:26). He thanked the Father for proceeding in the manner he had chosen. The kingdom is to be established for God's honor, not man's, for spiritual, not fleshly objectives. It is logically necessary to provide men for its administration who are not proud and exalted in their own eyes, but are humble -- knowing and reverencing God so deeply that they are pleased that he should be exalted. Certainly, man will be blessed in all of God's arrangements; but glory will go to God first.

Would this end have resulted had God chosen to work through human aristocratic minds? We think not. Aristocrats are "full" of themselves. God chooses men who are empty so that they may be filled with his glory. He can provide poor men and poor women with treasures of eternal

worth. Only thus will the excellency of the power of God be seen, and not by the might or wisdom of man (cf. 2 Cor. 4:7).

There was a time when men would have said that such simple people are not fit to rule others. When we look at the cries for equality and liberty we see that many opinions have now changed on this matter. One point, however, has not changed. No one is suitable to rule others who has not had some relevant experience in the exercise of power. God will provide both the experiences (now) and the means to accomplish his will (later). You are to be changed. You shall change this mortal life for another. He, even God, shall thoroughly fit you to the task he wills for you to perform. This change will bring joy unspeakable. His strength will enable -you to conduct yourself as a king, without fatiguing, to administer judgment and heavenly wisdom under God's new order (1 Cor. 6:2). God shall exalt his children in his time, but only if his children have first learned the humility, love, obedience and pliability which are now the subjects of our experiences. Take heart in your doubts, for your Father worketh in you.

Love Looks by Starlight

You are human. Your mind is weak. You may feel darkness stealing into your heart at times. You may be filled with fear, with horror, with confusion as you observe the mass of abortive life that appears upon the face of this globe. Do not despair. Darkness is temporarily inseparable from God's plan. Humanity can no more enter the glory to be revealed in it without experiencing separation from God and the resultant trials than can the fruits of the field reach maturity without the tilling and weeding that the patient farmer performs upon his orchard. The darkness of ignorance concerning God has existed in this world for ages. But darkness is short for any one generation. No generation has lived for "ages." We (personally) know nothing of the darkness upon the earth one hundred years ago. We were not yet born. After our lives have run their course (if the kingdom has not yet been established), we shall no longer know of the darkness that will then exist. Our next waking moment will find us in the sunshine of God's eternal power, glory, and love.

God loves his own. He loves you. He cares for you. He chastens, pities, upholds and prepares you. There is an inheritance in store for you -- along with all the sons of light. After the fight, yes the bitter fight, against the evil that surrounds us, there will be an end. And the victorious shall be gathered together with the Lord.

Our Desires Realized

Do you feel yet another sorrow? Is there, within your heart, a hunger that is never satisfied? You have longings which never depart. You ache for the time when all men shall know God as you know him -- but you can find no human heart who will listen to the story of God's love. You yearn to share the song of salvation with others -- but their lives are so full of getting and saving to self that they have no ear to hear the Master's knock at the doorway of their hearts. You cry at their pain, praying for the day when their tears shall be wiped away. Your heart faints from the weight of their pursuit of pleasure and self. Yes, even when you would share a word in season you cannot rejoice fully, for your words are filled with hesitation, your lips stammer, and you wish you had a better ability to be and to do things to his glory and honor.

"But in the kingdom..."

To some the words "but in the kingdom" are empty -- but to you they bring joy and peace. Only the kingdom of Christ will fill your longings for righteousness. Your stammering tongue will then be healed. Your feeble knees will be strengthened. God himself fills us now with the longing for his power and the beauty of his kingdom and his Son promised that *"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after' righteousness; for they shall be filled"* (Matt. 5:6).

Dissension Shall Flee

You are also troubled by the dissension among those of the household of faith. You have been brought to tears by your brother. You may also have caused him deep grief. Do not be surprised by the trials which come upon you (1 Pet. 4:12). Our experiences today are but other forms of the one trial which has beset the entire Gospel Age church. What else could you expect when such a diverse group of people are brought together by the knowledge of God's plan. It takes time to change hearts. You must trust in God's wisdom in bringing you together with your brother even if you might never have chosen him for your friend, much less your brother. God brought order out of chaos before you existed. Do you think him unable to do it again now in your presence? Do not forget that the results which come from our assemblies do not alter things, they merely test and prove them. The Word of God stands sure while men strive and chafe.

Our Father has watched the confusion which man has brought to everything he touches. He is not surprised. It was foretold that there would be strife. You were warned that the love of many would wax cold. Wars, commotions, severe testings: you were told about them all, you were told in his holy Word. The Apostolic Age was filled with these same troubles. Are we immune from the same testings which they endured?

Rejoice, for there is comfort even in this. Our fight is nearly over. Our life ticks away by the moment. Be strong and of good comfort. Stand firm and comport yourselves as men (1 Cor. 16:13). You can endure all things for a time. Keep close to the Word in your daily reading and the peace of God will rule in your minds and hearts (Col. 3:15). Let God preserve you during this discordant prelude to his harmonious kingdom. Then he will heal all wounds, wipe away all tears, and chase away the darkness for ever.

Your fellow sufferer, fellow soldier, fellow pilgrim, and fellow suppliant of the mercy of God unto eternal life.

Our Fellowship In Christ

The Scottish have a saying that "some things are better felt than 'telt,'" and perhaps this is especially true of Christian fellowship. Though 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 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 classmate who was in the hospital for an operation. When it came time for the four year old's report, she could think of nothing. After some parental prompting she remembered that that afternoon her little girl friend, who lived across the street, had been sitting on her front porch crying bitterly. Not knowing what else to do, the four year old said that she had crossed the street, put her arm around her friend and, she said, "Mother, I cried too."

Birds of a Feather

We have heard the question: "May we have fellowship with Br. John?" Or, "Do you think we should fellowship with Sr. Mary?" Such a question demonstrates that the asker does not understand what the word "fellowship" means. Suppose your reply was "Yes, you can fellowship with Br. John"; would that answer result in fellowship where before there had been none? Or suppose your answer was: "No! you should not fellowship with Sr. Mary"; would that reply in any way hinder a fellowship which already existed? You know very well that it would not.

A natural illustration using an old saying about birds will carry this point forward. "Birds of a feather flock together." We know that this proverb is true. Birds of a feather do not hold a meeting to discuss the matter. Nor do they pass resolutions as to whether they shall or shall not. By nature they actually do flock together.

This is also true of men. A man who is generous will never seek the company of a miser. A humble man never delights in the company of one who is arrogant. It just is not done.

All One Body We

Fellowship never constructs fences. It is true that the Lord's people have occasionally (while endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace) found themselves separated by fences which others have constructed. But those who share in God's holy Spirit and who yield to its influence find themselves possessed of a certain wisdom. Such know how to climb over the walls of separation which others might build. They know how to reach through the fences others might construct in order to clasp the hand of a brother Christian in warm and loving fellowship. Such have always been able to truthfully sing: "We are not divided, all one body we."

Doctrinal Differences

Some ask the question: How does doctrine affect fellowship? To this I reply: It all depends upon the individuals.

I find in myself (and in others known to me) a natural disposition to pay attention to doctrine rather than to conduct. However, the attention we pay to doctrine should always be with a view toward a closer walk with God. There is in this trait a very great danger.

One may hold the most accurate views regarding the fundamentals of Christian doctrine and be able to state them in the most precise manner. They may be familiar with dispensational and prophetic truths. They even may be acquainted with the teachings of ancient types. Yet they may also be barren of fruit. There may be little life where there is much light.

Let us thank God that our faith is not in a creed or statement of belief. Our faith is in the person of our Lord Jesus. His personality embraces every grace. In him we can find full fellowship and loyalty, yes, and unity too. And if the world could recognize him it would find its very life.

If Jesus stood in our midst so that we could see him with our literal eyes, I venture that if he chose to identify with us it would not be to the exclusion of all others, and that we would be delighted to associate ourselves with him -- and with any others whom he might choose as his companions.

Together

Another little story to leave with you: A few years ago three of us found ourselves waiting at a station for a train to depart. We watched as passengers boarded. Soon the conductor came along, a kindly, friendly faced man who by his appearance was nearing retirement. The engineer, walking a little faster, caught up with the conductor as they passed us. The engineer said 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," he said, *"together."*

- P .L. Read

Personal Predestination

On the Doctrines

Any discussion of this subject is liable to be unprofitable unless the participants agree as to what the term means. To reach such agreement, it is customary to resort to the dictionary definition, which should be acceptable to all as a basis for discussion. It is noteworthy that the dictionary brings the Almighty into the picture. Not everyone has taken the trouble to think out what is meant by the word when they use it, or what must be involved when it is asserted that someone is "predestinated."

Collins' dictionary gives the following definitions:

Predestination - The act of foreordaining; the unchangeable decree of God, ordaining whatever comes to pass, especially man's future lot.

Predestine - To decree beforehand, to foreordain.

Predestinate - To ordain beforehand by an unchangeable purpose.

The verb "to predestinate" means, then, to cause to come to pass by an unalterable purpose, or to foreordain unchangeably. Personal predestination was originally the Calvin creed, and apparently in an attempt to be logical, it was applied to good and bad, to angels and to men. Belief in hell and the immortality of the soul made it necessary to accept that God had predestinated the good to heaven, and the wicked to hell. With the current understanding of the immortality of the soul and the hell theories in this modern age, the predestination of the wicked has been forgotten, and we are left only with the predestination of the good to heaven.

It should be noted that the original Greek Scriptures which have been translated into English using the word "predestinate" did not contain any notion of the present-day dictionary meaning showing the certainty of arrival at a foreordained destiny as a result of an irrevocable decree or purpose of God. There are only four occasions when the Bible used the word "predestinate" -- twice in Romans (Rom. 8:29; Rom. 8:30) and twice in Ephesians (Eph. 1:5; Eph. 1:11).

We propose to examine the original meaning of these verses so as to verify that there is no thought of our being certain to arrive at a fixed destiny as the result of a foreordained, irresistible, unchangeable decree or intention of God.

If this were the case, then no other factors (such as our obedience to God's requirements) could be involved, because nothing can stop God's intentions. If obedience is required, disobedience must be a possibility. Do we agree with this? If we do not, then surely we must alter our understanding that freewill involves the ability to choose to do right or to choose to do wrong.

The word "predestinate," in the four Scriptures cited above, is used to translate the Greek word *proorizo* originally used by Paul, which Young defines as: To mark off first or beforehand, and Strong defines as: To mark out the bounds beforehand. The etymology seems to be *pro* -- before, and *orizo* -- which is the root word of "horizon" -- an imaginary line marking the bounds of the visible earth. Clearly the word does not contain any sense of certainty of arrival at a place or condition, as does the word "predestinate," but merely indicates the "bounds" or the outline of the objective "destiny" -- exactly as we see elsewhere the objective of the Christian as conformity of the character to the image of Jesus.

The subject of predestination is treated very fully in Hastings *Encyclopedia of Religions and Ethics*, which objects to the present-day dictionary meaning of the word "predestination" in the following terms:

It is etymologically unscriptural.

It is theologically depraved in its meaning.

It is philosophically not sufficiently distinctive.

The treatise shows that the Authorized Version was translated by men who were themselves already predestinarians, as were most of the clerics of the time, resulting in the use of a word conforming to their private views.

The word *proorizo* is also translated in other ways than the four instances mentioned above. A complete list of its occurrences follows:

Acts 4:28 "*For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done*" (Diaglott: "before appointed").

1 Cor. 2:7 "... *even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world*" (Diaglott: "previously designed before the ages").

Rom. 8:29 "... *he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son*" (Diaglott: "predetermined").

Rom. 8:30 "...*whom he did predestinate, them he also called*" (Diaglott: "predetermined").

Eph. 1:5 "*Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children...*" (Diaglott: "Having in love previously marked us out for sonship").

Eph. 1:11 "...*being predestinated according to the purpose of him*" (Diaglott: "having been previously marked out according to a design").

A similar word which merits attention in this connection is *horizo* and it is translated as follows:

Rom. 1:4 "*Declared to be the Son of God with power*"

Luke 22:22 "*and truly the Son of man goeth as it was determined*"

Acts 11:29 "... *and hath determined the times before appointed*"

Heb. 4:7 "*Again he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, Today if*

Acts 10:42 "*it is He who was ordained of God to be the judge of the quick*"

Acts 17:31 "*He will judge the world ... by that man whom he hath ordained.*"

Just as the word "predestinate" (in its present dictionary meaning) is not the equivalent of *proorizo*, so also the word "determine" (especially in its present sense of a fixed and unalterable

intention -- exactly fitting the predestinarians ideas of God's intentions towards them) does not correspond to the word *horizo*. The word "determine" used to mean "to limit," as Hebrews (4:7) quoted above shows, but its meaning has become changed by usage.

It would be difficult to find a single word that would correctly reflect the meaning of the Greek words *proorizo* and *horizo* and that would fit in elegantly with the Authorized Version translations of various contexts. But solely with the object of demonstrating how wrongly predestinarians read at least the four key texts quoted, it is suggested that perhaps the following will serve well enough:

Proorizo - To designate or mark out beforehand the limits or boundaries to be attained

Horizo - To designate or mark out the limits or boundaries to be attained.

Therefore, the correct thought to be taken from these verses would be:

Rom. 8:29 "... *He also did designate or mark out beforehand the limits or bounds to be attained, as corresponding to the image of his son.*"

Rom. 8:30 "... *whom He did thus designate or mark out beforehand their limits or bounds to be attained.*"

Eph. 1:5 "*Having designated or marked out beforehand the limits or bounds to be attained by us - the adoption of children.*"

Eph. 1:11 "... *we ... having been designated or marked out the limits or bounds to be attained by us, according to the purpose of...*"

There is no thought here of the certainty of reaching designated limits -- we must understand merely that the standard to be attained has been fixed beforehand. It could be noted that the word "horizon" is used today in this sense. For instance, someone recently said over the radio "We must lift our horizons" meaning, "We must extend the scope of our activities." There is on the radio a regularly scheduled item for schools which is heard under the title "New Horizons." In "Burmah International" (the house magazine of a well-known oil company) the limits of an oilfield area are described in certain geological strata which "form the production horizon," and in oilmen's jargon, the limits of an oilfield are referred to as its "horizon."

All Scripture shows that the way to the objective destiny which has been marked out beforehand is a trial, ending with the judgment (*krima* -- sentence) which begins at the house of God. If there is thus a trial, there must be a possibility of failure -- there cannot be absolute certainty of success, which predestination implies and requires. It is pointless to reply that God guarantees success because the work is his by an unchangeable decree, because there would be no trial of the transformation work which *we* have to perform. It could be argued that God will do it for us if we let him, but the question is not whether we will let God do it for us or not but whether we will do it ourselves, and moreover, whether we will do it under adverse conditions.

If obedience is required, then it must be possible to be *disobedient*. This alone disproves that God has decreed beforehand, and unchangeably, that we should become brethren of Jesus, because we could not then be disobedient, and obedience could not be required of us.

If there is to be a company of specially chosen predestinated brethren of Jesus by God's foreordained unchangeable decree, and if the ratio of these elect ones to all the called ones is as the few are to the many (Matt. 20:16; 22:14), then God has also foreordained by an unchangeable decree that the great "many" of those who are "called" will fail. That this could occur would be absurd.

We might bear in mind the conflict revealed in the Scriptures between God and Satan -- the one who aspired to be as the Most High. God has restricted his power over our wills -- we can choose to do right or to do wrong, to obey or to disobey. God will eventually demonstrate to Satan that even under adverse conditions a company of humans, of their own freewill, will choose to obey and run for the prize of Christ and will attain to it. Later, God will use this same company to assist the remainder of the willing ones of humanity also to choose to obey under *favorable* conditions. God never interferes with mankind's freedom of will.

Clarity of thought is obscured by the practice of assuming predestination where the Scriptures show that God, in fact, does the work of bringing about the transformation-from the enmity of Adamic fleshly imperfections to the sonship of a renewed mind. It is important to understand *how* God does this work and that it is not the result of a changeless decree applied to each concerned individual (independent of his own will), which had been issued long before the transformation work commences.

The Scriptures insist that God does this transforming work through his Word being received and obeyed, which results in a new mind. Faith comes by hearing. And hearing comes by the Word (cf. Rom. 10:7; 1 Pet. 1:23). The Word is the vehicle through which the *holy* Spirit of God works. "... *as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe*" (1 Thess. 2:13). When this working of the holy Spirit takes place in man we rightly call it God's work.

History and the parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:3-23) show us that with the exception of the bias towards Western nations and away from Eastern nations (as shown by Acts 16:6-7) the Word was to be disseminated throughout the world indiscriminately, just as a sower scatters seed in a field. The seed (which is the Word -- Luke 8:11) gives results according to the disposition of the hearer and his environment. 'Satrie hearers have such unsuitable characters that the message is not understood, is rejected and lost. Others receive the message but are hindered from developing by subsequent persecutions, or the cares of this world, or the deceit of riches. Others who have the right disposition, and who are not too adversely affected by their environment, bring forth fruit in varying degrees. The main point is that all have to contend with their environment and overcome it, or be overcome by it. All this was foreknown to and prepared by God before the foundation of the world and represents his activity -- the operation of the holy Spirit during the Gospel age.

It should be noted that the development of the church to become brethren of Jesus during the Gospel age is further hindered by the dissemination of a false message by an adversary, which produces false results. This is shown by the parable of the wheat and tares (Matt. 13:24-40).

So the Scriptures show that God has designated or marked out beforehand the bounds to be attained by those who will meet with his approval, and that he has completed all the dispositions to achieve his object before the world was. He created mankind freely capable of obeying or disobeying him. What he has done stands forever -- nothing can be added to it or taken away (Eccl. 3:14) God does not personally foreordain by an unchangeable purpose that any particular individual shall be saved, but he has previously marked out the bounds, the shape or character of those who shall become brethren of Jesus by their willingness to transform their human character inherited from Adam to the requirements revealed in the Word. God has not created a machine

which cannot fail to obey his will, but on the contrary he has restrained his own power so that all can obey and disobey.

Sometimes it is asserted that those who in the parable bring forth fruitage of thirty, sixty, or one hundred fold are predestinated (in the usual dictionary meaning). These, it is maintained, are fruitful because they were sown in good ground. This ground is said to have been prepared by God, who has a foreknowledge of the characters and needs of each individual seed. The objection to this line of-thought is that the Scriptural use of the term "foreknowledge" is disregarded and substituted by the meaning of God's unlimited knowledge and wisdom from before the world was. Thus it is implied that all those predestinated ones were personally known to and selected by God before they were born into the world.

A wise writer has reminded us that while we must not place any limitation on the extent of God's knowledge, *in Scripture* the word foreknowledge does not relate to the infinitude of God's wisdom but to the things written in the prophets. *In Scripture* the foreknowledge of God relates to the things foretold (e.g., Acts 2:23: "*him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,*" and Luke 24:44: "*All things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the psalms concerning me*").

Therefore, as God's knowledge and wisdom preceded his plans and action, so predestination and election refer to that pre-arranged plan by which God will save all who will conform themselves to the image of his son, through the Gospel. This plan is referred to in these words: "*According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Eph. 3:11), where the wisdom of God is described as being according to an eternal purpose. The *Diaglott* translates it, "the divine plan of the ages."

Because in the parable (Matt. 13:19) it says that the seed is sown in the heart of each individual concerned, some supporters of personal predestination consider that the prepared ground is the heart, and from this they infer that God prepares each individual heart, before the Word is heard, so that the person is able to receive it. After it has been heard, it is believed that God provides special care and protection for the rest of the lifetime. Against this, it should be pointed out that the whole structure of the parable is contrary to such an idea -- it is a story to illustrate an indiscriminate broadcasting and scattering of a message in a random way, with results which vary according to the disposition of the hearer and the environmental circumstances which surround him.

The main principle of the parable is that the seed sown in the heart (the hearing person) has to result in a modification of character to the required pattern laid down beforehand (i.e., the horizon) contending with and overcoming the environment, or being overcome by it. The basic concept of an allegory showing the indiscriminate scattering of seed would be totally unsuitable to illustrate the "predestination" of the seed to produce fruitage. The Scriptures show that in the Gospel age God does not bring any influence to bear on the called ones by direct personal action, but that he calls and works through his word of truth, brought into being for that very purpose at the beginning of the age: "... *the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.*"

Therefore, it should be understood that:

The seed sown by the wayside is an analogy to illustrate a person hearing the Word, not understanding it, it making no appeal to the intellect, and so the Wicked One catches it away.

The seed sown on stony ground is an analogy to illustrate a person receiving the Word with joy for a short time, until tribulation comes.

The seed sown among thorns is an analogy to illustrate a hearer of the Word, who becomes choked and unfruitful because of the cares of the world and deceit of riches.

The seed sown in good ground is an analogy illustrating a hearer of the Word who -understands and brings forth fruit, that is, who is able to overcome his environment and change his disposition and character to conform to the pattern which God had laid down beforehand.

The thought that the seed in the parable of the sower depicts individuals sometimes arises from confusion with the parable of the Wheat and the Tares, which is explained by Jesus in Matt. 13:36-43. Here, he uses terms to indicate that the good seed are the children of the kingdom and the tares are the children of the Wicked One. It is wrongly inferred that the good seed are the children of the kingdom before they are sown in the field, and likewise that the tares are the children of the Wicked One before the enemy planted them in the same field. The resulting mistake is to assert that because the good seed and the tares are children in the parable of the Wheat and the Tares, the seed in the parable of the Sower are also persons before being sown in the ground.

The plain fact taught by both parables is that the seeds represent a message which has to be heard by persons, *after which* those persons are affected by the message in various ways:

Some hear and associate themselves with the message for a time, then revert to what they were.

Others hear and associate themselves with the message in varying degrees so that they bring forth fruitages of thirty, sixty, and one hundred fold.

Others hear *a false* message and accept it, so that they are become associated with a false arrangement.

Only after the messages have been heard and accepted do the good seed or the tares become the persons in the explanation given by Jesus (Matt. 13:36-43).

The question naturally arises as to what is the false message of the tares, although this is not relevant to the subject of predestination. History shows that it must be a message which says that the church is to reign now, during the Gospel age, that no self sacrifice or suffering is involved, that the reign is not with Jesus administering the New Covenant blessings of the millennium, and that those blessings are to be enjoyed during the Gospel age.

Although the production of various degrees of fruitage (thirty, sixty, one hundred fold) is all said to take place in good ground, it is clearly wrong to understand that there are no adverse factors to be overcome in such ground. All Scripture teaches to the contrary. *All* Christians have to overcome *all* that which is represented by the wayside and the effects of the fowls of the air, the stony ground preventing rootage, the thorns and the thistles of the deceit of riches, and the cares of this life. The Scriptures clearly teach that if the disposition of the hearer of the Word is suitable for fruitage and the environment is hostile, the former must overcome the latter, or be overcome by it.

- Bible Study Monthly, England

Though It Tarry, Wait For It

"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." - Habakkuk 2:3

Was it perhaps the divine plan of the ages which the prophet Habakkuk saw when he was told to "...make it plain upon tables, that every one may read it plainly" (Hab. 2:2, Leeser). Habakkuk was told that the vision would not lie and though it would seem to tarry, in fact it would not. Men have always thought God's plan to be long delayed. Men have ignorantly thought the heavenly Father too slow to fill his promises. Some think him so slow about keeping his promises that they have abandoned their hopes with respect to the seed of Abraham and think that he has forgotten his own promise to bless all the families of the earth.

We know of the disappointments which have overtaken the Lord's people in these areas. The Jewish people were disappointed at the First Advent; they expected a glorious Messiah, not a suffering one. Since the First Advent, Christians have been disappointed at various times because their expectations of deliverance were not met. But the disappointed ones waited, hoped, and prayed.

Today, prophetic fulfillments press the matter of God's promises to the attention of his people. Again, in our day, there are false impressions and false expectations which are broadcast to his people. So ardent have these proclamations been that the subjects of time prophecy and the Lord's Second Advent have been brought into general disrepute.

In his own day, Jesus was mistakenly judged because of the false impressions which were held about him. Some thought that he had been born in Nazareth. From this erroneous belief there arose the scoffers question, could anything good come from Nazareth (cf. John 1:46)? A comparable situation exists today. Many ask whether any good can come from the study of prophecy or chronology? Are not those stories which were written by the prophets just so many human dreams? -- Are they not just the hopes of a few humans who longed for the rebuilding of Zion and the restitution of Jerusalem?

We recognize that such are the scoffers which were foretold to come in the last days (2 Pet. 3:3). These individuals tend to discourage prophetic study, even though such study can be the source of encouragement and hope to the Christian. It was the Lord who said that the vision would seem to', tarry. It was the Lord who encouraged us not to give up our hope because that which seemed to us to tarry would not,' in actuality, tarry. It was the Lord who', encouraged us by telling us that in the end times the vision would speak, it would, make itself heard, and that the vision (or promise) would not lie. The divine vision (or plan) would be vindicated, it would be proven to be true.

If such be the case, let us have faith in God and in the surety of his promises. God's plan will yet speak to all men. His redemptive purposes' will unfold the story of divine love to all men. He will yet cause the dawning of that great morning of joy which has long been looked for.

"So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish, what I desire, and achieve the purpose: for which I sent it. You will go out in joy and be lead forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song, before you ... his will be for the Lord's renown, for an everlasting sign which will not be destroyed" (Isaiah 55:11-13, NIV).

The Friendship of Jesus

"Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." - John 15:14

There is nothing so beautiful as true, unselfish friendship. The essence of true friendship is the miracle which blends two lives, each separate and distinct, each with differing potential, until the two become like one. There can be no love like this without sacrifice, and yet those who are so bound together are not conscious of such sacrifice,

Love is not blind,
But looks through other eyes;
It asks not *must* I give,
But *may* I sacrifice.

This uniting of two lives in one purpose, and mutual esteem one for the other is so close that to see one half of the partnership is to see both halves. When one of them expresses an opinion you also know the opinion of the other.

Such friendships, as rare as they are, do exist. The love between Jonathan and David was one such example. To Jonathan, the future exaltation of David was the same as if it were his own and he rejoiced in David's glorious prospects, even though they meant his own personal *loss*. "*...the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul*" (1 Sam. 18:1).

Friendship like this is a glorious jewel. Is it not a joy to realize that Jesus has invited us to such a friendship with himself. He calls us to unity with him and to share in his innermost thoughts and affections. In considering this topic, we propose to view it from four aspects:

the privilege of this friendship;
the influence of this friendship;
the responsibility of this friendship;
the conditions of this friendship.

Friendship's Privilege

Jesus revealed this privilege to his followers.

"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: But I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" (vs. 15).

His friendship means the confidence of both Jesus and his Father. This privilege is emphasized by the contrast which our Lord used. He no longer calls us servants (as had been the relationship between Israel and God), now we are friends. A servant is expected to obey blindly. The master is not obliged to explain himself. The master gives orders; the servant is expected to carry them out.

Friends, however, are treated with confidence. Explanations are often given to friends, and friends are allowed to appreciate the business and circumstances of the master. A friend is treated as an equal.

Abraham was a friend of God (James 2:23), and because of that friendship God chose to inform Abraham about various plans that he had made, rather than to hide them from his friend (Gen. 18:17). Do we appreciate this privilege? If our Lord has chosen us for his friends, he has also accepted us into his confidence and to a share in the secrets which the Father has revealed to him. Do we value this privilege? Do we find that God (through our Lord) has told us of his plans and purposes and of the new developments in the Christian way which are transpiring in our day?

Do we find, then, that an increasing understanding of our Father's will accompanies our Christian progress? This is an evidence of our friendship with Jesus. If we do not grow, does it not suggest that either Jesus has never chosen us as a friend or that our Lord has chosen us but that we have spurned his confidence?

Would you be hurt if your friend spurned your confidence? If you told a friend about a secret would you not be offended if they said "I do not want to hear about that? I like to be your friend but do not trouble me with your problems." We would think ourselves justified in feeling that such a friend little appreciated our friendship.

Such a position is not only selfish and unfriendly, it is also injurious to the one who has befriended another. We find that many who regard themselves as Jesus' friends are no truer than this. Jesus, our friend, shows his love for us by revealing his secrets (the secrets of God's plans) to us, his friends.

God's plan of salvation represents the longings of God's own heart. It is so dear to him that he sacrificed his Son in death so that it might be completed. Jesus valued that same plan so highly that he willingly endured the humiliation of being crucified as a sinner. Yes, by one majestic step at a time, God has been working out his grand plan. And the heavenly host find new joy at each successive phase because the Father and the Son are united in one purpose. How will they feel if we fail to share their joy, or their interests? What does it say of us if we neglect the evidences of God's condescending love?

John says that we cannot persist in such a negligent course: "...if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). We cannot enjoy this fellowship unless we share the same interests.

The prophet Amos asks, "*Can two walk together, except they be agreed*" (Amos 3:3)? How can we walk with God or fellowship with Christ unless we are agreed? Unless we experience the unity for which Jesus prayed, how can we be in harmony with the divine plan: "...that they may be one, even as we are one" (John 17:22).

Our Motives

Some people seek friendship in order to share in another's wealth, power, or influence. Those who seek for such seek out of their own selfishness. Such as these are not worthy to be considered friends, and by contrast, their ignoble attitudes point out some of the grand privilege of Christ's friendship: Jesus is the heir of all things; all power in heaven and earth has been given to him; and he is the King of kings and the Lord of lords and he offers us his friendship!

He offers us his friendship. We sometimes sing the hymn, "I've found a friend." But recently we were reminded of the question, "Did you find him, or did he find you?" This is a grand realization! Christ seeks our friendship, as he told his disciples, "*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you...*" (John 17:16).

He is the heir of all things. Jesus' name is above every name. And yet, Jesus seeks his friends among the weak, the poor, and the despised of God's creation. He seeks friends among those who were his enemies: for "...when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son..." (Rom. 5:10). He offers us friendship, with all that friendship implies. How strange it seems that anyone would reject this privilege -- the great condescension, the most marvelous favor imaginable.

Friendship's Influence

We are influenced by things with which we come in contact: books, environment, friends. Such influences remind one of the greater need to exercise care in selecting our friends. If we would please God, we should select friends who also wish to please and serve him. Worldly friends will exert an influence upon our minds which will lead away from God and back to the enmity from which we were set free: "...the *friendship of the world is enmity with God...*" (James 4:4).

In the reverse, a deep love for a pure hearted friend can uplift even the degraded heart. Such can be influenced toward better conduct simply through their esteem for the other. If this be true in earthly relationships, who can measure the influence of Christ's friendship upon the heart of the believer?

Jesus' friendship has altered the lives of many frail men. In the early days of the Master's ministry, Peter was impulsive, self-confident, and boastful. These traits made him a weak and wavering disciple. Would we have chosen Peter as a friend? Jesus did, and this friendship resulted in the rock-like character which the Master recognized in Peter when they first met and which has proven so important for the church of Christ.

When we first read of John the apostle, he was a young, fiery, hot-headed man. This was not only a man who resented injury but also the man whom Jesus called to his friendship. During their friendship -- while Jesus walked this earth and later through the resurrection experiences -- John's character was transformed. God cured even John's angry resentment at the crucifixion. John appears now as the apostle of love, beautifully reflecting the Master's character.

Christ's friendship must result in our transformation. It is impossible to live with Christ without our lives being affected. And if we cannot trace the mark of his companionship in our lives we have reason to doubt that he would be pleased to call us "friend."

Children love to imitate. When they hear stories of bravery or heroism they love to pretend that they are the hero. We find that adults sometimes choose careers as a result of childhood impressions. Is Jesus our ideal? Has his loving character fired our imagination? Is his zeal awake in us? If so, we shall try to be like him and to display his character in our lives.

Paul uses this thought, saying "*Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children*" (Eph. 5:1). The *Diaglott* renders the word "followers" as "imitators," showing a similarity between his thought and the actions of children. It is fitting that spiritual children imitate the beauties of their heavenly Father's character, and that of our elder brother and friend.

How has his friendship influenced us? What has his friendship-meant Peace in the time of storm. Security in times of danger. Comfort in sorrow. Instruction amidst perplexity. Companionship when we are lonely.

We wander in a "solitary way,"
No matter what or where our way may be,
Each heart, mysterious even to itself,
Must live its inner life of solitude.
And would you know the reason why this is?
It is because the Lord desires our love.
In every heart he wishes to be first.
He therefore keeps the secret key himself,
To open all its chambers, and to bless
With perfect sympathy and holy peace
Each solitary soul which comes to him.
So when we feel this loneliness, it is
The voice of Jesus saying, "Come to me,"
And every time we are "not understood,"
It is a call to us to come again;
For Christ alone can satisfy the soul,
And those who walk with him from day to day --
Can never have a "solitary way."

Friendship's Responsibility

Friendship is not one-sided. We must demonstrate our love and consideration to him. Friendship carries with it responsibility. Friends avoid hurting one another. If we love our friend we will not cause him undue pain.

A child's tears have stopped more than one parent from continuing in an evil course. Shall not our ability to hurt our best friend, Jesus, by acting contrary to God's word, be a strong help in conquering our waywardness?

Another responsibility is that of implicit trust. Is it strange to consider trust as a responsibility of friendship? More than one partnership has been broken because of broken trust. How would you feel if your nearest friend was in trouble -- and if you were the only one whom he had not told about the problem? Would you not be hurt? Would *you* not feel that you had a greater right to his confidence than others.

How frequently we treat our Lord in the very same way. We are apt to tell every one our troubles before we take them to the Lord. Moreover, many friendships have been broken because of jealousy, evil thinking, and the supposition of wrong motives because of such conduct. We must trust our heavenly Father and our heavenly Friend because he does all things well, even though sometimes our eyes are clouded as to his purposes in us. To doubt or question his love and faithfulness is to prove ourselves unworthy of his friendship. True friendship is expressed by Job: "*Though he slay me, yet will I trust him...*" (Job 13:15). Those who exhibit such trust can hear God say to them, in the poet's words: "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

Friendship brings another responsibility: the defense of our friend's name and character.

"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 10:32,33).

The words of Jesus are echoed in poetry:

Who slights an absent friend's good name,
Nor takes his part when others blame,
That man is black at heart I wot:
Beware his treachery, trust him not!

We feel nothing but contempt for those who run down their friends or remain quiet while others speak ill of them. If we deny our Lord -- either actually or by failing to stand in defense of his name and all that it stands for -- his truth and -- his people -- then we are not fulfilling our responsibility and thus prove ourselves unworthy of his friendship. He will not acknowledge such as his friends: "...him *will I also deny before my Father...*"

Another responsibility concerns upholding the honor of our friend. If you want to know what a man is like, look at his friends. Have you ever considered that others are forming their idea of Christ by their opinion of Christians -- specifically, *you and me?* Surely, we need no better reminder of our responsibility to our Lord than that. How careful we should be that our conduct would be acceptable to Jesus. How we should guard our actions so as not to be found in any place or in any company which he would not commend. To act another way is to misrepresent Christ's character to those about us.

If the friends of Jesus live worldly lives, indulging their own appetites, then others will think that Jesus approves such actions. Thus we would dishonor his name and he would be judged by our actions. Jesus' contemporaries recorded his life on earth. (We speak of the Four Gospels.) We, too, are writing a gospel:

We are writing a gospel,
A chapter a day,
By the way which we act,
And the things which we say;
Others are watching to see what we do;
Pray what is the gospel according to *you?*

Conditions Of Friendship

"Ye are my friends if..." How much that little word means! Friendship with Christ is in the balance: it depends upon *you* "... *if ye do whatsoever I command you.*" Human friends do not insist upon conditions of friendship. However dear our friends are we recognize their imperfection and accept them as they are. Human friendship, however beautiful it may be, is but a poor example of the friendship of Christ.

Jesus is the perfect friend. He has a right to insist that we accept his instructions as the basis for his friendship. John tells us that his commandments are not grievous (I John 5:3). Moreover, they are actually for our good. The Lord expects us to obey his words.

We prove our love to him by the way we keep his commandments, just as he proved his love to God by keeping the divine commands. *"If ye love me, keep my commandments"* (John 14:15). This simple statement defines the difference between friendship and servitude. What boss would say to an employee, "if you love me, obey my orders?" None! More likely he would say "If you wish to keep your job, you will do what I say." Jesus demonstrates his regard for our friendship by not threatening us.

If our friendship depends upon obedience, we do well to determine what his commandments are. The divine commandments are recorded in his Word. Jesus' commands are those he received from God. *"For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them"* (John 17:8). It follows that we must know his will before we can obey it. A constant search of his Word, then, is a prerequisite to obedience. The key is not the extent of our knowledge but our fervor in searching for it. If we desire to know him and to be like him, we need fear no failure. Jesus himself encourages all who would follow him saying, *"If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak of myself"* (John 7:17, ARV).

The Apostle John says that no man can love God while he hates his brother (1 John 4:20). He goes further in this statement to indicate that such a claim under that condition would be a lie. Here we find a principle which applies to God. If a man claims to be Jesus' friend and despises the Lord's commands, then he is, himself, proving his claim to be false. *"If ye love me, keep my commandments." "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."*

This is one of the commands: *"...walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you"* (John 12:35). If one walks, he makes progress along a certain path. To walk in the light is to walk with Jesus, for he said, *"... I am the light of the world..."* (John 8:12). To walk while we have the light is to walk with Jesus and to enjoy the increase in our understanding which comes from his friendship. This command suggests a danger; that we might lose the light and be overtaken in darkness. This is a real danger because we have fellowship one with the other only so long as we walk in the light as he is in the light (1 John 1:7).

It is as if our Lord is taking a journey with us. He holds the lamp of truth in his hand and shines it upon the path. Each step is illuminated and we progress. But if we stop along the way, our Lord will not. He and the light continue along the path and we are left in darkness. *"Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you..."*

Truth represents God's will; indeed, truth is the revelation of God's will. Does God's will change? Is it necessary for us to walk because his will is constantly changing? No! But why then must we constantly walk? God's purpose -- before he created the world (Rev. 13:8) -- was the perfecting of the earth and its inhabitants so that he would be praised in them. This purpose or "will" of God has never changed. History shows us that God has been accomplishing the overall goal through a series of shorter, specific stages -- just as humans undertake a large engineering project. Each stage has its objectives. Each stage is unique to itself, even though all of the stages are necessary in order to complete the final project.

God is like the builder of a house. The setting of foundations is quite different from erecting walls and different craftsmen are chosen for each job. The architect's "will" for each craftsman differs, but the purpose is the same: to build the house. So it has been with God. Each age accomplishes one purpose. God's requirements of the people who live during each age have varied, yet all has been working toward the end of God's plan. God introduces to men new developments in his plan as the time for their accomplishment arrives. The fact that they are new to men does not mean that they are new to God, merely that he has now chosen to reveal this purpose or that purpose. Other activities cease when their purpose has been fulfilled. Jesus' friends must walk in the light in order to understand what he would have them do that day.

Another command which he has given us is that "new commandment." Jesus told his disciples, "*A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.*" How did he love them? He had told them (John 13:1):

When Jesus knew that his hour had come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end [i.e., to the utmost].

He loved them enough to overlook their failures. In his report to his Father he used such expressions as "they have kept thy word," and "I am glorified in them." He loved them enough to die for them: "...the *good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*" We are to love one another as much as Jesus loved us.

This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you (John 15:12-14).

How is our love for Jesus recognized? Are we used up in the service of his brethren? Is our life a sacrificial one? Is our love as unchanging as Jesus' love was for us? An enduring friendship is rare indeed. We see many so called friendships. People unite because of similar interests, but soon they tire of one another; a trivial incident or trite misunderstanding breaks such a friendship.

Christ's love is unchanging. If we love as he did, our love will be as enduring as his. Have we ever displeased the Lord? Have we ever been faithless or doubted his wisdom? Did the Disciples' weaknesses and stupidity, their selfishness or lack of thought make any difference to Christ's love? No. His love remained the same. What a reminder that should be when we take offense at the harshness of a brother or sister, when we ourselves are misunderstood or misrepresented. The love of Christ forgives! Let our love forgive as well!

We are to forgive unwitting injury. There is, however, another side to this story. What of those who whisper and gossip about their brethren? Even the world's standards hold those who misrepresent another as liable to punishment. How much more does God: "*Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him*" (1 John 3:15).

The closer we are living to the Lord, the more we are subjected to the venom of the Adversary. Satan would destroy us. His weapons of false doctrine are powerful, but no more so than the poison of evil surmising and faultfinding. Even the Christian's full armor (Eph. 6:11-17) cannot protect us when we drink of the poison found in the stream of evil surmising.

No faultfinder is a friend of Christ, whatever his claims' ;may be. He commanded that "*ye love one another.*" The nearer we live to Christ the more frequent will be our attacks from the Adversary. The man who holds false doctrines may be deceived. But the, man who imputes wrong motives to the brethren is a tool of the Adversary. "*It must needs be that offenses shall come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh*" - Matt. 18:7)!

O be not the first to discover
A blot on the name of a friend,
O be not of discord the mover,
For hearts may prove true in the end.

Our love must cover the failures of our brethren. We demonstrate our love by serving and helping them. This means that we must search for ways in which to help. We must sacrifice our time, our preferences, our comforts in order to minister to their needs.

Is it a true friend who always takes and never gives? There is little we can do for Christ, but there is a lot that we can do for one another. That is the test which Jesus has given us. Any service done to the least of his brethren (Matt. 25:45) is counted by God as though it were done to Jesus. What greater incentive could we have. Every work of love, every effort for the assistance of his saints can be done as though we did it directly to the Lord: whether we hand out hymn books or wash dishes at a convention, whether we write a shut-in a letter or contribute a dollar to the "work. Oh what a joy that brings to even the most menial of opportunities.

There are some who make no effort to be with the Lord (in private) or his people (in public). What if we are such a person? Does not this show how cheaply we regard the merit of Jesus? If that is our attitude, then our consecration is only theory. We have yet to put it into practice. God wants us to live consecrated lives, not to talk of them, and there is all the difference in the world between the two choices (cf. Eccl. 5:4).

Do you want to be with those whom you love? We can be with our Lord in prayer, but that is not the only place. We can be with Jesus where two or three are gathered together in his name, because he has promised to be in the midst of such (Matt. 18:20). When we associate with a group of his people we fellowship with them and with him. When we stay away we lose the blessing of God which flows from Christ's presence.

This is illustrated in the twentieth chapter of John's Gospel. We read how the disciples met together on the first day of the week. There the Lord stood in their midst and greeted them in simple words. "... *Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord*" (John 20:20).

Thomas was not present on this occasion (John 20:24). They told him about what had happened but he could not believe them. Thomas could not recapture that lost blessing. And so the Lord ministered specially to him, on a subsequent occasion, knowing that the assurance of his resurrection was a crucial test for Thomas. But would such a special ministry have been needed had he been present with the others on that first occasion?

We will miss blessings from God if we fail to take advantage of our opportunities to meet with his people for mutual help and encouragement. We may say that God can care for us wherever we are, but if we ignore his commands such will not be the case. We have seen how God cares for those, who through no fault of their own, are unable to use this means of grace. But we have no reason to suppose that he will bless those who have the ability to be where Jesus is and choose not to take advantage of his blessings.

Our friendship with Jesus depends upon our obedience to his command to love one another. This is the most practical method we have of showing our love for the Master. If we disobey him, we prove ourselves unworthy of his love. If we deny him, he also will deny us.

If we allow earthly interests to separate us from our service to Christ, we are demonstrating that they are more important to us than our friendship with Jesus.

He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me (Matt. 10:37,38).

Sheep and Goats

We conclude by turning our attention to the parable of the sheep and the goats. In this parable Jesus explains how he recognizes those who truly are his friends. We do not refer at this time to the specific interpretive timing involved with saying when the parable is to come true. We refer, rather, to the principle herein described: our Lord measures our lack of love to him by our lack of love towards his brethren.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked and ye clothed me: I was sick and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me (Matt. 25:34-45).

What the hand is to the lute;
What the breath is to the flute;
What the fragrance to the smell;
What the spring is to the well;
What the flower is to the bee -
That is Jesus Christ to me!

What's the mother to the child;
What's the guide to the pathless wild;
What is oil to the troubled wave;
What is ransom to the slave;
What is water to the sea --
That is Jesus Christ to me!

Faithful is the saying:

-- For if we have died together, we shall also live together,
If we endure, we shall also reign together,
If we deny, He also will deny us,
If we are faithless, He faithful abideth --
For deny Himself He cannot. (2 Tim. 2:11-13, Emphasized Bible)

Sanctify Me Wholly

Sanctify me wholly,
Sovereign Savior mine;
Spirit, soul and body
Now make fully thine.

Make my motives blameless,
Purify my heart;
Set me now entirely
For thyself apart.

Here and now I yield, Lord,
Thine to be alone;
Now is self uncrowned, Lord,
Thou dost take the throne.

Ever keep and fill me,
Pour through me thy grace;
Till at thine appearing,
I behold thy face.

How To Listen To A Discourse

Don't be a criticizing listener.
Don't be alert to mistakes -- in grammar, gestures, facts.
Don't load up with mistakes and unload on others.
Don't be a heresy hound, like the Pharisees, to catch the speaker.
Don't be a sermon-fitter -- thinking of others to whom it would fit.
Don't assume you must agree with everything.
The discourse is meant for you -- not for your entertainment.
The aim is to help you become a better person, to grow.
Listen with a mind prepared with prayer and expectation.
Listen with a sympathetic and open mind.
Listen with a humble mind, assuming that the speaker is better than you.
Listen expecting to have your prejudices corrected.
Suggest thoughts, texts, and subjects which would help you.
Remember that no discourse is quite what the speaker hoped it would be.
A discourse which is conceived with prayer, heard in a prayerful atmosphere by hearts which are open, sympathetic, humble, cooperative, and watered with the holy Spirit will bless many times over.

- Selected.

Attaining Christian Maturity

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." - Philippians 3:10,11.

The hope which the apostle here records, echoes the hopes of all of God's saints. This hope is shared by all who will be overcomers and who will inherit the promise of joint heirship with Jesus. In fact, nothing short of this hope will be acceptable. Our appreciation of God's favor must exceed every other appreciation or else we demonstrate that we are not worthy of him and are not the sort of believer that he is seeking.

This attitude should be at work in our daily lives. The moment one begins to contrast fellowship with God with earthly love, family ties, and human ambitions these latter appear quite insignificant. They begin to look like the imperfections which are refined from pure gold -- rather than looking like the gold itself. All those who can so regard their human lives find it easy to renounce their earthly interests and even life itself in exchange for the favor of God.

But such Christian maturity is not found early in our experience. It is developed. It is the product of Christian growth. We must first be brought to a point of comparison. We must, at some time, and for the first time, weigh the advantages of God's fellowship against the good things of earth. We must, at some time, decide in favor of God and his pleasure, reaching a point when we are first willing to give up the others -- earthly life, hopes, aims, and pleasures. These must be sacrificed, that is, we must be willing to relinquish any or all of these good things as soon as we find that they interfere with our maintenance of God's favor and blessing.

From the time that the scales first turn in favor of God, our hearts should be dedicated to God. All earthly prizes should lose their value as, our eyes are opened to heavenly things. The heavenly promises should become increasingly real and alive until at last (by the eyes of our faith) we can see him who is invisible, and we can feel the crown of glory and grasp the exceeding great and precious promises that God has reserved for those who love him. Such faith is a real anchor, holding and staying the course of our lives. Each reach this condition separately. Some do so in weeks. Others in months. Many may take years to grasp the reality that life without God is as refuse when compared to the loving kindness of our God and of his son.

This divine favor is *so* greatly appreciated that some dedicate their entire lives to attaining it. But such do not act merely in their own interests for some future life -- the coming kingdom of our Lord and Savior, the incorruptible glory and honor to be granted to Jesus' joint heirs. No! This fellowship extends into this life. Our communion with God and our appreciation of his fellowship interrupts all of the miseries and troubles of life.

As a matter of fact, the true children of God will be so close to their heavenly Father (and with the spirits of truth and righteousness) that any interruption of that fellowship will be recognized as a real and present loss. Such interruptions may be pleasant to them as men and women, certainly, but those who are new creatures in Christ will be willing to cut these things out of their lives (even if they are as dear as one's own right hand), or to pluck them out of their experiences (even if they were as precious as one's own right eye) rather than to allow such an interruption in their heavenly fellowship to continue. Only those who appreciate fellowship with God more than life itself have attained to Christian maturity.

The Directors Report

"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." - Jude 20,21

Another year has passed, the last of the sixth decade since the Pastoral Bible Institute was founded. Our hope is in the Eternal. He has brought us through another year, but the list of those who have passed to their reward during our lifetime reminds us that we too may soon be called upon to render our own eternal accounting. Should his judgment then rendered be a hearty, "Well done," we would nevertheless have to realize that we had still not performed even one task perfectly. Only the righteousness of our Master is able to make any of us stand, and that as Jude has reminded us, unblamably before the Father (Jude 24).

But, the rendering of our earthly accounts is an equally sobering task. We have nothing of which to boast. Our intentions have been to glorify the heavenly Father's name and we rejoice that there are evidences that he has been pleased to manifest his strength in our weaknesses. We trust that such evidences have not inclined us to presume on his grace -- or worse, to take it for granted. We hope that the evidences of his care over us, as over all of his children, have been only an inspiration to increased zeal and humility. We would never want, knowingly, to render to him less than our best.

The directors, feeling the privilege of this service, take this opportunity to report to those who have elected them on their activities during the year just past. We are happy to report that a spirit of unanimity continues to dwell among us. We have attempted to put spiritual things first, seeking to inspire others to live the truth: taking up their cross daily to following the Master and witnessing to his faithfulness by word of mouth and through the printed page as they have opportunity. What we teach we attempt to practice through these same two means: through the pages of the HERALD and the ministry of the Word by the Editors and Directors. This is our effort, feeble though we realize it may be, towards the feeding those who will one day be entrusted with "greater works" in that day when all shall be taught to know him and believe him.

The Lord's providence places limitations upon all of his servants. The time, opportunities, and finances with which any person or group has to work determine, to a great degree, what can be done. The eyes of men will see no "great and marvelous works" done by the Institute. But we regard his watchful care over us in "that which is least," as being equally as important as his care over others in different works. It has been seen in history that men can be so engrossed in the telling of the message that they have overlooked the privilege and necessity of living it. So, we thank God that he has hedged us round about in this regard.

The founding principle of the Pastoral Bible Institute, Inc., is the freedom (or "liberty") in Christ. No creed has been formulated in its publications or public pronouncements. We restate our position in each issue of THE HERALD: "free from all parties, sects, and creeds of men." These are not mere words. We are determined to work for the preservation of the liberty in Christ for each individual associated with the Institute and will work to guard that liberty insofar as we are able.

"The present mission of the church is the perfecting of the saints for the future work of service; to develop in herself every grace; to be God's witness to the world; and to be prepared to be kings and priests in the next age." These words along with their scriptural basis, taken from the statement "To Us The Scripture Clearly Teach," are accepted as true. And it has been our joy to

present to those with whom we come in contact the precious heritage of Bible truths. God gave them to men to be shared with others as opportunity presented, not so that we might conceal them under a basket.

Some individuals may be concerned that these gems should not be lost, but we recognize that there is a still more subtle danger against which to guard ourselves. That is the danger of losing the spirit in which truth was given to us by the Lord through those who preceded us in each generation. The message, however fine, is an entirely different message when it is spoken in the wrong spirit. Let us note well this point "For *this is the will of God*, [concerning you], *even your sanctification...*" (1 Thess. 4:3). Let nothing becloud or obscure this truth -- neither other truths or errors.

The ministry of the Word has been blessed this year with a wider outreach than in a number of years. We have all been encouraged both by the comments of those with whom we have met and by the letters of those who have written.

During the year we have been encouraged by the addition of new subscribers, from names supplied by existing subscribers. Our subscription list sees ups and downs, like any publication, but we are encouraged by the words of appreciation and by the faithfulness of those who have been continuous subscribers for thirty, forty, and even fifty years. We appreciate not only the opportunity to share the message with those who have not heard it, but also your confidence in the Institute's ministry: that we have that which would soothe the aching heart and would feed those that hunger for the Word of God.

Before closing these thoughts we would remind the readers of the opportunity of membership in the Institute. Membership is open to all who feel a special kinship with the spirit and message of the Institute. There are no annual dues to be paid, nor is there any statement of beliefs to be subscribed to or signed. Any interested are invited to inquire for further information.

We also remind you of the opportunity of witnessing to others through the pages of the HERALD. Our offer of a free trial subscription still stands. And we note this in one particular frame of reference. In many of the Bible classes which we visit we hear that one of the most difficult of jobs to be done by local brethren is that of personally following up on responses to various public witness efforts. Why not send those individuals a trial subscription to the HERALD? Send us the names and complete addresses. Should we have correspondence with them afterwards we will keep you advised.

It would be a grave error for those of us elected to the Board of the Institute this year or for those appointed by us to serve as Editors of the HERALD *of Christ's Kingdom* to presume self-sufficiency or even think that our performance of such duties and tasks assigned to us were done in an exemplary manner. We are aware that we need to grow into the character likeness of the *holy* One and to manifest fruits of righteousness without which it is impossible to please him. Believing that, "...the *sincere and fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*" (James 5:16, Oxford), we solicit your prayers and support toward this great end, knowing this that God is faithful and true.

Your brethren in the Master's service,
the Directors,
Pastoral Bible Institute, Inc.

The Annual Meeting

The sixty-eighth Annual Meeting of the members of the Pastoral Bible Institute, Inc., was held Saturday, June 6, at 11:00 a.m. at 4454 S. 14th Street, Milwaukee WI.

Following the customary devotions, Brother J.B. Webster was elected as chairman of the meeting and Br. P.J. Pazucha, as secretary. Next followed the reading and approval of the minutes of the previous meeting. The annual report of the directors was presented. This, including the financial statement, is published in full on pages 16-17 of this issue of the HERALD.

The names of recently deceased members were read, as were the names of new institute members during the preceding twelve months. Next followed the election of a new board. Sr. Ann-Truth Lange and Br. Brian Kuehmichel were appointed tellers. While the ballots were counted the rest of the friends enjoyed a season of fellowship in praise and testimony as well as receiving a report of various pilgrim

trips, both foreign and domestic. The names of those brethren elected as directors were read at the conclusion of the count: J.L. Buss, A. Gonczewski, A. Jarmola, P.J. Pazucha, L. Petran, J. B. Webster, L. R. Webster. A devotional service concluded the meeting.

The new board met following the Annual Meeting. Among the actions taken were the election of officers whose names follow: J.L. Buss, Chairman; A. Gonczewski, Vice-Chairman; L. Petran, Secretary -Treasurer; P.J. Pazucha, Assistant Secretary -Treasurer. The Editorial Committee appointed to serve during the next year was: A.L. Jones, P.J. Pazucha, L. Petran, T.M. Thomassen, L.R. Webster.

On Sunday the seventh of June the members assembled together with the Milwaukee Bible Students Ecclesia in a sweet season of convention and fellowship in the Spirit of our Lord.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FISCAL YEAR ENDED APRIL 30, 1987

(1) Balance Sheet as of April 30, 1987

Assets

Cash on hand		\$15,315.18
U. S. Treasury Bills		58,456.81
M & I Partnership Savings Account		12,151.81
Accounts Receivable		265.00
Interest Receivable		987.56
Prepaid Expense		500.00
Inventory of Books, etc.:		
Pocket Edition-Divine Plan	\$321.00	
Miscellaneous Items	<u>198.25</u>	
Total Inventory	519.25	<u>519.25</u>

Fixed Assets

Office Equipment	13,250.55	
Accumulated Depreciation	<u>2,508.00</u>	
Balance	11,031.32	11,031.32
PBI Library		<u>3,000.00</u>
Total Assets		\$102,226.16
Liabilities		<u>247.51</u>
Net Worth (as per analysis below)		\$101,978.65

(2) Statement of Income and Expense and Analysis of Net Worth
Fiscal Year Ended April 30, 1987

Income

Contributions		\$30,060.18
Herald Subscriptions		5,717.00
Legacies		3,000.00
Interest Earned		<u>4,078.57</u>
Total Income		\$42,855.75

Operating Expense

Pilgrim Expense		\$ 6,143.92
Herald Expense		7,329.07
Office Staff		14,900.00
Free literature and Herald Subscriptions		1,266.67
Administrative and Office Expense		1,565.11
Office Rent & Utilities		3,257.16
Depreciation		2,508.00
Library		<u>395.00</u>
Total Operating Expense		37,364.93
Net Expense for Fiscal Year Ended April 30, 1987		\$ 5,490.82
Net Worth, May 1, 1986		<u>96,487.83</u>
Net Worth, April 30, 1987 (as per Balance Sheet above)		\$101,978.65

Faith's Victories

"...this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." - 1 John 5:4

Faith and loyalty to God appear paramount among the characteristics of the patriarchs. Paul brings these attributes to our attention in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. 11:8-22).

We have evidence, in the deliberate testings which God brought upon these men, that he seeks those people who are able to exercise a special faith in him. This faith is one which extends to the individual's full ability to obey God. Such a course on God's part is not surprising. No, he could not reasonably expect perfection from imperfect people. His own word states that "... *there is none righteous, no, not one*" (Rom. 3:10). But what human characteristic makes any member of our fallen race, and in particular those men of old, especially adaptable to the development of this faith? We find the answer in Jesus' words: "*Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks*" (John 4:23, NIV). These must worship God sincerely and honestly. Is such worship possible without faith? Hardly, because "*...without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he is and that he rewards those that serve him*" (Heb. 11:6).

Ancient Faithful Believers

Abraham had so strong a faith that even the need for a resurrection from the dead could not dull his certainty that God would fulfill his promise. The apostle tells us that Abraham had problems with this matter and that he philosophized upon how God could fulfill his promise. He knew that Isaac was his legitimate heir. This had been directly acknowledged by God (Gen. 21:12). Yet, God had asked that he slay his son (Heb. 11:19). And Abraham could see no other way by which God's word could be fulfilled than by some miraculous raising of Isaac from the dead. So strong was Abraham's faith that this did not daunt his obedience.

This is the faith which the Lord seeks in the spiritual seed of Abraham, the gospel age church. This is a faith which will trust him where it cannot see him. It is a faith which is always aware of and obedient to his perfect wisdom, perfect love, and perfect justice, knowing that God also has the perfect power to bring about his promises.

Abraham's life shows us that this is not an instantaneous faith. When he entered Canaan he did not have this faith. Abraham's faith -- and ours -- takes years to grow and mature. Note, however, that Abraham was not so foolish as to profess that which he did not possess. He did not tell God that he could serve him just as well in Chaldea or Babylonia as he could in Canaan. He did not presume to tell God that he could learn just as much faith there in Ur -- without having to leave his family and friends.

Some Christian teachers seem to adopt these tactics, however. God looks at the heart. Our faith is preeminently in our heart -- not in our work. But God (through the Epistle of James) assures us that our faith will quickly manifest itself in our work. What is more, if we fail to act upon our faith that faith will die. Perfect work is not demanded, because we are incapable of perfection. But any who wish to remain justified before God (through faith) must display faith. Faith without works is dead (James 2:17), because it has lost its vitality, its life.

Justification is a free gift, "*... not of works lest any man should boast...*" (Eph. 2:9). It is God's *gift* through Christ, based upon the ransom. Justification is a conditional gift. It is given in order to enable

the justified person to go on to sanctification. If the justified person does not proceed on to sanctification, the apostle tells us, the grace of God has been received in vain (2 Cor. 6:1).

God spoke to Abraham more specifically after Abraham had proven himself obedient than he had earlier in Abraham's life. God said plainly, "...unto thy seed will I give this land..." (Gen. 24:7). That promise must have seemed quite improbable. The land was populated by strong nations whose posterity would undoubtedly prosper. There was room for doubt in Abraham's mind, but he knew no doubt. Faith accepted the promise and he ratified God's promise by building an altar (Gen. 22:9) for the offering of sacrifices.

Isaac, the Peaceful

What identified Isaac as one of the Lord's people? Isaac did nothing great or wonderful. He founded no colleges, he built no churches, he organized no relief funds, as praiseworthy as these things are. Isaac had God's approval because he too believed God. It was, no doubt, his faith in God which gave him his great love of peace.

The lessons of being the peacemaker are worthy of note. There is a blessing promised for those who are both peaceable and those who are peacemakers (Matt. 5:9). They may not grow rich or influential among men but they will prosper in their relationship with God. They will grow more quickly in the fruits and graces of the spirit and be better fitted for the work of restoring mankind, which is their hope and aim.

No one would deny that there are times to stand firm for one's belief. It would be wrong to retreat when the principles of righteousness and truth are involved. But we can all find opportunities to yield to others, as did Isaac, and in doing so find the Lord's provision for our prosperity. Had Abimelech (Gen. 26:16-20) asked that Isaac renounce his worship of the true God we cannot suppose that Isaac would have agreed. We too must learn when to stand and when to submit and agree.

Jacob Chose the Lord

There is no record of anything very wonderful in Jacob's life -- aside from his wonderful faith in God. He believed in the oath bound covenant given to his grandfather Abraham -- his belief filled and shaped his life. It was confidence in that covenant which led him to seek his father's blessing (the birthright, cf. Gen. 25:3 1) so that he might share in that promise.

The Lord did not reprove Jacob for coveting the heavenly promise. His covetousness strengthened him to deny himself his own dinner in order to procure the birthright. His covetousness led him to desert his interests in Isaac's house and to become a pilgrim in a strange land. This he forsook for the sake of this divine promise.

Instead of reproof, through a vision, God shows his appreciation of Jacob's character. God spoke to him and renewed the promise, saying:

"I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of" (Gen. 28:11-15).

Any man who received such unqualified approval from God should be highly regarded. And not only so, but we would do well to reflect Jacob's spirit in our lives. Our human appetites and those in-

stitutions in which we feel at home are very little to give up in exchange for an inheritance in the heavenly promise of joint heirship with Jesus.

Such will receive God's blessing. They may not be blessed by their fellows, however. Neighbors may slight us. Friends may accuse us of spiritual greed when they learn that we seek a heavenly kingdom. They may claim that we are selfish. But the Lord does not. He says that he is pleased to see us appreciate the heavenly promises. He is pleased when we forego any of our earthly rights and privileges -- if we do so in order to run the race to win Christ (Phil. 3:8) and be found in him as a joint heir in his kingdom.

Concerning Jacob's faith, Paul says that God accepted his faith for righteousness and his name is counted among those whose lives, according to the testimony of God, had been pleasing to him.

Joseph, the Faithful

Joseph did much more than his forefathers. He saved the nation of Israel. He saved his Father's house. He even saved Egypt, which would have been destroyed by the famine had it not been for Joseph's providential planning. But Joseph does not come to our attention in the light of any of these deeds. All of these works are cited after a rather small incident and are given as evidences of an already existing faith in God.

Without that faith Joseph would have been nothing. Faith kept him strong while he waited in the pit. Faith kept him strong after he was sold into slavery. His faith stayed his character from the temptations encountered in Potiphar's household and gave him triumph throughout his stay in prison. Yes, without faith he would not have had: the personality which brought him the power to interpret dreams or the wisdom to properly use the power which he received as a result of those interpretations. Joseph's faith showed him the course to the development of the spirit of a sound mind.

The malicious treatment which Joseph received from his own brothers demonstrated his trust in God. Here we find applications for ourselves if we would share in the inheritance, of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gal. 3:29). The Almighty is as all wise as he is all powerful, and he can select various means to accomplish his purposes. Joseph's life shows us the wisdom by which God circumvented the evil ideas of men and used their actions to serve his purposes. It is difficult to learn the lesson (one which many of the Lord's people have not yet learned) of relying upon the Lord and upon his power. But a full reliance upon the Lord as the helmsman of our lives brings us comfort of heart and joyous peace.

A part of our preparation by God has to do with the lessons of humility, patience, faith and endurance. Our Lord Jesus endured contradictions, trials, and testings in order to display his obedience. These he endured being perfect, holy, and undefiled. How much more do the members of his body need to show their obedience. And it is through our testings, just as it was with Joseph, that we are fitted for the glory that shall follow.

That obedience which brings divine favor has been the secret to success for all the figurative Josephs of God. In other times success was measured by wealth and power. But, during the Gospel Age true success is measured by spiritual prosperity. Spiritual prosperity is displayed by our character. If we become like our Lord Jesus and his apostles and if we give our lives over to be used by God, we will be manifesting our faith. Adversity is our school. Through our trials correct ideals are formed, and through repeated trials our characters are crystallized, like those men of faith who had the testimony of God's approval.

That He May Establish Your Hearts

"May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes (parousia -- is present) with all his holy angels." - 1 Thessalonians 3:12,13, NIV.

These words were not addressed to sinners but to saints. Paul did not speak to those who lacked the spirit of Christ, but to those who had already been begotten by the holy Spirit of love. An increase in love indicates that love has already gained some ascendancy in the heart, a mastery of the mind. Love grows by conquering and subjecting all other thoughts and forms of conduct to itself.

The idea that our love is to grow with our Christian maturity agrees with the Scriptures. *"But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"* (2 Pet. 3:18, NIV). *"...Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the head, that is Christ"* (Eph. 4:15, NIV). *"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 3:14). If we approach this mark by developing a character like our Lord's, God will award the prize which he has promised to those who share in his Son's experiences.

It is as though we were a jug being filled with pure water from hidden springs. As the water fills the container it eventually overflows. Similarly, God's people are influenced by his love until it overflows into our lives, and the lives of those we contact. This filling by God blesses us and those who know us. This filling glorifies and praises God. At least it should if the work is taking place in us.

The apostle does not begin at the beginning of his story. His statement presupposes one distinct love which must precede all others: love to God, our Father. Any love toward brethren or the world must be founded upon the love which we have learned from God and from his Son. We cannot properly love others until we begin to reflect (or overflow with) the love of his Son. *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, love your neighbor as yourself"* (Luke 10:27, NIV). It stands then, that a man must love God first. His love must cause him to agree to do those things which please God. Yet, his love must be more than consent, it must be eager, enthusiastic about expressing its love. *"God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him"* (1 John 4:16).

Some Grow Slowly

What reasons are there for the slow growth of love among God's people? One reason is that the Adversary has blinded many hearts to the true character of God (2 Cor. 4:4). Misrepresentations hinder many from worshipping God in the true spirit (John 4:23). How thankful we are that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ now shines for his children. We rejoice that many now see his glorious character. We thank God too that some have overcome the deceptions of the Adversary, as all ultimately will be able to do (Rev. 20:3).

As We Do to You

The apostles taught a gospel which they appreciated and practiced. They were examples of this overflowing love, and it was this love which led them to sacrifice their interests and rights for the sake of the Lord's people. They laid down their lives for the brethren -- daily, hourly. They sacrificed their pleasures, their jobs, and their opportunities in order to bring others the message of Christ. It is with particular force, therefore, that they could exhort their fellow Christians to follow them in the course of self-sacrifice and obedience to Jesus.

This should also be true of others -- of us -- who walk in the way of righteousness and love. We must exemplify our Lord if our words are to have any meaning. If we would encourage others to press toward the mark, we must approach it ourselves. Whether from a pulpit or in the daily bumps along life's road, we are living letters of our Lord which are read by all who come in contact with us. The children of darkness may hate us. They may speak against us without cause. But, if we are walking after Jesus, they must recognize that we have been with Jesus even as they recognized that the apostles also had been with him (Acts 4:13). We must begin to show his spirit, his personality, however unlike him we may be by nature or education.

Abounding in Love

Some respond to Paul's admonition by saying that they have tried to grow in love but do not know how to cultivate this characteristic. Paul answered this question by implication. Paul suggests that this is not something which we do but that it is something which God does for us. *"May the Lord make your love increase and overflow..."* (1 Thess. 3:12, NIV). It is the Lord's work. We can accomplish only a little of it ourselves, and the sooner we discover this fact the faster we can progress. Our love must grow from the source of grace and of love and of truth -- God, because God is love (I John 4:8).

We begin to receive God's spirit from the time of our dedication to him. From the time we begin to live to God and not to the flesh we are subjecting ourselves to his spirit. He uses various means and the entire range of human experiences to teach us (1 Cor.10:13). His final purpose is that our love increase and overflow, cleansing away the selfishness against which all men contend.

The channels of grace are variously represented. One agency is the Word of God. Another is divine Providence. A third is the fellowship of the body of Christ-the saints. All of these are tools in teaching us to abound in love.

His Word

The basis of our faith and hope is his Word. But it is also the basis of our love. By hearing the word we taste and see that the Lord is gracious, that he is loving. As we see his love manifested, we recognize the pattern toward which we may direct our lives. Our Lord expressed it best: *"You must therefore set no bounds to your love, just as your heavenly Father sets none to his"* (Matt. 5:48, New Jerusalem Bible). He is the pattern. We are to copy him as far as possible. But we are especially to keep him as our standard of comparison for all situations and all times.

The apostle illustrates the action of God's word through the picture of water. Paul speaks of our being cleansed from the defilements of sin and selfishness by the washing with water through the word (Eph. 5:26, NIV). It is by this washing that the bride becomes a joint heir with the heavenly bridegroom. How does the Word of Truth cleanse us of our imperfections? By showing our

imperfections to us so that we might correct them. And yet the word does more than this. We are also encouraged by certain promises: "*Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises...*" (2 Pet. 1:4), without which we would be easy prey for the Adversary. It is the Adversary and our own fleshly desires which suggest that we succumb to selfishness and sin. It is the promises of God which encourage us to look to the end of our course for the reason to remain faithful to God. The promises of God provide that sure and steadfast anchor of the soul (Heb. 6:19) by which we resist the winds of temptation (James 1:6).

Divine Providence

God intervenes directly in the lives of his children. When we allow our desires to burden us (James 1:14), God may allow adversity to cause us to reflect upon our course. Such lessons -- offers of assistance -- the psalmist referred to when he said, "*... thy rod and thy staff they comfort me*" (Ps. 23:4). The providential over-rulings of God instruct us in ways which we may be unable to grasp from the Word alone. These are lessons which are impressed, so to speak, upon our hearts and will continually benefit us.

Assistance from the Brethren

How do we benefit from our brethren in Christ? Sometimes by a word spoken in season (Prov. 15:23) -- a bit of counsel, some consolation, or even a word of reproof. Or, our benefit may come through the testimony of other Christian lives. As we see their testings and their ability to endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ our own determination to show our faith in God may be increased. The ability of others to speak with joy and thankfulness about the Lord's providence in their lives even though they may be undergoing great tribulation is a strong example of what God can and will do for us.

We should not suppose that such encouragement comes from our brethren. This is a blessing from God. Yes, through the brethren, but from God nevertheless. Why? Because those who can encourage others are enabled to do so by the encouragement which they themselves have received from God. They are overflowing. It has been so from the earliest days. The young become the elder brothers. As they advance in the body of Christ they learn to joyfully assist others, even to laying down their own lives for them. This is the work of God, the effect of his spirit. By these God works in us to do his good pleasure so that we may increase and overflow in love.

Who Are the "You?"

Does the Apostle refer to all men? Are all men expected to grow in love? Surely not! The majority of men do not even understand the love of God to which Paul here refers. At best they have some knowledge of natural love, but frequently know little even of that love.

Paul is referring to the true church. As long as we continue to be a part of this class we will be subjected to the Father's discipline, because

"...what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons" (Heb. 12:7,8, NIV).

Our Probation

Let us make a distinction. There is a time when the body of Christ, his church, will be perfected: in the resurrection. There is first, however, a period of time when the body of Christ is being formed or developed. It is in a growth, or embryo, condition. That development is what is now taking place. As long as we remain upon this earth we are on probation. God is testing us. If we remain faithful, we will receive the promises which are found in God's Word. If we are not faithful, we cannot be accepted nor receive the promises offered to the faithful.

Figuratively, we are pupils in the school of Christ. As long as we are in the flesh we will have the chastenings, providences, disciplines, instructions in righteousness, and assistance of the brethren. These constitute lessons which we must learn in order to graduate from this school. Our graduation represents our character likeness to our Lord. And it is to those who become like Jesus that God has promised the reward of joint heirship.

This is the reason that we are urged to develop an overflowing love. Those who refuse to progress will be cut off from the body just as unproductive branches are severed from a fruit bearing vine.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you (John 15:1-3).

It is not only necessary to become members of this class which is here addressed as "you," it is also necessary that we remain in that class. We must maintain our standing by faithfulness and progress under the Lord's instruction. It is our duty to submit our wills to his good pleasure. This kind of submission is not a form of stupor. Nor is it indifference. No, we are to set our minds and all of our

energy in line with the instructions we find through his word, the brethren, and his providential overruling. We need not be anxious, as though the Lord might forget the lessons that we will need in order to become like his Son. Our only thought need be that he is faithful. With that reminder, all we need to do is search for his grace and strength while we walk in his way to the best of our ability. *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:105).*

Why Is Development Necessary?

Our hearts need to be fixed, settled, and grounded in holiness. It is not sufficient that we have some knowledge about love. Even to have love thrilling our hearts so that we feel generous and benevolent toward others is not sufficient. Why?

What kind of people is the Lord seeking? *"A peculiar people." "A royal priesthood"* (1 Pet. 2:9). A love for righteousness must be so firmly fixed in the characters of these people that all unrighteousness, all sin, all injustice would be repulsive. These must not only not love iniquity, but, as the Scriptures declare, these must hate iniquity (Ps. 97:10). Only truly loving righteousness can result in a true hatred of evil. Such an attitude can arise only from a fixed character, from a personality which has been crystallized by time and experience so that it is unwavering in its loyalty to righteousness.

For this reason God has hedged his people about during this Gospel Age. By making their way a narrow one, full of discipline, trials; and tests, he sifts out those who do not develop the character that he can approve and that he has made the criteria for a share with Christ in his kingdom.

If such a rigid standard of character were the absolute requirement, no one would ever receive God's approval. The more our senses are exercised in God's way the more we learn what Paul meant when he said that "*.. I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not*" (Rom. 7:18). To this the words of David agree, "*... there is none that doeth good, no, not one*" (Ps. 53:3). These points being accepted, we are assured that God is not seeking fleshly perfection. By the testimony of God's own Word, he says that he could never find those whom he has said he is seeking.

What then? The apostle is not teaching anything unreasonable. What he is saying is that our hearts may be fixed in holiness before God our Father. Yes! This is possible! To have a heart (a will, a motive, an intention) that is blameless is very much different from being blameless in every thought, word, and action. Thus, the heart represents the new creature. Our flesh carries with it all the sin that we have inherited during the past *six* thousand years. Our flesh is incapable of serving God. But our new mind, that disposition which is overflowing because of the love of God, may and must reach this unblamable condition in the sight of God.

Could we imagine any other condition being acceptable to God? He has called these to be his church, his royal priesthood. He is fitting them for the ultimate work of blessing every family upon the face of the earth. It is these who are to be the Bride for his Son and to be associated with him during his millennial kingdom. Surely God could ask nothing less than that our hearts be in full accord with the principles of righteousness and that these principles should control our daily lives -- so far as humanly possible. Would not the results of such a life-style be the putting aside of all filthiness (of both the flesh and the spirit) and the development of holiness in every aspect of our lives (2 Cor. 7:1)?

How reasonable God now appears to be. How gladly we accept his will. How earnestly we wish that every imperfection and fleshly blemish were erased and that our minds had already been fully established in righteousness through his loving tests. How we long for the new body that he has promised to us in the First Resurrection -- a body that is suited to our new way of thinking and to our crystallized character. With such instruments, we may serve him without hindrance and without distraction. With such a body, we may glorify God in every act and word, as well as in our heart! This is acceptable to God. He counts it, through the merit *of* Christ, exactly as though we were perfect, since such is the desire of our minds, of our will (2 Cor. 8:12). God is waiting until this character is fixed and permanent.

Established in the Lord's Presence

Paul's lesson has applied to all of God's people. However, there is a special application to those who live in the time of harvest. Mark his words, we are to be established "*in the presence [parousia] of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all his saints.*" To what extent are we established? Or to what extent are we still unsettled -- wavering.

Malachi's statement, "*... who shall stand when he appeareth...*" (Mal. 3:2) should not be taken to imply that all would be standing when he appeared. There would be some who would think that they were standing (or "were acceptable to God"), but who would really not be in God's favor at all. We understand this verse to suggest the question, Who shall stand the test at the time of his appearing?

For example, at the First Advent Jesus came to his own people. The Jewish people rejected and crucified him. Only a few, at that time, stood the test. John the Baptist said, "... *he will thoroughly purge his [threshing-] floor, and gather his wheat into the garner...*" (Matt. 3:12). This, it seems, is a work of purification.

Similarly, in this harvest there is a testing of the Lord's people. Who will endure this test -- this proving of the Lord's people? The criteria is simple: true consecration to God. The prophet intimates that some might be disappointed with the longed for Messenger of the New Covenant, in whom the Jews so delighted and hoped. His day is to be a strenuous one: "*Who shall stand when he appears? Who will abide the day of his presence?*" The intimation is that not many will abide, not many will stand -- the majority will fall.

Our Enemy: Spotted Garments Malachi describes why many will fall and only a few will abide. The Lord's tests will be like fuller's soap. Fuller's soap (or earth) is the enemy of every spot on a garment. God's requirements, like those of a refiner of silver, will be the same: every imperfection, all the dross, must be eliminated, and that in a furnace hot enough to insure its separation. The test will take time. He will sit like a refiner sits, watching carefully to see that the heat is neither too great or too little, and that the time is neither too long or too short. All who will not be established in righteousness will be sifted and rejected. The time for the completion of the body of Christ is at hand.

Who Shall Stand?

Do not be surprised that the trials come quickly and intensely. The Lord will prove whether you love him or not. Neither be discouraged that he needs to test you. Remember that it was he who began the work in you, and he is able to complete it. It was he who loved us as sinners, arranging the great ransom sacrifice. If he loved us so much when we were still sinners, will he not continue to love us now that we are attempting to please him? Surely he does, because we have received of his grace, we are justified by faith in his Son's blood, and we are walking in the Lord's footsteps with his help. Those who desire to become copies of the Lord and who want to profit by the instruction of the Lord are reminded that such comes not by their strength but by his. If they submit themselves to him, he will perfect in them the spirit of love and of righteousness and of holiness. And these will be made "...*meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*" (Col. 1:12).

Bees Worth Having

Be patient, be prayerful, be humble, be mild.
Be wise as Solomon, be meek as a child --
Be studious, be thoughtful, be loving and kind,
Be sure you make matters Subservient to mind.

Be cautious, be prudent, be thoughtful, be true,
Be courteous to all men, be friendly with few.
Be temperate in argument, be eager to climb,
Be careful of conduct, of money, of time.

Be cheerful, be grateful, be hopeful, be firm.
Be peaceful, benevolent, willing to learn;
Be courteous, be gentle, be liberal, be just;
Be aspiring, be lowly, because thou art dust.

Be penitent, circumspect, sound in the faith;
Be active, devoted, be constant till death.
Be honest, be holy, transparent and pure;
Be dependable, Christ-like, and you'll be secure.

Timely Advice

Allow a person to select from among the words and actions of the best of men, just what they prefer, and to use what they have selected in any way they please, and they can poison the minds of that person's best friends against them.

Just a sentence without the whole letter; Just a saying without the circumstances; Just an action without the reason; Just a text without the context;

Just some judicious selections, and some judicious omissions, and out of the man's innocence there can be created the plausible evidence of his wickedness.

- *"The Truth" Magazine*

"When God gives us unique blessings, Satan besets us with unique temptations." - selected

Entered into Rest

Haviland Boyle, CA F. Brooks, FL
Irene DeWys, Mi
Catherine Nicholson, NH
Nicholas Nicholson, NH
Alvin Raffell, OH
Pauline Robinson, OR
Helene Roszczewski, MA
Joseph Socha, NJ