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## "The Dominion of Death" OR "the Shepherding of Nations"

*"...that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." - Hebrews 2:14*

Are we to understand from this scripture that Satan has the power to destroy whoever he will?

Satan, the tempter, by initiating sin among men, brought all men under the divine sentence of death. It could hardly have been Satan's original goal to prostrate the human race in death but merely to have transformed man's allegiance to himself, and the prospective empire of man along with it. The Scriptures provide no indication whatsoever that in all of God's universal kingdom there had, previously, been any incidence of death among God's intelligent creatures.

Satan appeared to Eve as a liberating benefactor. He argued that the death penalty threatened in event of disobedience was an impertinent intrusion by God upon the freedoms of the human. He argued that rather than harm, good would result from ignoring the divine command. Thus Satan became the father of lies and thus of sinners (John 8:44).

He devoted himself with untiring persistence to the frustration of God's purposes. He is called the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4), the prince of this world, [*kosmos*, social order] (John 12:31), the prince of the powers of the air, or heavens (Eph. 2:2). It is said the world is under his power (1 John 5:19).

In becoming Christians it is evident therefore that we have accepted a new lord and come under a new standard of behavior. We are, thus, instantly set in conflict with Satan's empire and must fight to maintain ourselves and achieve victory in this warfare of the mind.

Our theme text says that Satan has the "power" of death. If he had such "power" fully under his conscious control might we not rest assured that the saints of God would long ago have perished

from the earth? The saints, we read, are kept by the power of God (1 Peter 1:5); and from this scripture and many others, including the first and second chapters of the Book of Job, we must conclude that Satan's operations among men are restrained by certain divine limitations. It seems evident that the word translated "power" [*kratos*] would better have been translated "dominion" in this text (ARV, cf. 'Z., R1271), as has been done in the following cases:

1 Peter 4:11 -- That God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, whose is the glory and *dominion* forever and ever.

1 Peter 5:10-11 -- That God of all grace, who called you...to him be the *dominion* for ever and ever.

Revelation 1:6 -- Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be ... glory and *dominion* for ever and ever.

Jude 25 -- To the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, *dominion* [*kratos*] and power [*exousia*]...now and forevermore.

In this last instance we can see that the word *kratos* should not be translated power because the very next word, *exousia*, is so translated.

### **Shepherding the Nations**

In John's Patmos vision he saw the heavens opened and beheld the King of kings and Lord of lords coming from heaven and being followed by the armies of heaven. He saw the great heavenly army on its way to overthrow evil and to establish righteousness in the one rebellious province of God's universal kingdom (Rev. 19:11-21).

We read in the fifteenth verse of that chapter that he will "*smite the nations*" with the sword of his mouth and "*rule them with a rod of iron.*" This may not, at first appearance, be a very hopeful prospect for the nations. However the word *poimaino* ("rule") would better have been translated "to shepherd," seeing that it is derived from *poiman*, meaning "a shepherd." Rotherham so renders it in the following texts:

Matthew 2:6 -- Out of Bethlehem shall one come forth to govern, who shall *shepherd* my people Israel.

1 Peter 5:2 -- *Shepherd* the beloved flock of God which is among you.

Revelation 2:26 -- He that overcometh . . . I will give authority over the nations and he shall *shepherd* them with a scepter of iron (mar.).

Revelation 7:17 -- Behold the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall *shepherd* them [the great multitude] and lead them to life's fountains of waters.

Satan has ruled over men to satisfy his own desires, his own selfish interests, but Christ will shepherd men for their good that they may be restored to the image of God.

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## **Lessons from the Flowers of the Field - Part I**

### **Life Through Death**

*"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow..." - Matthew 6:28*

One of the best ways to teach is to illustrate the lesson by some fact which is visible to the natural senses. It is noteworthy that our Lord Jesus, when he wished to teach spiritual truths to his disciples, drew illustrations of those truths from the events of daily life.

Jesus used nature in his illustrations. He taught using such simple things as the sparrows, the leaven used in baking, fig trees, mustard seed, grains of wheat, weeds, and the wild flowers. We know that he used other lessons too, because the written record of Jesus' life does not exhaust the Master's teachings (John 21:25).

We have, therefore, precedent for the illustration of spiritual truth from natural phenomena. We will note some simple facts of plant life and see how they illustrate spiritual truths.

The one thought presents itself repeatedly: life comes through death. The Apostle Paul stated this clearly when he said *"For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God"* (Col 3:3). This thought was not new to Paul. He had received it from our Lord. *"He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it"* (Matt. 10:39).

The Christian life, from inception to perfection, is a process of growth and of progress through death. One who seeks to be quickened into spiritual life must learn this basic lesson: *"What you sow does not come to life unless it dies"* (1 Cor. 15:36, RSV). Death to your own best interests is the door out of carnality into spirit begetting, and on from spirit begetting into the life that is filled with all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:19), and eventually on into life eternal. The cross of Christ, on which his precious blood was shed to wash away our sins, is the symbol of death to self.

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

*"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world"* (Gal. 6:14).

These are the lessons which we will consider:

Death is the gate to life.

Death to the human nature is the way into a life of sanctification.

Death to sin is the way into a life of holiness.

Death to lawful things is the way into a life of surrender.

Death to self is the way into a life of sacrifice.

## The Gate of Life

This lesson comes to us in the stages of a plant's growth, its budding, blossoming, and seed bearing: the delivering power of death. It comes as one of the many voices in which God speaks to men, bringing strength and gladness.

We can trace the sign of the Cross in the first hint of the new spring's dawning. The chestnut tree is one of many examples. Before a single old leaf has faded, the next year's bud may be seen at the tip of the branch and the twig, forming the shape of the cross. Other leaf buds also seem to bear the mark of the cross by breaking through the stem with blood-red markings. In a plant's first stages, sometimes, the crimson touch is visible in seed-leaves and fresh shoots and even in hidden sprouts. Look at the acorn as it breaks the shell. See how the baby tree bears its birth-mark as it breaks through the shell blood-red.

Every being that would enter into the life of the spirit must bear, at the outset, this crimson seal. There must be the individual sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, for "*...there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12). Death is the only way out of a world condemned; the world into which we were born.

There is a fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;  
And *sinner*s plunged beneath that flood  
Lose all their guilty stains.

When the blood of the crucified Christ has been applied to our hearts we go out into life not only pardoned, but justified -- declared righteous!

## A Life of Sanctification

If our dedication is complete, we find that on the other side of the Cross there is a new life begun. The love of the crucified has touched the source of our life, and we are in a world made new. Whereas before we sought safety from God's wrath against sin, now we find ourselves seeking holiness, not safety.

It soon comes to pass that we feel another need for deliverance. The voice of God speaks to our heart and we realize that there are two lives struggling within us. One is strong, from previous growth. The other is newborn and feeble.

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would (Gal. 5:17).

One finds that their motivation is divided between the two, like the sap that flows partly into the old condemned leaves, and partly into the new, fresh buds. The two struggle side by side. We feel the claims of the new life and we experience the power of the old. We cry out, "*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death*" (Rom. 7:24)? And from this feeling of need, this recognition that one's life has not yet been brought fully into harmony with God, a new door of escape opens. The way, once again, is the way of death.

A stage of dying must come over the plant before new leaves can grow and thrive. The plant must deliberately choose between the new growth and the old. One has to give way to the other. The

acorn must cease its existence in favor of the new shoot. The twig must withdraw sap from last year's leaf, letting it flow into this year's bud.

Before a person can enter into a life of holiness, with all of its possibilities, a similar choice must be made. We have known and practiced sin in the past. Now, sin must be relinquished. New purposes, the new motivation must have full play.

Look at our parable in nature. If we pick off a dead leaf and examine the stalk through a microscope, we find that the old channel of sap is silted up by a barrier invisible to our eye. The plant has, literally, shut the door on last year's leaf, condemning it to decay. Soon, without further effort, the stalk loosens. The winds of play around the stalk and soon it falls away.

What barrier can we place between ourselves and our old way of thinking? Where is the sentence of death which we can pass upon ourselves? Go back to the Cross again! It is there, within our reach:

"...our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin" (Rom. 6:6,7).

### **A Way To Holiness**

The Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ shuts off the life of sin. Like the silted channel of the leaf stalk it stands as a barrier between us and sinning. That is, it is there if we "reckon" it there: if we hold it there by our faith and by our willingness to recognize its power. Jesus' open tomb opens the way of life in which our growing new disposition can develop into its "springtime" power.

The sap -- the life -- the will is withdrawn from one's former existence. Our aims and desires are rechanneled, being sent with full force into a new life before us. We accept that this is our new life. It is the only one to which we have a right. We consider ourselves dead to the old life; alive to the new; putting off the former we put on the new. This is both an act and a process; it is a resolve taken once for all, but carried out in detail day by day. Like the plant's steady resolve, the sap flows regularly, continually into the new leaf so that the old leaf will die.

God is present with his resurrecting power. The Cross and the empty tomb are never far apart. The law of the spirit of life can now work. As we loose our hold upon the clinging nature of sin, the expulsive power of his working within, and the play of his winds about, will make us free indeed, just like those young shoots when last year's leaves have fallen.

### **The Positive Outlook**

When the sentence of death on the old nature is realized, the new nature must be manifested. Separation from all sin is the starting point of sanctification, not the goal. "Separation" is the reaching of that point where God can begin to develop his ideal in us -- unhindered. Separation is that point when the death of winter has done its work and the sun can draw out in each plant its own individuality, making its existence full and fragrant. Holiness means more than sweeping away the old leaves of sin. Holiness is the life of Jesus developed in us.

It does not matter that we feel utterly helpless when we compare ourselves to him. Given the proper conditions -- the hidden power within, the outlets of growth shut off -- the sun will do the rest. Out of apparent lifelessness, the blossoms will be drawn forth. Do not displace the power of the Holy One of Israel. Do not put off to some future time the miracle of his work in us. The

naked wood of a tree looks hopeless in February. Yet, in the springtime, the bloom bursts out with hardly an intermediate stage of new growth.

Look at the flowering rush that grows by the waterside. The crest breaks forth from nothingness out of the dry, seemingly lifeless pith comes the golden brown blossoms until there is hardly room to receive them. What more do we need than to have this God for our God. Who can bring such abundant life out of seeming death and barrenness?

There is no need to defer the power of God to work miracles in our hearts if we admit the manifestation of his grace. How many of the miracles of Jesus lay in the concentration of natural processes into a sudden act of power! Many of the sick would have been healed, by degrees, in the course of time. The lapse of years would have brought about the withering of the fig tree. The storm would have spent itself in a few hours. The miracle in each case consisted in the slow process of nature having been quickened by divine power-condensed into a moment.

Can we trust him for similar marvels in our lives? Hear his words: *"Whatsoever things ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them"* (Mark 11:24). The change from careless living to a holy walk with God can come in one day if we earnestly desire it.

### **A Lesson from a Shrub**

There is a bush called the gorse, or furze. This is a low, many branched, spiny shrub, bearing yellow flowers and common on the wastelands of Europe. For an entire year its thorns harden and sharpen. Spring comes. The thorn remains, as firm and sharp as ever. But halfway up the thorn's length two brown furry balls appear, mere specks at first, growing directly from last year's thorn. And in time they break out into a blaze of fragrant, golden glory. How beautifully this represents the spiritual progression:

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:11).

Do not be concerned if your trouble shows no signs of easing; it is like this thorn which appears hopelessly unyielding. Though it clings to the branch through the days of the spring, eventually the tiny buds appear which will clothe the thorn in glory. Take the hardest thing in your life, the place of greatest difficulty, outward or inward, and expect God to triumph gloriously in that very spot. Just there he can bring you into blossom, causing you to bring forth spiritual fruit to his glory.

Springtime expands and once again it passes into the shadow of Calvary. God has more in store for us than merely the blessedness of receiving of his grace. A new world lies beyond, a world of giving: first of our surrender to God, then of our sacrifice to men.

The Flower that Never Blossoms A flower that stops short of flowering misses its purpose in life. Just so man; we were created for more than our own spiritual development: reproduction, not mere development, is the goal of matured being: reproduction in other lives.

There is a tendency in some characters to spend their whole time on the production of bloom at the expense of the seed. The famed Japanese cherry blossoms in Washington D.C. illustrate this: they bring forth a marvelous abundance of blossoms, but they produce no fruit.

The flowers that are bent on perfecting themselves by becoming double, end in barrenness. Similarly, barrenness comes to the person whose interests are all concentrated upon their own spiritual health, heedless of the needs of those around. The ideal flower is the one that uses its gifts as means to an end. Their brightness and sweetness are not for themselves alone; they attract the bees and butterflies that will fertilize them and make them fruitful. All else may disappear when fertilization has occurred: "...It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). The problem, then, is how are we to escape from that self-loving life that holds us, even after we have learned to loosen the grip of sin in self?

Back to the Cross we go. The Cross frees one, not only from the world of condemnation and from the world of sinning, but additionally from the power of outward things and from servitude to self. The Cross opens the door to the world of acquittal. Once again, it opens the door to holiness. Next, it opens the door of our life to the realm of surrender-which must precede sacrifice. The essence of the Cross is a life lost, to be found again in those around. "*For whosoever shall save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it*" (Matt. 16:25).

Look again at nature. As the plant develops there comes a fresh stage of yielding. At first it was only the dead leaves that had to go. Now it is the fair new petals of its blossoms. They must fall, and for no visible reason; no one seems to be enriched by their removal. And so long as our idea of surrender is limited to the renouncing of unlawful things, we have not grasped its true meaning; for no polluted thing can be offered to God. The life lost on the Cross was not a sinful one; the treasure poured forth there was a God-given, God-blessed treasure.

That life was lawful and rightful to be kept by the Savior. Ah, but the life of the world was at stake! And so we come to the fourth of our basic points.

### **A Way To Surrender**

The buttercup may be used to illustrate this lesson of the way to surrender. The "calyx" of a blossom is the external (usually green) envelope (or covering) which grows just beneath the petals. In the bud of the buttercup the little hands of the calyx clasp tightly around the beautiful petals. In the new bloom their grasp becomes more elastic, loosening somewhat during the daytime, but keeping the power of contracting, able to close again during a rainstorm or when night comes on. But, when the flower has reached its maturity, the calyx hands unclasp, losing all power to close again, and fold themselves away from the petals: leaving the crown free to float away when God's time comes.

Have we learned the buttercup's lesson? Are our hands 'off' the blossom of our life. Are all things, even the treasures that he has sanctified, held loosely, ready to be parted with-without a struggle-when he asks for them?

It is not in the partial relaxing of grasp, with the power to take back again, that victory is won. *Victory is* won when that power of taking back is yielded. We have won new victory when our hand, like the little calyx hands of God's buttercup, are folded behind our backs in abandonment. Death means a loosened grip -loosened beyond all power of grasping again.

We are not to be surprised if God takes us at our word, stripping us, for a while, of all that made life beautiful. To some, it may be outward things of bodily comfort which must be stripped away from our hearts: leisure, culture, reputation, friendship. To others it may be the things of their inner lives that must fall away: sunny lands of spiritual enjoyment which are replaced, perchance, by temptation's battlefield where every inch of our foothold has to be tested. Yes, we must be

tested until every peace, every experience, and every other resting place gives way to God himself.

Have faith to let go. Learn his beatitude: *"blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me"* (Matt. 11:6) -- the beatitude of trusting, as it has well been called. Some learn it easily. Others, like John, have learned only in the hour of desolation. You have told God that you want him only. Are you ready to ratify the words when his emptying begins to come? Is God enough?

Practical death with Jesus to those things which are lawful is just letting go. Even as Jesus, on the Cross, let all go save God. It is not by struggling for mastery that this lesson of surrender is learned, but by yielding, just as the body yields at last to the physical death which lays hold upon it.

Some blessings are gained by struggling for them. The way to experience the blessing of *full surrender* is simply to surrender. Only to the hands of the Father do we let ourselves go; not to any iron law of nature-with its merciless grasp. In the hands of the Father our spirit falls, and there we are made conformable unto the death of Jesus.

Does this seem hard? Does it seem better to say "I would rather stay in the springtime; I do not want to reach unto the things that are before if it must mean all of this pain." The Master's voice to such is heard, *"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer"* (Rev. 2:10). The one crucial attitude is that we remain obedient at heart. Then we will be ready to let the flower pass, if he bids us, when the sun of his love has worked some ripening. We will feel, then, that to try to keep the withering blossoms would be to cramp and ruin the new life within us. It is loss to keep when God says to give.

Here again death is the gate to life: It is an entering in, not a going forth only; it means a liberating of new powers as the former treasures float away like the dying petals.



## Lessons from the Flowers of the Field - Part II

### Life Through Death

*"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow..." - Matthew 6:28*

We cannot feel a consciousness of death: the words are a contradiction of terms. If we had literally passed out of this life and been resurrected in the next, we would not feel dead; we would only be conscious of a new and wonderful life within us. Our consciousness of death would be an entirely negative matter -- the old pains would be unable to touch us, the old bonds would be unable to fetter us.

Our consciousness would have passed into the new existence; we would be independent of the old. And a like independence is the characteristic of the new flood of resurrection life that comes to us as we learn this fresh lesson of dying-a grand independence of any earthly thing to satisfy our souls; the liberty of those who have nothing to lose, because they have nothing to keep. Our little all has been given to our heavenly Father. No one can any longer take anything away from us: if they take it, they take it from our Father. Our Father has power to prevent their taking it or to give it to them or to make them pay for that which was taken whatever price he sees fit to exact of them. *"...Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord"* (Heb. 10:30). As for ourselves, we can do without anything while we have God.

There is a certain expression of abandonment about the wild rose calyx. Mme goes on and it begins to grow towards the end for which it has had to count all things but loss: the look of emptiness has gone-it is flung back joyously; simultaneously with the dying a richer, new life has begun to work at its heart for --

Ever with death it weaveth  
The warp and woof of the world.

The lovely rose petals that have drifted away are almost forgotten in the reaching forth unto the things that are before (Rom. 6:19); it is yielded to bring forth fruit (Rom., 7:4).

There is one more stage to be developed in us after the lesson of absolute, unquestioning surrender to God has been learned. A life that has been poured out to him must find its crown, its completion, in being poured out for men. Surrender must go forth to sacrifice. *"They ...first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God"* (2 Cor. 8:5).

Yes, back to the Cross once more. If there is any place where this lesson is to be learned, it is there. *"By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren"* (1 John 3:16, RSV). What has come into our hearts? It is the love which showed itself forth at Calvary. *"Yes, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all"* (Phil. 2:17). And again, the same apostle says,

*"So then death worketh in us, but life in you"* (2 Cor. 4:12). *"...Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received..."* (Acts 20:24).

Our dying to self must extend ever deeper. The source of life which this process is to liberate grows ever wider and fuller as the work proceeds because the work is no longer confined to the

narrow range of our own lives, but is multiplied by our ability to influence a myriad of other fellow men and women. Death must reach the source of our hopes and ambitions if we are to be truly set free. We are no longer concerned with giving up this thing or that; rather we blindly, helplessly, recklessly relinquish ourselves, our very lives. A dying, final overthrow, must come upon all that would hinder God's work in us -- all impulses that are born of the flesh must be put aside, all energies which are given to self must be put away, all interests which remove our hearts or minds from him must be sacrificed. Only thus can the life of Jesus -- in the intensity of his love for all mankind -- have its way in our lives.

### **A Life of Sacrifice**

The dry dandelion with its ball of silver down has surrendered its golden petals to death. The delicate seed pod must break apart; it gives and gives and gives until it has nothing left to give. What a revolution would come upon this world if this were to be the standard of behavior. If all who claim to be *God's people* ventured on through life making themselves poor as did Jesus for the sake of need which surrounded him, what a world this would be. What ultimate good would result if all of the "I's -- Me's -- Mine's" of our lives were practically and really delivered up to God, no longer to be recognized by ourselves when we have our inevitable clashes with others!

The hour of this new dying is clearly defined in the dandelion globe. It is marked by the detachment of seeds. There is no sense of wrenching: the dandelion willingly gives up its seeds, not knowing where or how the wind will blow the myriad of seeds. It holds itself no longer for its own keeping. The dandelion's life is now something to be given and a breath does the rest, turning "readiness" to "will" to "performance" (2 Cor. 8:11).

To a person who has been through such frequent "deaths," such conscious acts of volition, even those acts which look as though they must involve sacrifice become something natural -- spontaneous -- full of a heavenly involuntariness. At a point of maturity these acts of sacrifice are the natural outcome of the indwelling love of Christ in the heart of the believer.

### **Ask God**

Why not ask the Father to show us those parts of our life which need to be emptied of self? We find that we are not concerned, here, with selfishness in its ordinary sense. The precious Blood may have cleared away all routine selfishness from our hearts long ago, but there may remain other forms of "self" which we have not yet recognized. Self may coexist with much which appears to be sacrifice. There can be certain forms of usefulness in outward self-denial (as for example the discipline of the athlete in training), yet below this innocent appearance may remain our desire to decide matters for our self. It is possible to take pride in deciding to do many things: even in serving God. Such hidden faults hinder our new intentions and frustrate the work of the spirit. The latent living for self needs to be put to death before God's breath can carry us forth as the winds carry the dandelion seed. Are we ready for this last form of surrender?

Does God really mean for this process of emptying my life of self to proceed so far? We know of no better answer than the words of Jesus. "...the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself.- but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (John 14:10). "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30). His human life, as sinless as it was, was completely laid aside. He lived by, through, and for the Father. Our life, as sinful and worthless as it is, should follow the pattern of his so that we might live by him.

But how do we succeed, at length, in this thoroughly unnatural task of emptying ourselves of self?

We do not do it by struggling. We succeed by dying to our own will in Christ Jesus. "*I am crucified with Christ.*" Individually, we must let self go to that death. The power of God will rise to meet our expression of faith; we will find it true that the pains of death (Acts 2:24) are loosed, and that he can have his way with us.

### **Break Every Tender Tie**

Wild iris seed pods are very much like peas. The seeds of each are held by a fine fiber -- a vegetable thread. When the pods have dried and opened each thread must be broken for the seed to fall out. Once loosed, the seed is free for God's use anywhere in the world. Reluctance, calculating, reservations are all gone; the husks are wide open, the seeds can be shed unhindered. Repeatedly, the breaking comes. Seed broke in order to go to shoot. The leaf bud broke to go to leaf. The flower bud broke to go to flower. But all that has gone before is of no avail if there is not one more breaking. "*Love is the fulfilling of the law*" (Rom. 13:10), and sacrifice is the life breath of love. May God show us every withholding thread of self that needs breaking still. May his touch upon our life shrivel it into death.

See how a piece of oat-grass empties itself. As it dries, each separate glume (or seed sheath) spreads wide and allows the grain to fall out. Look at the openness with which the seed sheaths loosen all that they have to yield. Note also the patience with which they close again, content at having finished their work. "*She hath done what she could*" (Mark 14:8). Oh, the depth of the rest that falls on the soul when the voice of the Beloved speaks those words! Will they be said of us?

The seed pod has no hopes of future reward. It is merely fulfilling the opportunity open to it. Its purpose for existence has been finished when the wind shakes forth the last seed, and the flower stalk is beaten low by the autumn storms. The pod not only spends, but as the Revised Version has it, is "spent out" (2 Cor. 12:15). We are enriched through Christ's poverty. Those who follow him are made poor, but they in turn make others rich (2 Cor. 6:10).

Have you noticed how the emptied calyx grows into a diamond shape; or how the emptied seed pod stands crowned for its ministry, as though it gloried in its power to give life to others. The wild rose produces a round, red seed ball when the blossoms are gone. And the triangular points of its calyx form a perfect crown upon its top. Even in nature, in a measure, the faithfulness unto death and the crown of life go together. So we, if we suffer with him, will also reign with him.

When the sun sinks below our horizon, that sunset forms the dayspring for other peoples. In the Autumn, when the harvest is gathered and the fruit is stored, the glow of red and gold transfigures bush and tree with a beauty which summer days never knew.

So with us: the clear pure dawn of cleansing through the blood-the sunrise and gladness of resurrection life, the midday light and warmth of service -- all are good in their order, but he who stops there misses the crown of glory beside which the brightness of former days grows poor and cold.

When the glow of a life poured out to Jesus becomes a life poured out to others, then the commonest things take on new beauty. The sunset of our lives can become the sunrise for others who have never seen the light: because his life is made manifest in ours, yes, even "*...manifest in our mortal flesh...*" (2 Cor. 4:11). There is a bloom which arises upon the human life like the

bloom on fruit which precedes the hour of our sacrifice. Oh, that we might learn to die to all that is self, with the royal joyfulness which he manifested. In him we find the ultimate assurance that death is swallowed up in victory (1 Cor. 15:24). God can fill every step of our way with the same triumph of gladness that we see in the golden sheaves of wheat. Glory to his name!

But what of the outcome? In the natural autumn there is a new power set free. It is the power of multiplying life. Spiritually, the promise of Christ was that because he poured forth his soul unto death he would see his seed. God leads his children by small steps down the road called life. Repeatedly, God has linked the promised seed with sacrifice as with Abraham, Rebekah, and Ruth. Those who forsake all -- at his bidding -- receive a hundredfold more. Sacrifice is the factor which God uses in his work of multiplying life. *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24).*

### **To Live -- To Die**

If it die, it brings forth fruit. Christ's likeness will be formed in the hearts of God's children whether their lives are laid down in toiling on behalf of those who know not God or in ministering on behalf of those who know him.

Even in the death of a plant there is no finality. Emerson said "There is no end in nature, but every end is a beginning. Every ultimate fact is only the beginning of a new series." *"While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease"* (Gen. 8:22). Life leads to new death. New death leads back to life again. Over and over, when we think we have grasped our lessons, we find ourselves beginning another round in God's divine spiral of life. The Apostle's phrase "in deaths oft" (2 Cor. 11:23) is an apt summary of the course of our growth. *"For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh"* (2 Cor. 4:11).

Sphagnum, or soft moss, grows in bogs and damp places. It is used by gardeners for the packing, in shipment, of their plants. Sphagnum is composed of successive layers of fresh plant life which have grown up upon previous layers of dead moss. Thus, the moss illustrates the process of which we have just been speaking: stage after stage of dying have come. Each in succession has been crowned again with new life. Each time the crown itself has sunk into death, and that death again has been crowned in the act of dying. While this process continues, all that appears is life. Those who pass by the bog do not see the daily dying that lies underneath.

Yes, life is uppermost. Life, radiance, joyfulness, strength: we are the representation of him who liveth and was dead. Behold, he is alive for evermore (Rev. 1:18). It was necessary that stress be laid at the gates of death. But a gateway is not the place where people live. So also with death: like the plants which bear its marks, we may, and must, display to God our willingness to die--rather than to man. For above all else, the inflowing, overflowing life and love of Christ Jesus remains present to fill us after we have been emptied of self.

Let us not dim this prospect by morbidness or gloom. He is not a God of the dead, but of the living (Mark 22:32). God wills to have the *glory* of gladness in him shine before all men.

Consider the wonder of this process. As we deliver our life and our will, bit by bit, into the grave, the Fountain of Life himself wells up within us.

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Most men have only slightly comprehended the resources which lie to their use when Christ dwells within them. Most have learned but a little of the power which may penetrate our life when we admit Jesus. May God lead us, at whatever cost, into all that may be known of him and his power in this life.

We have watched as life has been withdrawn from blossoms into the seed pods. From thence, as the pod ripens, life is withdrawn from it and given to the seed itself. Consider now, the words of the Apostle: "...that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1:28). The sense of the word "perfect" is "ripeness of maturity." Let us surrender ourselves, so that through surrender we may be brought to the ripeness of maturity.

Let us focus, for a moment, upon the plant seed. What a marvel it is, thus empowered for the future. It is but a speck of whiteness folded up in its brown shell. Could there be a less significant detail in all of creation? And yet, seeds are filled with a vitality which will last -- given specified conditions -- while the earth abides. Those careless feet which tread upon the plants of the field only hasten the burial that is its next stage onward. The autumn's storms bring to the plant fresh baths of quickening.

The seeds which multiply the flowers of the field require that a constant battle be fought. There is, under present conditions, a very real battle for the survival of the fittest. The henbane, for instance, is by no means the most prolific of plant forms. But if every seed which a single henbane produced during a five year span were to bring forth new life there would be ten thousand billion plants -- enough to cover all the dry land upon the earth with approximately eight plants per square foot (cf. *Natural History of Plants*, Kemer and Oliver). Perhaps in this seeming waste there is an important lesson for man to learn. The natural seed contains the power to produce an overwhelming amount of life. How much more the life which proceeds from the Son of God, who is the Fountain of Life. "There is no limit to what God can do with man, provided he (the man) will not touch the glory."

Plants aptly illustrate the love which does not seek its own. No one knows, when the seed has come to rest and roots begin to take hold, from whence the seeds have come. And what personal glory is there for the plant which sheds its own life in order to produce this new life? Plants just give. Their only aim is to be bare stalks when the course of their life has run its course. Everything is loosed without calculation or self interest. One might almost imagine the plants repeating the words of the psalmist: "*Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake*" (Ps. 115:1). From the plant we learn the lesson of absolute indifference as to whether our service is appreciated, or even recognized, as long as our work is done, and the Lord is glorified. The plant asks nothing to keep, nothing to show, nothing in which to glory.

What does it matter if we, ourselves, never see the prolific life which the seed of the spirit may produce? It is all the more likely that God will entrust us with this great multiplying power if our faith does not need to see the fruit of its labor. God can grant to his creature a spiritual harvest only when the glory goes to God.

It matters that we do our part. To us lies the responsibility of sowing seed to the spirit. Let us learn the maturity which we hear in Jesus' open confession: "... *My meat is to do the will of him*

*that sent me, and to finish his work"* (John 4:34). And on he went with it. He spent crying (John 11:35) and great drops of sweat (Luke 22:44) in order to continue the fight to the end. At Calvary he uttered his summary: *"It is finished"* (John 19:30).

For what do we hunger and thirst? Is it our only hope that before he calls us from this life we may have given every message which he has for us to deliver? Will we have prevailed in every intercession to which he summoned us; distributed for his kingdom and the necessity of his saints every dollar he wanted. Have we shared with him every call to the fellowship of his sufferings for others, poured out his love and sympathy and help as he poured them out on earth? When he comes to us, will he find no treasure unspent and no talent laid in a napkin-like seeds unshed in shelly fold? Are we acting as if we had such longings? *"...by him actions [not longings] are weighed"* (1 Sam. 2:3).

This last lesson is the most difficult to learn. In service we must learn the same lesson as in history. Both end in Christ alone, and only. The highest aim in ministry is to bring others into his immediate presence. By bringing others to him then he may act upon them directly. And while the Master works we may stand idly by, like John the Baptist, rejoicing greatly.

Some have looked upon their inner or mental life as being separate from their service to God. But as we progress the two merge into one -- Christ. Whether we are closed up in the secret temples of the heart or set free in contact with our companions, the quickening work of Christ in us proceeds. Christ is the beginning. Christ is the ending. We found that our first spiritual step was to let him into our mind as our life. Our last step can go no further. Throughout our life it is the apprehension of Christ which increases our perception.

Christ -- Christ -- Christ, filling all the horizon. Everything in us, everything to us, everything through us. *"For me to live is Christ."*

The fruits of our life need not end with our earthly days. All around us the signs of the times suggest that the days until the establishment of his kingdom are short. But if we are mistaken, when the last gate of death has been passed, God may use the things which he has wrought in us for the blessing of hearts unknown to us. As the twigs and leaves of bygone years pass their vitality to the new-born plants which succeed them, so may we. God only knows the possibilities that lie enfolded in each human life.

Shall we not let him have his way? Shall we not allow his plan to proceed to its extension through us? The plants yield to their purpose instinctively; shall we not do so by choice? These natural teachings of surrender and sacrifice are not mysticism. The truths which they illustrate can, and must, be tested: if we are growing up into Christ's death through its delivering power, then those who live and work with us will not be slow to find out.

Jesus, the Crucified! Shall we not follow him? May he inspire every step, whether into the shadow or the light. May our words echo those of Ittai, the servant of David *"As the LORD liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be"* (2 Sam. 15:21). Amen.

## **My Savior Talked to Me**

My Savior talked to me one day.  
My path it seemed so rough and steep,  
He laid his hand upon my head  
And said, "My son, why do you weep?"

His hand it seemed so warm and gentle,  
His touch so soft and kind,  
As if I'd been awakened  
From dumbness, deaf and blind.

The dark clouds that had gathered,  
They all now seemed so light and clear  
And now I am rejoicing  
In faith I have no fear.

So let us not be doubtful,  
And put our trust in him,  
And may our cup be filled,  
Even to the brim!

- W. Bredlau

## "All the Fulness of 'the Godhead' (Deity) Bodily"

In 1881, when the *King James Version* of the Bible was in common use and the first English revision of the New Testament was published, an article by H. V. Reed appeared in the magazine *Restitution*. He wrote: "The word godhead is not good English: it means nothing in itself and conveys no idea to the reader. What is a godhead?" It is merely a bad translation. The Greek manuscript word should be rendered "divinity" or "deity." Many Bible scholars and translators have realized that "godhead" does not convey clear meaning, and at least fifteen versions, disapproving it, use some word or phrase other than "godhead" used three times in the *King James Version*, where in Acts 17:29, Rom. 1:20, and Col. 2:9 it represents each place a different Greek word.

"Godhead" in Colossians 2:9 of the *King James Version* is a translation of the Greek *theotes*, which is "an abstract noun for *theos*," the usual Greek word translated 'God'. (*Greek-English Lexicon*, Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich) "An abstract noun is one indicating a quality, as goodness, beauty." (*Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary, International Edition*). This means that when Paul wrote of Christ Jesus that "...in Him dwelleth all the fulness of deity..." he taught that all the qualities of God dwelt in Christ Jesus our Lord. In view of that, one may be sure that whatever "godhead" may be thought to mean, it surely does not properly represent the meaning of the Greek words Paul wrote.

### God's Fulness First in Christ Jesus

The Epistle to the Colossians was written by Paul because of his concern over concepts which he learned were being taught to brethren with whom he had never shared spiritual perceptions in personal contact. He refreshed their minds regarding "the word of truth of the gospel and the living hope which had already been brought unto them. This important review is found in Col. 1:5-22. Following that, Paul affirms his labor and ministry in explaining God's mysteries. (Col. 1:23-Col. 2:5)

The Apostle realized that "*traditions of men*" had been delivered to them by teachers who had developed elements of a wisdom suited to the proud, curious, speculating, and carnal temper of the world. These traditions were blended with legal, external observances by Judaizing teachers and were incompatible with the doctrine of Christ. This situation made Paul's admonition there especially appropriate and timely.

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of this world, and not after Christ. For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the deity bodily (Col. 2:6-9).

What a wonderful assurance this is to trusting Christians! All the attributes which are part of God's being are "housed permanently" in our Leader and Forerunner! The completeness of our Lord's powers was constituted when "*He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high*." The assertion that "*all the fulness of deity*" dwells in Christ means that the qualities which are in God's being are not divided up, part in one and part in others. If on the other hand, the fulness of deity were to be understood as being divided up, it would imply that there were other mediating spiritual powers or independent spiritual forces at work which should contribute their wisdom and



power in order that God's work of salvation be fully accomplished. But this is not so. There is not a partial nor a temporary indwelling of God's qualities in Christ, but rather "*all the fulness.*" Christ is not in the same rank with other created beings such as angels. (Heb. 1:5) As the Son, He is greater than all that was created through Him.

In view of this, there is no need to seek instruction, wisdom, and encouragement elsewhere; not from Jewish ordinances and traditions, nor from heathen philosophers. Believers do not need those who set forth divergent schemes of salvation and deliverance from sin apart from Jesus such as those of which false teachers dream. Christ is Head of all principality and power, and all God's holy angels are his willing servants. The Apostle's counsel in this regard continued in Col. 2:14-23.

Christ Jesus our Lord is the Word, the truth, the personal embodiment of all that is good and true, and emphatically the revelation to man of God's being. The extensive responsibilities delegated to Jesus in His service under God are often affirmed in Scripture, two of which are now quoted. Firstly, "*To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through Him*" (1 Cor. 8:6). Secondly, "*For there is one God, and one mediator of God and of men, a man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in its own times*" (1 Tim. 2:5,6).

"Fulness" -- That Which Fills There is a point worth noting in the word "fulness." A translation in the New Testament only of the Greek *pleroma*, "fulness" means "that which fills," "that of which a thing is filled." The teaching is that all the attributes, all the qualities of God, dwell in Christ Jesus. The "fulness" dwells in Jesus. Christ Jesus received His capacity -- He is complete. This does not suggest, however, that His capacity is the measure of the Father's capacity. The glory of the Father is supreme, unequalled. God clearly attested, "*I am the LORD: that is My name: and My glory will I not give to another.*" (Isa. 42:8, Isa. 48:11) The glimpse given in 1 Cor. 15:41-42 of differing glories in the spiritual resurrection affirm the diversity of heavenly, spiritual glory. The supreme glory is that identified with the Father's glorious spirit body. "*God is spirit*" (John 4:24). The glory of the Son is next; and it is the Father who distributes all subsequent, lesser rewards (Matt. 20:23).

There are two principal views as to the exact thought Paul intended in Col. 2:9. Though different, they seem not to conflict, nor one to exclude the other. Sentence structure and rules of grammar indicate that in the *RSV* translation the last word in verse 9 qualifies the word "dwells": "*For in Him the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily.*" A note in the *Greek-English Lexicon* by Bauer, Amdt, Gingrich sums up one of the views-that the Greek adverb *somatikos* ("bodily") means that the totality of the attributes of

God dwell in Christ Jesus "*in reality, not symbolically.*" It suggests that such view is supported by Col. 2:17, where typical Jewish stipulations regarding foods, holy days, and sabbaths are shown to be "*a shadow of things to come; but the body* [which it takes to mean "reality"] *is of Christ.*" While it is agreed that "the fulness of God's nature" does truly and fully dwell in Christ, that truth seems to have been already established by the Greek *katoikeo*, ("dwells"), "to dwell fixedly in a place." (*Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*) And realizing that Christ was foreknown in God's eternal purpose (Eph. 3:11), several translators in verse 17 have used not "body", but rather the word "substance." Christ Jesus, as the One foreknown and thus that "substance," enabled the several shadows mentioned in that verse.

The other view is that the adverb *somatikos* describes how the "fulness" dwells in Christ "*as a complete and organic whole, not fragmentarily*" (*Expositor's Greek Testament*, Nicoll);

"corporately" (*Jerome Biblical Commentary*). It is in this sense, too, that the church is one body under Christ, its head. (Eph. 5:23) The aggregate of Christian disciples constitute a corporate whole.

### **Reconciliation Purposed**

There was special purpose in the Father's design that His "fulness" should dwell in the Son. God brought all His qualities into one entity to enable His faithful servant to encourage and develop those divine qualities in others. This is shown in previous verses (Col. 1:12-22). Paul affirmed that God dealt bountifully with His beloved Son from the beginning.

"And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church: *who* is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell" (Col. 1:17-19).

Weymouth nicely words the last segment of those verses: "*For it was the Father's gracious will that the whole of the divine perfection should dwell in Him.*"

The "fulness" is in Christ to equip and qualify Him for the work of reconciliation.

"For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven" (*NAS*)

Reconciling man to God and God to man is the objective for which God has caused "all the fulness of divinity" to dwell in Jesus.

But this did not make the Son the Father, it did not blend the Son into the Father, it did not make the glorified Jesus identical to the Father. But it did raise their constant unity to a higher, superlative level, to a level not previously experienced. Always God has been supreme, and there is no Bible testimony that the Son ever expected to receive the greater glory which the Father retains to Himself. There are Bible teachings which show the Father is greater than the Son, and that the Son is to be subject to the Father. One is 1 Cor. 15:25-28.

"For He [Christ] must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He [the Father] hath put all things under His [the Son's] feet. But when He [the Father] saith all things are put under Him [the Son], it is manifest that He [the Father] is excepted, which did put all things under Him [the Son]. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him [the Son], then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him [the Father], that put all things under Him [the Son], that God may be all in all."

### **The Church Being Filled**

In Ephesians 1:20-23 Paul relates our Master's "fulness" to the bringing about of the anticipated condition in which God will "*be all in all.*" He refers to God's exceeding great power, that He raised Christ '*from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies.*' In elevating Christ Jesus to that authority, God "*hath put all things under His [Christ's] feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.*" From this is seen that Christ, who is head over all things, is head to the church as manifested by His spiritual organization and supervision of it. From Him comes its life, in Him is its joy; through the church Christ is lived forth and witnessed. The Apostle John exulted in the benefit we

receive from Christ. *"And of His [the Son's] fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."* (John 1:16) It is His fulness, and the church receives of His fulness, and that fulness is shown forth by the church. Jesus is full of the "fulness" itself; we are filled from Him. The receiving of His fulness is an important goal toward which each devoted Christian must strive. Believers are exhorted in Eph. 4:13 to develop the character qualities of our God and receive fulness: *"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and o the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness o Christ."*

It is of course understood that the fulness with which Jesus fills others is the "fulness of God" because the Son fills with the fulness with which He Himself was filled. Indeed, the Apostle's exhortation in Eph. 3:19 establishes just that. *"And to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fulness of God."* Our Lord Jesus is not involved in any counterfeit "fulness." Our Savior has communicated to his church through the holy spirit and Scripture the plenitude of gifts and graces wherein our lives are intended to inspire others to such fulness.

In Ephesians 4:10 Paul reminds every believer that Jesus was exalted *'far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.'* Inasmuch as God is to reconcile through Jesus *"all things to Himself ..whether things on earth or things in heaven,"* it is most appropriate that Jesus has been exalted *'far above all heavens.'* During this present time of preparation and development each member of the church endeavors to be filled with "the fulness" to their individual capacities. The purpose in this for believers is the same as that for which Jesus received "all the fulness": that he might equip and qualify them for their work in the process of reconciliation.

Who also hath made us able ministers of the new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors of Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. (2 Cor. 3:6, 2 Cor. 5:18-20)

This solemn commission involves every sincere believer in Jesus, and is both a great privilege and a sacred responsibility.

The day when "all" the qualities of God will be "in all" a reconciled, willing and obedient creation is sure to come. They too will be filled with the "fulness" by *"Him that filleth all in all"* (Eph. 1:23) to the capacity of the glory of their being, according to the Father's good pleasure in their rewarding. God's appointed time will not tarry, even though issues of the moment indicate that the promised glorious day is destined to come in a later generation of a succeeding century. But this is no cause for discouragement. There is a rest of faith for *"the people of God"* (Heb. 4:9). *"Behold! now is a well accepted Season; Behold! now is a Day of Salvation."* (2 Cor. 6:2 *Emphatic Diaglott*, Isa. 49:8) Because we shall increase our faith and knowledge today, we shall share with the victors who will receive great reward and *"the crown of life"* tomorrow. (Rev. 2:10) *"Have faith: in God"* (Mark 11:22).

- Gilbert Rice

## A Frenzy of Delusion

*"And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth." - 2 Thessalonians 2:11,12*

Looking at these words of the Apostle as a prophecy dealing with the end of the Gospel age, we suggest that few would argue that they apply primarily to the church and will later apply also to Babylon and the unregenerate world. This is in keeping with the scripture: *"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God"* (1 Peter 4:17)?

Paul does not specify what lies would be believed nor does he suggest what truths would be unappreciated. We might be tempted to suggest some that apply, as though we could make an infallible list. But all that we would so include would equally demonstrate one characteristic, and so we prefer to list that common characteristic: disloyalty to God-shown by a person's attitude of heart. Anyone who disregards truth must be disloyal. Every liar also must be disloyal. Why else would any choose evil over good?

Thoughts are common things. We have many of them every minute. Perhaps because they are just that common it is easy for a person to become indifferent towards the honesty of their thoughts; to entertain ideas whether or not they are known to be true or false. And as a result such a mind is open to error filled ideas. Dishonest thoughts can arise easily, and without constant supervision they can permeate our entire character -- like baking powder mixed through a favorite biscuit recipe.

It is precisely such insidious injustice that lies at the base of many troubles to the church and the world. Only a few of earth's billions attempt to be just [much less practice justice], and these are frequently found only among the true believer in Christ Jesus. It is required of such that they exercise mercy and generosity in their interpretations of the actions of their friends, family, and enemies, as well as the affairs of this world.

According to these prophetic words a time is coming when God will test all people. Or, we might more accurately say, he will allow Satan to test the world with a "frenzy of delusion!" It is hard to imagine what might not be included in the way of hasty or irrational conduct respecting the truth of God, affairs personal, social, religious, or political!

This spirit of frenzy is adding to the troubles of this world which are seen throughout the broad spectrum of human experience. It leads men towards an anarchy which is to envelop all civilization in an indescribable time of trouble which will precede the establishment of the Messianic kingdom for which men have prayed so long.

The saints of God will not escape the testing. *"Who will be able to stand?"* Some, we are aware, are under this strain right now. Let us have compassion for them and do all in our power to encourage and build them up in faith. But we must also be concerned for ourselves-that we maintain that spirit of a sound mind of which Paul teaches (2 Tim. 1:7).

What can we do to assure our own faithfulness, our own success in this period of testing?

First we should square our actions and words by the strictest standards of justice. Secondly we should scrutinize our entire life more carefully. "*Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*" (2 Cor. 10:5) -- as it is expressed in Christ Jesus the Lord. Is love necessary? Yes. In its proper order, but in order to be in harmony with God's precepts it must be in accord with justice. "Just before generous," is an old adage worth remembering. Having learned first to be just one finds oneself prepared to exercise love and generosity.

The Scriptures do not speak in vain when they declare that "*A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight*" (Prov. 11:1). This is a balance which applies to mental as well as physical dealings. Whoever does not love righteousness (yea, we extend that to say, whoever does not learn to hate unrighteousness) is in danger of falling prey to this frenzied delusion of which Paul speaks. The powers of evil exercise extraordinary power to tempt God's people to release themselves from the restraints that they have placed upon themselves in their search to please God. Let us all mark well the admonition, "*...watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation*" (Mark 14:38).

## Prayer, Purpose and Power

Prayer is perhaps the greatest aid to godliness at our disposal. It has been said that "prayer does not bring God down to us, but lifts us up to him." Faith has a great effect upon prayer: for if faith be lacking, how shall one ask, believing (Matt. 21:22)? It may be said that the one whose faith is the greatest will realize and find the greatest use for the privilege and blessings which prayer affords; it has always been that daily work requires grace, and daily grace requires daily requests. So, with James, we "...ask *in faith, nothing wavering*" (James. 1:6).

Our prayers should be constant, instant, confident, and expectant. A "prayer answering God" hears the petitions of the humble and of the contrite heart (Isa. 57:15) and his answer is sure, according to his wisdom, That does not always mean that it will agree with our petition. But his answer will always be for our ultimate blessing and to the glory of the Father and the Son.

What has prayer done for others? And what has it done for you? Prayer raised the dead. Prayer has healed the sick, restored sight, given hearing to the deaf, and strength to feeble limbs. The hopeless have been revived by prayer, and the timid have received the strength of God. On a broader scale, prayer has overthrown nations. Yes, when offered in a manner acceptable to God, it proves efficacious.

Those who have used prayer as a means to closer fellowship with the Divine have always received a measure of peace -- rest. This rest only belongs to those who know the blessedness of these words:

Lord lead me to a faith like this,  
Through trial though it be:  
For O! the rest of faith is bliss,  
The bliss of rest in thee.

### Prerequisites to Prayer

The purpose of prayer is evident. Without it the Christian life will be barren. Our Lord and his Apostles knew this and accepted its privileges -sharing, too, its untold results. Prayer is mighty when made in the proper state of mind. Some might ask, What is the proper state of mind? We list some of the requisites as follows:

a spirit of love,  
a spirit of praise,  
a spirit of supplication,  
a reverential attitude,  
acknowledgement of the merit by which we approach the Creator.

When empowered by such honesty and reverence our prayers may reach, like Jacob's ladder, to the very throne of God.

The golden thread of prayer runs throughout the Holy Writ. We note the variety of circumstances in which prayer was offered, noting also that there was no formal pattern which all of the ancients followed to assure their prayer's acceptance by God.

But noting the simplicity of the recorded examples we learn several facts about prayer:

There must be a desire for some thing.

There must be a purpose (no aimless, mindless, browsing, as though we were on a shopping tour through God's storehouse).

The objective which lies beneath both desire and purpose must be the fuller indwelling of Christ and his love.

Paul suggests that we "*Pray without ceasing*" (1 Thess. 5:17). The parable of the Importunate Widow also suggests the need and efficacy of continual prayer. With such examples we are assured that God wants to bestow his blessings upon his children, if only they will ask. Considering that it is a wonderful blessing and privilege to be, thus, invited to drink deeply at the fountain of boundless love, it is a wonder that we pray so little. Could anyone pray too much? Or, do we pray enough? The prayer life is essential to our growth in the likeness to Jesus. Peter says, "*watch unto prayer*" (1 Peter 4:7). Jesus said, "*Watch and pray...*" (Matt. 26:41).

Do we take him at his word? "*All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive*" (Matt. 21:22). This assurance is broad and unlimited; he is faithful who has promised.

Be reminded, however, that his answer will always come -- even if it is not the answer we expect. God is too wise to err. And he is too good to withhold anything from those who walk uprightly (Ps. 84:11). We may not recognize the purpose which he has in us, but in the afterwards, we shall know even as we are known (1 Cor. 12:13). Then we shall understand the heights and breadths, the lengths and depths of divine love, grace, and power.

Both the purpose and power of prayer are best understood by the persistent usage of prayer. Each day brings its cares and perplexities, so we need not lose any opportunity for prayer. It may seem contradictory that while we live in a day when the conveniences of life have so "freed" us from labor that we also have no time left to spend in meditation, prayer, and Christ-like activities. Yet, if we are truly looking for that city whose builder is God (cf. Heb. 11:10), then we must look after first things first, one of which is prayer.

### **Where To Pray?**

We should pray in the family circle, wherever possible. We may pray in the assembly of his people. And we all have opportunity for prayer in secret.

How could one grow in likeness to God and Christ without spending time with them in prayer? We cannot become like that with which we are not familiar. In the quiet and seclusion of the prayer state our mind is set free from the worries of this world. With calm fervor the heart reaches out to its God, and the influence which flows from him to us will be sweet and abiding -- if we approach him with humility and contrition. Those who approach God in the privacy of prayer will find his answers in the most public places of their lives. They will find strength, courage, and hope in the daily activities of life.

"We live too much in the lowlands when we should be on the mountain tops." This quotation does not forget that we may all need some "lowland" experiences in order to become more Christlike. There seems to be much truth to these words, because we can never find ourself in a

place where we can not lift our mind to God. Is there any place that is inappropriate for our approach to God? In crowds, in the routine of daily life, in private; God is always nearby. Beloved, when our mind is centered upon God and his love Satan cannot overcome us.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:35,37-39).

We need not inhale the sin tainted atmosphere in which we live. We are able to live in the purer air of heaven, a holier atmosphere, if you will. If our minds are drawn upward as was our Lord's, then we too may inhale the breath, the Word, of God. Nothing is too large for him to see around. Nor is anything too small for him to note. Naught that affects our peace escapes his attention. No experience in our life is too dark for him to read. And no perplexity, however difficult, is too confused for him to unravel. *"He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds"* (Ps. 147:3). God's ability is so great that the relation between him and any one of us is as full and distinct to him as if there were not a single other heart upon this earth with whom he could share his love and care and for whom he gave the life of his beloved Son!

This care is summarized in one word: love! Love covers all. Love dominates all, inspires all, oversees all of God's dealings with men. And when love fills our heart, controlling us as it controls him, then we find ourselves hungering and thirsting after righteousness (Matt. 5:6). To such hearts prayer is a gracious boon.

### **Prayer and Praise**

Praise is an important element of prayer. We are the constant recipients of God's mercies, so our prayers ought not to consist wholly of asking and receiving. Considering that he is such a merciful and tender Father should it not be a pleasure to love, serve, and obey him? To love him is to make him the subject of our daily thought. To appreciate him is to make the prayer, Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, our sole aim in life. In order to please him we repeat the words of the disciples, *"Lord, teach us to pray"* (Luke 11:1), and *"Lord, increase our faith"* (Luke 17:5). As we come to a deeper appreciation of these words we learn the fullness of Peter's understanding when he spoke of the *"...end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls"* (1 Peter 1:9; cf. vs. 1 Peter 1:2-9).

*"...ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full"* (John 16:24). We find that our hand of faith is extended further when we come to understand our Lord's ability to fulfill his words here quoted. Of whom do we ask? *"... It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us"* (Rom. 8:34). To this agree the closing words of Jesus' earthly ministry *"... lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world [age-Diaglott]"* (Matt. 28:20).

What do these words mean to us? The union of Christ and his disciples was to become much closer in the future than it had been in the past. Once, he dwelt among them. Now, the light, love, and power of Christ dwell in his disciples. What is more, his character shines through their lives to others, so that men, beholding, *"...marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus"* (Acts 4:13). What Jesus was to those now asleep in death he is eager to be to those who now live in him: *"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe"*



*on me through their word"* (John 17:20). He prayed for us, that we might be one with him and with the Father! What a union this is! We freely proclaim: *"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out"* (Rom. 11:33)!

This living with and through Christ is joy unspeakable (1 Pet. 1:8). He gives a joy and peace that the world cannot remove. He works his will in us, and through us the good pleasure of his will is done (Phil. 2:13). We can learn to live as he lived; to work as he worked; to manifest the same spirit: the spirit of love, humility, patience, forbearance, kindness, mercy, benevolence, serenity, tolerance, and obedience. Thus loving him and abiding in him we shall *"grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ"* (Eph. 4:15).

This is not an easy task which we are assigned. We are hindered by self and the world. As we reflect upon our past lessons from God we inevitably recognize the weaknesses and the spirit of the world in our past actions. We should see too, however, some measure of progress, of growth through tribulation. Yes, we have reason to give thanks to God, who gives us victory (1 Cor. 15:57). Our experiences, hard though they be, teach us that we need his grace, which alone is sufficient to our needs. We see how that in weaknesses we have learned to call upon his strength. *"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee"* (Isa. 26:3). Such promises as these are the source of sublime rest and comfort when we see how he has fulfilled them in our own lives, time after time, after time.

### **The Blessing of Prayer**

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me ... I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14: 1-3).

*"Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak"* (Mark 14:38).

We joy in knowing that one day all men and women shall learn the power and efficacy of prayer.

"Teach us, Lord, the value and blessedness of habitual, constant communing with thee in prayer through him that gave his life for us ... Lord of our life, grant that we may ever keep thee and thy will in our planning. For Jesus' sake, do thou graciously so order our lives that by growing more and more like him we might, by thy grace, enter into the joys and service of the life that is promised to the faithful."

This quotation may not reflect the attitude of the majority of men, but it must reflect ours. There has been issued an inestimable calling to joint heirship with Christ! Amazing Grace? Yes! Boundless love? Yes! Thanks be to God who gives those who trust in Christ the victory.

How might we summarize the subject of prayer? The Christian must not only spend time alone with God in prayer, but must also make the most of that privilege. This entails "cooperating" with God and watching for God's answer.

God answers prayer. Sometimes when hearts are weak,  
He gives the very gifts believers seek:  
But often faith must learn a deeper rest,  
And trust God's silence when he does not speak;  
For he, whose name is love, will send the best!  
Stars may bum out, nor mountain walls endure;  
But God is true: his promises are sure  
To those who truly seek.

Faith brings to the petitioner the resources of heaven. We have faith in physical things. Why do we often lack faith in spiritual things? How strange that this should be so!

O, what peace we often forfeit!  
O, what needless pain we bear!  
All because we do not carry,  
Everything to him in prayer!

As we follow in his footsteps, may we remain faithful in prayer: being "instant" and continual; watching for his answer with persistence.

A thousand tests meet every life,  
In the course of one day's sun,  
A thousand deeds are written down  
As the best that could be done  
In firm defense, or bold retreat...

And comrades, yours are counted on  
In the sum of someone's life,  
Your smiles, your words, your heart and hand;  
Somewhere, in some secret strife,  
Are marking victory -- or defeat.

Victory or defeat! Yes, we may each one be the source of good or evil to others. We are sometimes startled by the profoundness of Paul's thought that no man lives or dies unto himself (Rom. 14:7) We may all be a blessing to others. We may not be aware of how we have helped another, but in the afterwards we shall know what our lives have meant to each brother and sister. We need not be overly anxious about this. Go on, in faith, doing what Providence has assigned to your life. As we learn to be more faithful in following the Master's command to follow him we will better reflect the likeness of Christ in our life.

*"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."* May we be blessed by the power of prayer so that our sole purpose becomes the practicing of those things which we find in Jesus' life. And if we are faithful in this we have his assurance that we may be accounted worthy of a place in the kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Be not too busy with thy work and care To look to God; to clasp thy hand in his. Miss thou all else, but fail not thou of this; Thou must not all alone thy burdens bear, Listen and wait: obey and learn his will, His love and service all thy life shall fill.

- W. N. Wainwright

## Righteousness Will Prevail

Falsely charged, the verdict rendered;  
Cruelly flogged, he's crucified.  
"It is finished," cries the Master.  
Lo! The son of God has died!

See his followers: weeping, fearful.  
Sudden darkness fills the land.  
Have the hosts of evil triumphed --  
Satan gained the upper hand?

Trace the deeds on history's pages:  
Faithful martyrs tortured, slain.  
Mid the terror, God seems silent.  
Is their suffering all in vain?

Evil often goes unpunished;  
Truth appears to suffer loss.  
Ah, but in the final picture  
Jesus triumphed on the cross!

Raised again by God's great power,  
Jesus lives forevermore,  
Pledged to carry out God's purpose --  
Adam's ransomed race restore.

Those who walk in Jesus' footsteps,  
Undismayed by loss or pain,  
Soon will have a joyous privilege --  
Sharing in his kingdom reign.

Then, on earth, a new arrangement  
Such as man has never known:  
Truth and justice, love and mercy  
Flowing forth from Jesus' throne.

Multitudes of Adam's children  
Raised from death to learn God's ways --  
Free from bondage and deception --  
Join in songs of thanks and praise.

See God's plan in full fruition:  
Doubts and fears no more assail.  
Sin and Satan gone forever,  
Peace and Righteousness prevail.

- E. L. Redeker

## **Entered Into Rest**

Thomas H. Brooks, FL  
William Lange, WI  
Raymond Negley, IL  
Mabel Simons, RI  
John R Williams, WI