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The Trial of Your Faith—Bro. Joseph Ajise, Nigeria

MY DEAR BROTHERS and sisters in the Lord and loving friends
of the truth: Warm loving greetings to you all in the name of our
Lord and Master Jesus. I bring you the greetings and love of my
wife, Sister Modupe, and also of our children. I also bring you love
and greetings from your brethren in Nigeria and especially from
my home ecclesia in Ibadan, Oyo State, in Nigeria.

It thrills our heart to express our profound thanks and gratitude to
Jehovah, our Heavenly Father, through the merit of our Lord's
precious sacrifice, for His unbounding love and care of His saints

in the flesh, and for the privilege to participate and share in the 1990 International Convention of Bible Students.

My subject is taken from the 1 Peter 1:7,

That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

The Purpose of Trials

A Doctor G. Hallock wrote on page 3351 of the Reprints:

So God, by his testing providences, makes the place of rest one of unrest to us, and thus lures us out to trust ourselves to his care and guidance over untried ways. And So he brings us to a stronger, maturer, more useful life. The stormy waves cause the anchor to take a stronger grip. There are advantages in disadvantages. Disappointments have proven God's best appointments.

The experience of a true Christian is one of continued trials and testings of faith. But only a Christian fully understands the purpose of testings and trials. He can endure them because he understands and is convinced that *all things work together for good, to them who love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*—Ro 8:28

Those who are acceptable to God as children are those who have previously exercised a manifestation of faith in the Lord and consecrated themselves to Him. This faith and consecration are qualities highly esteemed by the Lord and will be specially rewarded by Him.

The gospel invitation to turn from sin and follow the Redeemer's counsel and example does a work of testing. It gathers from the world those with the character likeness of Jesus for a future, special service designed by the Lord. This invitation is only for the willing ones of mankind. There is no compulsion with this invitation. One's own will governs the whole matter.

This discourse is, therefore, for the Christian who has intelligently answered the Gospel invitation and counted the cost of discipleship, who has put off the old man with his deeds and put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created him.

Those who serve God to escape a future punishment and gain heaven, or those who answered the call from purely selfish motives, do not experience the peculiar trials referred to in the scriptures. Consequently they will not be partakers in the promised glory. These are nominal Christians who do not fully understand the use of trials and testings of faith. They therefore can not endure them.

In 2 Corinthians 1:5,6 the Apostle Paul writes:

For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, So our consolation also aboundeth by Christ; and whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

This, then, points to the truth that the afflictions of the Gospel can not be endured without the consolations of the Gospel, our invitation to be partakers of the sufferings of Christ.

In Romans 8:18 the Apostle Paul writes, *I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* He calls attention to the Church as prospective joint-heirs with Christ who, if faithful in suffering with him in this present time, shall ultimately share his glory in his kingdom.

While we *fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ* (Colossians 1:24), we are to *lay down our lives for the brethren* (1 John 3:16) to serve them. Whatever we may do for any member of the body of Christ, whatever we may do for any consecrated believer, the Lord tells us he will esteem it as though it were done to him.

This does not necessarily mean laying down our physical strength, health, and life in PHYSICAL service and ministry to the brethren, though in many instances this is very profitable. But the injunction to lay down our lives for the brethren would more particularly signify the laying down of our physical health, strength, knowledge, talents, and means in the service of the SPIRITUAL interests of the Lord's people.

The Apostle Paul contrasted the Christian experience by saying, *We are perplexed, but not in despair.* (2Corinthians 4:8,9) The anxiety or uncertainty of the Lord's people should never be allowed to reach a state of despair because the Lord tells us that *I*

will never leave thee nor forsake thee. (Hebrews 13:5) This is a gracious promise from the Master. It should give us a sure and steadfast hope.

We are persecuted, but not forsaken. When persecution and opposition come to us, however, we should ask, *Are these experiences coming to me because of my loyalty to the Lord, or is there something in my disposition that causes them?* If it is because of our loyalty to the cause of the Lord and his righteousness, we should rejoice. But if, on the other hand, there is something in our disposition that causes them, we should diligently endeavor to rectify it.

We are cast down, but not destroyed. The feeling of loneliness and depression is natural at times to all mankind under the adverse conditions prevailing in the world. We are, therefore, to be of good courage and cheer. If the Lord permits us to have trouble, we are to exercise fortitude. We are to patiently endure and not allow the experience to destroy our faith, our happiness, nor our loyalty to him to whom we have vowed our allegiance. We must come boldly to him, looking to the Lord for his assisting grace to help in every time of need. We should claim his precious promises and rise above the difficulty, pressing forward to the mark.

The Apostle Paul continues by saying that these things are designed to work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. We can

rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulations worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit [of God] which is given unto us.—Ro 5:2-5

In the process of these experiences, the Christian comes to a better understanding of how all things work together for the good to them who love God, when they are rightly exercised by the trials and testings of their faith. He can also see the import of the Apostle Peter's exhortation to the Church in 1 Peter 4:12,13 where he says,

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you: but rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings that, when his glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy.

To suffer as a Christian is to suffer for fidelity to Christ, to his word (the Bible), and to his people. Thus persecution may come upon us because of our loyalty to the teaching of God's word, it may come to us because of our activities in the service of the truth, or it may come to us because of our opposition to long-established and much honored errors.

In 1 Peter 4:14-19 the Apostle Peter continues by saying,

If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a troublesome meddler; but if any one suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God. ... Therefore, let those who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

Trials from the Brethren

The most difficult trials to bear are those from the brethren. Such trials are not from the Church alone. These trials constitute a fire that burns, that does a purifying work among us. We should rejoice knowing that these experiences are developing characters that are pleasing to God.

It is a reasonable question to ask, *Why does God permit strong delusions and trials of faith in this evil day when these delusions and trials may actually cause the overthrow of the faith of many?*

In 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 the Apostle Paul answers this question. He says,

Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be condemned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Thus we are plainly told that God not only permits, He also desires that the faith of His professed people should be severely tried. If thousands fall by these trials and testings, it is because they are not worthy. They did not receive the truth in the love of it. Those who thus lightly esteem the truth and merely minister to their selfishness, are unworthy of it. It is the will of God that all such should lose their share in the kingdom.

A true Christian experience is not an exaltation of feeling, or a feeling of great joy and spiritual upliftment that finds its expression

only when inspired by some ardent song, prayer, or exhortation of Christian fellowship. Any child of God who is dependant upon such *means of grace* for his vitality is but an infant in Christian experience.

The experience of a Christian is the *putting off of the old man with his deeds and putting on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him*. It means to *grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus*, and to be rooted and grounded in his love. It means a building up of a character structure by *adding to faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love*.

The way to such an experience is the way of sacrifice. *Present your bodies a living sacrifice*. This is what our Lord and Master Jesus did when he said, *I come not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me*. (John 7:28) We can not count ourselves worthy of this high calling in Christ Jesus if we do not ignore the will of our flesh with all its ambitions, hopes, and aims however proper they may be in and of themselves. We must devote all our energy, our time, and our talents—be they many or few—to the doing of the Master's work. This consecration is even unto death when, after finishing our course, our reward is sure.

We are not to be conformed or patterned after this world with its ideas, hopes, and aims. We are to be transformed, remolded, changed by the renewing of our mind as we take the mind of Christ by making every effort to think as he thought and do as he did (or would do) in each circumstance of life. That is how we prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. It is only by coming into such an attitude of mind that we can fully know the will of God.

By exercising faith and demonstrating our loyalty we, as new creatures, will be able to please God and work out the proper character as His word instructs us by developing the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Peter concludes by saying,

If you do these things, you shall never fall. [Why?] For So an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly in the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:10,11)

The Lord chooses those who have developed characters containing strong and enduring qualities such as fortitude, patience, long-suffering, etc. These are the ones who walk close to the Lord and will not be driven away from him by any of the wiles of the Adversary. These follow the Lord in the *narrow way* of trials, disciplines, and testings during the present life. By and by, as the Lord has declared, *They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.* (Revelation 3:4) But if, on the other hand, we escape all trials, testings, and difficulties, we should doubt our relationship with the Lord. We should doubt if we really are sons. As the apostle puts it, *Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*—He 12:6

Thus if the Lord's people find themselves in temptations and tribulations, they should not feel downcast. They should rejoice and say, *These are evidences that the Lord is preparing a place for me in the Kingdom.* This should be the rejoicing of our hearts. This should give us more courage to *fight the good fight* against the world, the flesh, and the Adversary. It is only the flesh that suffers. The *new mind*, the *new will*, has great joy. The new creature can rejoice, knowing that these trials and testings are not for harm, but for good. (See 1 Peter 4:13.)

We are called to be joint-heirs with the Lord. We responded to this invitation. If we are obedient to the Lord and his word, and if we are properly exercised by the experiences which we receive in the school of Christ, we shall gain his gracious approval. *Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.* (1 Thessalonians 5:24) On the other hand, if we fail to cultivate the proper character structure, we will fail to gain the kingdom because we have failed to keep the covenant relationship we entered into with the Lord at our consecration.

The fall of any who break this covenant will be far worse than the fall of Father Adam whose fall resulted from having only a limited knowledge and inexperience in the result of evil. But the Church has come to a clear knowledge of the truth and has experienced a share in redemption. The falling away of such a willful sinner would mean *a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation* (Hebrews 10:27), the fear of being destroyed as enemies of God. Adam had only a small knowledge of the grace of God. He is therefore going to be redeemed and ultimately restored to perfect life if he comes into harmony with God.

Think of all the *worthies* of the past

who through [the testings and trials of faith] subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens were tortured had cruel mockings and scourgings were stoned were slain with the sword, wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented, [not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection]. And these all, having obtained a good report through [trials of] faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they [the worthies of the past] without us [the Church class] should not be made perfect.—He 11:33-40

We of the Church class are not called upon to endure greater trials than the worthies of the past. As the Apostle Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 10:13,

There hath no temptation [or trial] taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

The Importance of Armour

We are now in a special time—the time of harvest—when we may expect strong delusions not only upon nominal Christendom, but upon those who have been specially favored with the light of the present truth now shining. We are assured that a great hour of trial is coming upon the whole world, and it must begin with the Church, with the *house of God* beginning with those who profess to be saints. The Lord admonishes us that we should *put on the whole armour of God* that we may be able to stand the delusions and snares of the wicked one in this evil day. (Ephesians 6:11)

To put on the whole armour of God is to put on the armour of light. When we analyze the armour, we find it is not merely an armour of knowledge, but is largely an armour of faith. This armour contains love as one of its chief elements, and surely every part is tied together with love. The term *the wicked one* applies to Satan the devil, the one who is the Adversary, the opponent of righteousness and Jehovah. Whoever has failed to discern that there is a devil is all the more liable to come under the influence of this great, malevolent being who is portrayed in the scriptures as the greatest foe of God, men, and righteousness. Satan works in the hearts of the children of disobedience. The Adversary presents himself as an

angel of light, not as a messenger of darkness. He knows that error and sin would repel the children of light.

The Lord's people are to resist the devil by not allowing his seductive arguments to carry any weight with them. We have the sure word of prophecy and the instructions of our Lord and his apostles. If we love the word of the Lord, we shall seek to be guided by it. As the Apostle John says in 1 John 5:18, *He that is begotten of God keepeth himself and that wicked one toucheth him not.*

Christians, and especially those who claim the light of present truth, should remember the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3:4,5 concerning the difficulties of this present time at the end of the age. Paul says *perilous times shall come; people will become lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such [Christians] should turn away.* We should turn away in the sense of not following in the same course of error and falsehood. The invitation is *to come out of her my people*, to get out from under the influence of falsehood.

Those Christians who have heard the call to come out of Babylon, from denominationalism and sectarianism, and who have become one with the Lord are invited by the Apostle Paul to a dedicated service. He writes,

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and a holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.—Ro 12:1,2 (Revised Version)

Conclusion

Dear brethren, may we of the *wheat class* prove in our Christian trials that we are true Christians, genuine Christians, begotten of the word of God's promises, and living in full accord with it as we seek to bring forth good fruit. Let us not be imitation Christians, members of the *tare class*, begotten not of truth nor of the word of the kingdom, indeed being utterly ignorant of it since we might have been begotten of excitement, of fear of hell, of the hope for worldly advantage by membership in a nominal church, or begotten of pride or a desire to be among good people who have social and financial ambitions.

We need to understand why it pleases our Heavenly Father to severely test the faith of His people. Jesus our Head and Master was a perfect example for us So we might walk in his footsteps. The Heavenly Father did not spare His son, but he was tested in all points to prove his worthiness of kingdom glory. So the same trials of faith will occur to the footstep followers of Jesus to test their worthiness as co-heirs with him. May we remember that our testing is not to see whether we are perfect according to the flesh. On the contrary, God knows our frame, He remembers that we are but dust. What God seeks in us is the development and perfection of faith.

Let us *take heed to the ministry which we have received in the Lord, that we fulfil it.* (Colossians 4:17) Let us daily present our bodies a living and holy sacrifice, having compassion one to another, loving one another as brethren, being pitiful, courteous, not rendering evil for evil or railing for railing. Contrariwise, we should bless and give blessing, knowing that we are thereunto called [to bless], that we should inherit a blessing. For it is better, if the will of God be so, *that you suffer for well doing than for evil doing.*

Dear brethren and friends, let us take heed to our ways, let us cultivate the fruits of the spirit, that at the end of our Christian course, we may indeed be presented *faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.*—Jude 24,25

And may the Lord add His blessing.

The Promise of the Spirit Bro. Fred Binns, England

WE HAVE TAKEN OUR title and meditation from Galatians 3:14 which reads, *That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT through faith.*

The word of God tells us that if we are Christ's then we are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:29) But it is only as the Apostle Paul opens up to us the scriptures that we begin to realize the immense implications behind the original promise. Much more than a mighty deliverance is brought to our attention. The promised Seed is to be more than just the one who will bruise the Serpent's head. He is to be even more

than the head of a heavenly family, blessing all nations. The Seed is to be all this, but far more than this: it is to be a divine family, a new creation brought forth only by divine power without the intervention of human hands. It is entirely the product of faith and the divine will.

We need hardly say that the head of this new creation is our Lord. What we must constantly remember is that we must be conformed to him in all things for, as the Apostle Paul also reminds us in 1 Corinthians 15:49, *As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.*

But how does this change take place? How do we become heirs and joint-heirs with our Lord? Paul's words in Galatians 3:27 point the way: *For as many as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. [verse 29] And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.*

But what does it mean to be baptized into Christ? Paul again tells us, in Romans 6:3. *All we who were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death.* And for what reason? That we may walk in a new way. For he continues,

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

But again we ask, What does this mean in the practical outworking of our Christian life? In what way does this make us heirs? The words of our Lord to the Pharisees in John 8:39 answers these questions: *If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.* This answer points them to their complete lack of faith, but points us to Abraham as the father of the faithful. It draws our attention directly to the record of his life in the book of Genesis, just as Paul has also done in Galatians. Let us therefore turn to Genesis 11:31 where the record of Abram's walk of faith begins.

Abram's Walk of Faith

We are all aware that we, like Abraham, have been called to leave our old associations with this present world and seek that city whose builder and maker is God. (Hebrews 11:10) As we follow the life of the patriarch, we will not only note those parallels confirming our calling, but others showing us to the level of our attainment, and others pointing toward the full attainment of faith

in Christ. For if being Christ's means we are Abraham's, surely we must be doing the works of Abraham.

Even as we commence to think along these lines, we see the connection between the call to leave this old world and baptism, for this baptism is into Christ's death. This old order of things is the flesh in all its manifestations. The only way to deal with it and to live in the spirit, as did our Lord, the antitypical Isaac, is for us to trust the Lord to remove the flesh by his cross.

As we follow the journey of Abraham through the promised land, we will see the flesh in many of its ways. We will see how God's dealings with Abraham removed its influence from his life until he was totally and completely at rest in God, trusting Him for all things.

So the call came to Abram [not Abraham, for he had not learned anything of that spiritual walk]. We too, as he did, respond to the moving of the spirit, knowing that no man comes to Christ except the heavenly Father draws him. (John 6:44) We leave our family and friends while still only understanding things with the natural mind. We have only the old family name, Adam. But Abram did not come out alone. He was accompanied by his father and his nephew Lot. Perhaps he thought they would be a help to him. Perhaps the family ties were too strong.

Yet God understands our frame—and Abram's. Patiently He waited for Abram to learn the lesson. After a long journey they come to Haran. Instead of going on to Canaan, they stopped. Why? The word of God does not tell us. It simply says they came to Haran and dwelt there. (Genesis 11:31)

What were they doing in Haran when the object of their journey was just over the horizon? We cannot say for sure, but verse 32 tells us that Terah, Abram's father, was 205 years old. Perhaps the long journey had been too much for him, or he may have been in declining health and had to stop. Abram might have had to care for him. What we know is that Abram made no further progress until, *Terah died*. It was only then that God spoke to Abram. Genesis 12:1 reads, *Get thee from thy father's house*. Taking his father had only delayed him.

Likewise when we begin our walk with Christ, we cannot help but bring much of the old Adam with us. It is quite natural. This earthen vessel is all that we have. Its instincts, good and bad, are an indivisible part of its being. The faults we would gladly leave

behind if we could, and the heavenly Father makes full allowance for this. But what needs His special attention are those better characteristics, those abilities which, as we lay them down on the altar of sacrifice, we feel will be useful to us in our service to the Lord. We do not actually realize immediately that to lay them down means to let go of them.

So God waits as He did with Abram. Nothing could be done until Terah died. No further progress could be made. Not until we begin to let go of our lives and let God begin to use our abilities by His spirit can it be said that the new life has started. Then God can say, *Get thee ... unto a land that I will show thee.*—Ge 12:1

So Abram went as the Lord had spoken (verse 4) to the plain of Moreh. Here the Lord appeared to him and there he built an altar. Up to this time the Lord had only spoken to Abram, but now he appears to him. For the first time we have an altar mentioned. This should also have been our experience. Perhaps we can remember the time that as we began to let go of the things of this world, our vision of the spiritual realities and the face of the Lord became clearer to us, that we were entering more deeply into the spirit of consecration.

And Lot went with him. Such a seemingly casual remark here in verse 4 implies that the natural mind is not eliminated that easily. As we follow the travels of the patriarch, we will begin to see how deeply ingrained is the old nature and how subtle its effects.

Verse 10: *There was a famine in the land and Abram [travelling south] went down into Egypt.* We can sympathize with and understand his actions, for the famine was *grievous*. The Lord had told Abram to go to a land *that I will show thee*, and that land was not Egypt.

It is very easy to say in retrospect that a famine is nothing to God, that all Abram had to do was look to the Lord and his promise just given. But the test was very real and it needed faith. We ourselves know that stressful situations demand attention. It is far from easy to look to the Lord for His guidance rather than to make a hasty decision. Or whilst quite properly planning for a secure future, to leave the Lord out of the arrangements, only later to see that the Lord's way was best, that we compromised our best spiritual interests.

So it was for Abram. After the decision to go down to Egypt for help, even before he had entered the land, he had to compromise

the truth. Genesis 12:11-13, *It came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife . . . say I pray thee that thou art my sister.* This was the truth, yes, but only half the truth. It was a deception. Yet God was patient with Abram knowing the earthen vessel He was working with. So He sent a plague on Pharaoh until Abram was obliged to leave Egypt.

Happy are we if, as the Apostle Paul admonishes us, *we judge ourselves that we should not be judged.* (1Corinthians 11:31,32) However if not, God seems yet to be faithful to judge us for *we are chastened of the Lord that we should not be condemned with the world.* Happy still if, having made some compromise, we find under the influence of the spirit that we cannot live a half truth and, with Abram, return to the house of God and to consecrated ground.

Ge 13:1-4, *Abram went up . . . to Bethel unto the place where his tent had been in the beginning . . . unto the place of the altar, and there Abram called on the name of the Lord.* He was back in communion with his creator after learning a valuable lesson. How wonderful it is that the Father can bring out important spiritual blessings for us from even our worst mistakes.

Verse 5: *And Lot also . . . went with him.* Abram had still not realized the importance of that first word from the Lord, *Get thee from thy father's house and from thy kindred.* God now, with that infinite patience and loving grace does what Abram had not been able to do: He removes Lot from Abram.

Separation Occurs

The next incident demonstrates the wonderful working of the spirit to overrule that which opposes us to the objective God intended. Verse 7: *And there was a strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle. Truly the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh.* (Galatians 5:17) But now Abram was prepared to deal with the situation. He knew now that compromise was fatal. More than this, he now understood the importance of resting in God, in the condition to which He had brought him. It mattered not to Abram how much or how little land was under his control. He rested in the promise. God's word on the matter was sufficient. So Lot could choose. If Lot went to the left, Abram would go to the right.

Without constraint they parted, as we read in vs. 9: *Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself from me.*

Separation!

This was the very thing that God had purposed from the beginning. Under the almost invisible working of the divine hand, everything was happening so naturally. Yet as soon as Abram had learned to respond to the Lord's leading, he finds himself doing the Lord's will exactly, without effort of any kind.

Separation is the very thing we seek. After the separation from Lot, the word of the Lord comes even more fully confirming the promise (see verses 14-18). What spiritual import there is in the words,

Lift up thine eyes, look from the place where you are, north, south, east, west, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. . . Arise, walk through the land in the length and in the breadth of it.

We too are at Bethel, the true house of God. We should also lift up our eyes to these heavenly things and walk through the heavenly Canaan that we *may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ.*—Eph 3:18,19

Thus Abram moved his tent and *came to dwell in the plain of Mamre.* (Genesis 13:18) The name Mamre in the Hebrew means strength or vigour. It was here also that Abram again raised an altar to the Lord. Likewise the increasing awareness that the spirit brings to us of the love of Christ can only increase the spirit of our consecration to him.

Is our faith growing more firm and vigorous? Are we walking in our inheritance as the apostle admonished us in Co 2:6,7: *As ye have therefore received Christ, So walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith.* Every step should mark a new stage in our consecration just as every altar that Abram raised to the Lord marked his progress in the land.

When we have reached this stage we should be ready to enter into a victorious life in Christ, having put on the whole armour of God. (Ephesians 6:10-17) Thus also we find with the patriarch in Genesis 14:1-16. Lot, now embroiled in the politics of Sodom, is taken captive in a war with the kings of that area. Abram is obliged to help him.

Although we may know what it is to be separated from natural thinking, we are by no means free from it. Otherwise, as the

apostle said, *then must ye needs go out of the world.* (1 Corinthians 5:10) Satan cannot touch the *new man* that is being developed in us. He can only attack us through the flesh. But armed with *the whole armour of God*, wielding the shield of faith, we can *quench all his fiery darts*, overcoming the powers of darkness.

Therefore we see Abram with a mere handful of men subduing five kings. Returning from victory he is met by two people: the king of Sodom and the king of Salem. The contrast between them could not be more striking and in the different way in which Abram responds to them. Both offer gifts to Abram, one a blessing with bread and wine, the other all the spoils of the city. To the one, Melchizedek, he receives the blessing and gift and deferentially offers a tithe of all the spoil. To the other, he turns away without a second thought saying, *I will not take from a thread even to a shoe latchet and will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say I have made Abram rich.* Nothing could better demonstrate Abram's complete rest in the Lord for everything and his complete disregard for anything the flesh might offer.

So too with the believer who has finally come to realize the foolishness of trusting the flesh for anything in his service to the Lord. Only by letting Him use our abilities do we truly recognize Him as Lord. It is not in the old nature to produce the new man.

Abram, not lacking confidence in his God and having been assured of the land, still has difficulty in seeing how God can make it possible. The only one who seems likely to inherit is Eliezer, his steward. The Lord replies: *Behold the word of the Lord came to him, saying, this shall not be thine heir, but one that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.* (Genesis 15:4) Then, taking him out under the starry heavens, God promises that his descendants will be just as numerous.

But Abram asks for a sign. Likewise with us, even when we have *exceeding great and precious promises* (2Peter 1:4) we still need to be brought to understand the meaning of Ephesians 1:20 that *he is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think.* Even when we believe, we discover that there is still a further level of faith to be reached. Abram believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. (Genesis 15:6) Still he requested some further confirmation.

How glad we are that we have such a patient heavenly Father who will bear with us also. God responded to Abram's request just as he does to every earnest plea sent up, not in unbelief, but with the

desire that our faith may be strengthened. He prepares to make a covenant with Abram which will yet again seal the promise.

The Making of a Covenant

With us also when, after coming to rest in our justified condition, we are drawn to consecration, our trust increases and our spirit of consecration deepens. As our consecration increases, we appreciate our need for total submission. Our only concern is how to achieve it. And here our heavenly Father leads us forward demonstrating yet again our need of Him. He arranges our covenant just as He did for Abram. (See Genesis 15:9-21)

When a covenant between two parties was made in that day, an animal was sacrificed and divided into two portions. Then the two would walk up and down between the sacrifice and thus seal the agreement. God directs Abram to lay out the pieces. After he did so, Abram waits. God seems to delay. The day draws on, but still the Lord does not appear. Now the vultures see the carcasses and descend. Abram dares not let them even touch the sacrifice or it will be defiled. All day he walks up and down between the offering to keep the birds away. When night comes, he falls into a fitful sleep. He wakes to see a lamp of fire moving up and down between the offerings.

The Lord was making the covenant to guarantee the promise. But Abram was not walking with Him. Neither we nor Abram can keep a covenant perfectly, and God cannot accept less. The law covenant demonstrates this. Since God is clearly the only party in the Abrahamic covenant, it is sure. God had permitted Abram to prepare the offering, and it was all he could do to keep it from the birds. But this demonstrated his sincerity and intention, and this was all the Lord needed.

We also must bring our offering to the Lord, *presenting our bodies a living sacrifice*. (Romans 12:1) We must endeavor to keep it before Him, *working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, realizing that it is God who works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure*. (Philippians 2:12,13) God will keep His side of the covenant if we walk in sincerity of purpose before Him. We will make mistakes and will not always fully understand His will for us, but our heavenly Father can use our shortcomings to teach us what it is to walk after the spirit and not after the flesh.

The next incident in Abram's life illustrates this. God again seems to delay. The important matter of the seed grows more pressing to

Abram and Sarai. So they use their own judgment and a son is born to Abram by Hagar, Sarai's handmaiden. The unhappy consequences of this soon become apparent. So it is whenever human wisdom is used to further the Lord's work. Some arrangement is devised other than that which the Lord has in mind. Before we know it, we are placed in a position where we must wait for the Lord's favour to return.

At last Abram clearly sees that God must provide the seed and that Sarai's age and his own waning vigour are not important. Now he waits. God once more reiterates the promise. More than this, He gives Abram a new name, and a sign: Circumcision. All of this occurred before the promised seed had come. Circumcision was a sign of that righteousness by faith (Romans 4:11), but also a figure for us of that complete separation from the flesh which allows us to walk in the spirit. The Apostle Paul clearly shows in Colossians 2:10-12,

Ye are complete in him [Christ] which is the head of all principality and power, in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. Buried with him in baptism wherein ye are also risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

This is a *circumcision without hands*, owing nothing to our own efforts (and therefore miraculous), being the *circumcision of Christ*. Now the seed of promise will come, the *new man*, born not of the flesh by our own efforts, but of God. With the sign and the new name comes a closer walk with his creator. God takes him into His confidence; he is no longer a servant but a friend. God appears once more to him (Genesis 18:1). Then comes the revealing of the Lord's mind. Verse 17: *Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?*

The Lord had revealed that he was about to overthrow Sodom. Abraham intercedes not just once, but a number of times. He is heard in that Lot is saved (Genesis 19:26). From the beginning of the Gospel Age the intercession of one for another is an evidence of spiritual maturity. As we read in Galatians 6:1, *If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in meekness.*

Abraham's Tests Continue

One last step now remains before the child of promise is brought forth. A *root of bitterness*, long thought dead, must be dealt with. Once again all the events seem to occur in a natural manner and they reveal the hidden fault. All Abraham has to do is recognize his mistake.

Abraham journeys south once again, this time into the kingdom of Abimelech. Just as with Pharaoh, Sarah is introduced as his sister. Although Abraham had undoubtedly learned from his last experience, he had not realized the need to completely eradicate this dangerous half truth from his thinking. It had lain all these years as an error from the old life, springing up now to bring forth its fruit of contention and strife. Once again we see the patience, love, and wisdom of the divine creator towards those who are sincerely endeavoring to walk with their God. He makes a means of correction and grace, a means for the new man to advance spiritually.

Originally Pharaoh had become aware of Abraham's deceit by the force of circumstances. Now the hand of God is seen more distinctly. First He holds Abimelech back from his intended act. Then God discloses in a dream what He had done and that he had been saved from death. (Genesis 20:3-6) Then comes the surprising instructions from God to Abimelech respecting Abraham. Verse 7: *Now restore this man his wife, for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee and thou shalt live.*

What can we say of such grace and favour? Abraham had certainly wronged Abimelech and he was rightly admonished by him. Yet God clearly upholds Abraham before him. It seems that as the Lord's people walk before Him sincerely endeavoring to be led by His spirit, the very mistakes they make bring to light their secret faults. Under His hand their experiences have a remedial effect which bring them to judgment. Once this is dealt with, they may stand before Him.

Paul prays in Philippians 3:9 *to be found in him not having mine own righteousness . . . through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.* Or, as he says elsewhere,

Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. (Ephesians 5:25-27)

So too, Abraham realized that God was bringing to light his shortcomings in faith which, when seen, can be remedied, that after correction he could stand before his creator, being upheld by him, that he might intercede and bless.

Now at last the Lord visits Sarah according to His word (Genesis 21:1). The child of promise is born, weaned, and comes of age. It must have seemed to Abraham that the Lord had achieved his aim. But the greatest lesson of all was yet before him.

When it came, the word of the Lord must have been a thunderbolt out of a clear sky. Genesis 22:2, *Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest . . . and offer him for a burnt offering.* Abraham offers not one word of denial. Without delay, *early in the morning . . . and with Isaac his son . . . he went unto the place of which God had told him.* (Genesis 22:3) There was no shadow of turning. His faith was complete. God had promised that *in Isaac shall thy seed be called.* (Genesis 21:12) The Lord had spoken. His word could not be broken.

At the beginning of his call Abraham believed that God's word was true. This was belief in God. At the end of his journey he knew that God's word could not fail. This was faith in his God. God's word was greater than any earthly event. Even the death of the seed itself could not disannul it. If God had asked for Isaac as a burnt offering, it could only mean that He intended to raise him up again. Such a thing had not been known before, but Abraham's faith was being perfected. It was reaching forward from the known to beyond the knowledge of this world into the face of his God whom he trusted.

We can and must, if we are to be like Abraham and be led beyond ourselves, come as Paul declares, to know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge. As our opening text states: *that the blessing of Abraham might come upon us through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the spirit through faith.*

The Privilege of Prayer-Bro. Walter Blicharz, USA

THE CHRISTIAN ENJOYS many privileges that the world knows nothing about. One of the greatest of these is personal access to the presence of God through prayer. All can pray, but not all can approach His presence.

At the conclusion of each day's activities when we reflect upon its many experiences, we realize how the Lord's loving care

intervened through His providences and are impressed with the *eye that never sleeps*. This is the privilege of prayer which the Apostle Paul in He 4:16 tells us about: *Let us therefore come BOLDLY [or with assurance and confidence] unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

Many things have been spoken and written about prayer, but one outstanding fact is clear: prayer is the vital breath of our Christian life. It is just as needful to our spiritual existence as the air we breathe for the life of our physical bodies.

Prayer is an important subject, an important aspect of our life. It is so important that no one will ever reach the Kingdom of Heaven without prayer.

Prayer is universally practiced. We are not the only ones who pray. The Jew, the Christian, the saint, and the sinner all pray. But the scriptures show that prayer is a privilege, even a unique privilege, for the true child of God.

There are various objectives for prayer which depend largely upon one's understanding of what it is. A proper understanding is necessary for our prayers to be effectual. James 5:16 reads, *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man [meaning a good or just one] availeth much.*

Some take a severe position as to who can pray. But we believe it must please the Heavenly Father to see His creation give thanks for the blessings of life and for them to recognize Him as the giver of all good things. The Psalmist states (in Psalm 65:2) *O Thou that hearest my prayer*. He may not always answer, but the assurance is that He does hear. God has two dwellings—one in heaven and the other in a meek and a thankful heart.

Jesus wanted the prayers of his followers to be *effectual*, to be meaningful and a means of strength. He wants us to enjoy a relationship he enjoyed with the Father. He sees us with a perfect heart—a perfect purpose and intention—striving to overcome weaknesses and disabilities of our imperfect flesh. In John chapter 17 the burden of his heart is manifested in his prayer on our behalf. Verse 3 reads,

And this is life eternal that they might KNOW thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent.

To know the Heavenly Father is the Christian's life-long pleasurable experience. Jesus wanted us to know that the Father is always there for us. He wanted us to be assured of the Father's loving care and His many providences on our behalf.

There are various motives or expressions for prayer:

1. To many, it is a way of extreme supplication.
2. To others, a wish of the heart.
3. To some, vain repetitions.
4. To many, *a must* when sickness or troubles are experienced.

Whether directly or indirectly, knowingly or in ignorance, the unfortunate reality is that the underlying objective and motive for prayer is often selfishness.

What is prayer?

What does the word of God teach concerning prayer? Some *say* their prayers regularly without ever enjoying the communion prayer offers. These prayers are empty, void of the spirit, spoken as an obligation. Prayer is not a *formalized* outline of words. It is not a selfish demand for material advantage. It has been said that *prayer is the heart's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed*. There is much truth and thought in this definition. The scriptures state that *God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*. (Hebrews 4:12)

In Matthew 6:1-8 Jesus says:

Take care not to do your good deeds in public, to attract the attention of people. If you do, you will get no reward from your Father in heaven. Whenever you do your deeds of charity, never blow your own horn in public, as the hypocrites are in the habit of doing in the synagogues and on the street corners, to be praised by the people. I say to you, they already have their reward. But whenever you, a follower of mine, do a deed of charity, never let your own left hand know what your right hand is doing, So that your deed of charity may be secret, and your Father who sees what is secret will reward you. Also, whenever you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to attract the attention of the people. I say to you, they already have their reward. But whenever

you, a follower of mine, pray, you must go to your most private place, shut the door and pray to your Father in secret and your Father who sees what is secret will reward you. And whenever you pray, you must not keep on repeating set phrases, as the heathen do, for they suppose that they will be heard in accordance with the length of their prayers. So then you must not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. (Williams translation)

In the next few verses Jesus gives the outline for what today we call *The Lord's Prayer*. In this scriptural account it will be noted that the Master when giving a lesson on proper and improper almsgiving, extends the subject and explains proper and improper prayers.

Prayer is the privilege of having access to the presence of God and having communion or fellowship with Him! This privilege can be contrasted with that of Cornelius of whom it is written: *A devout man who revered God and prayed always. (Acts 10:2)* Verse 4 states: *Thy prayers are come before God as a memorial.* At this time Cornelius did not have the privilege of fellowship and communion with God.

Prayer is a great honor, a most precious privilege. To be a person of prayer is not a sign of weakness. The world's truly great have usually been men and women of prayer; but above any of them stands Jesus who continually sought his Father's audience in prayer.

Jesus taught and practiced the privilege of prayer. If he, in his perfection, needed spiritual fellowship and communion with the Father, how much more do we need it in our imperfection. We need to be, as Paul suggests in Romans 12:12, *Instant in Prayer*. We are to pray *always*. This is done by lifting up our hearts and minds to God at any time or place and realize that the Father continually abides with us. It's a great feeling to know that our active duties have been performed under his eye and supervision, plus unburdening ourselves alone with God.

Our prayers must express confident faith, loving esteem, reverence, childlike dependence, and acknowledgement of sins and shortcomings. Prayer is closely and actively identified with progress in spiritual things, progress in the fruits of the spirit toward God, toward the brethren, and toward all men.

Prayer is a door to a force So powerful that it can overcome the laws of nature. It performs miracles! The Word of God is filled with accounts of its power, from the widow's cruse of oil (1 Kings 17:14) to the raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11:43). But the greatest miracles of prayer have not been *spectacular* ones. They have been the daily supply of the sustaining power of grace and help when we need it and which keeps us from falling.

Another phase of the power of prayer is its ability to alter our lives for good. It is a life-time process. The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:18 writes: *We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.* (Revised Version)

In 1 Corinthians 6:11 we have another example where the Apostle Paul simply shows how this *change* comes about: *And such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the spirit of God.*

We need to pray for the Holy Spirit. Jesus assures us in Luke 11:13 that such a request is appropriate: *If ye know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.*

Prayer is the privilege which helps accomplish this *transformation*. At times we do not make full use of it. We must feel our need in order to appreciate our fellowship and communion with God. Life's trials and difficulties, sorrows and temptations, often impel us to pray, but this should not be the only time we should pray fervently. It shows a crystalized and mature Christian development when we come to the throne of grace with joy and thanksgiving—to give praise.

In helping his followers and his Church down through this Gospel Age in how to pray, Jesus states in Matthew 6:8, *Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of.* He wanted us to realize that our petitions and requests should be primarily for *holiness of heart*, for a filling of his spirit, for spiritual food that would refresh and strengthen us.

The power of prayer works in many ways.

1. It makes us strong when we are weak.
2. It makes us bold when we are fearful.

3. It gives us words of wisdom when needed.
4. It gives us strength to face and endure experiences.
5. It puts words in our mouth when we are speechless.
6. It selects a direction at a *fork in the road*—turn left or right.
7. It gives unshakeable assurance of peace with God and trust in His providential overruling.
8. It gives enlightenment and understanding of His Word.

How can our prayers be most effective?

At times we may pray often and accomplish nothing. The Word of God gives reasons for this. James 4:3 puts it this way: *Ye ask and receive not because you ask amiss that ye may consume it on your pleasure.*

Jesus states in Matthew 6:31-34,

Therefore take no thought saying what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek.) For your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all of these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

A prayer that is never answered is a selfish prayer. Such a prayer is not based on faith. James 1:5-7 states:

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.

If your prayer is faithless, it will also be fruitless. We must have faith in God, and our faith must embrace the two great stipulations of He 11:6,

1. Faith: *Without faith it is impossible to please God.*

2. Believe: *He that cometh to God must believe that He is and diligently seek Him.*

The Apostle Paul suggests in Romans 8:26 that at times *we know not what we should pray for as we ought.* But in Colossians 4:2 he states, *Continue [persist, persevere] in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving.*

Every trial of faith and patience is an occasion for prayer.

Every failure to gain a victory is an occasion for prayer.

Every victory of self is an occasion for prayer.

Every service for the Word of God becomes an occasion for prayer.

The positive side of our prayers is highlighted by many scriptures. Some are: *Ask and ye shall receive that your joy may be full.* (John 16:24) The Psalmist says, *In thy presence is fullness of joy and at thy right hand there are pleasures forever more.* (Psalm 16:11)

Brethren, prayer is the most powerful tool we have of companionship with our Heavenly Father. Within this companionship:

We have adoration and worship.

We have someone who cares about what happens to us.

We have complete assurance that our confessions of commission and omission are heard.

We have inner-peace that our weaknesses are understood and our failings forgiven.

Prayer is our very existence. God is only a prayer away. What a privilege is ours—intercession with our Heavenly Father. Even though we are all on the same communication line, our individual calls will never be ignored because *the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous person availeth much.*

God will take time to listen if we take time to pray!

The Holy Scriptures-Br. Fritz Burner, Germany

WE WOULD LIKE TO contemplate the scripture in 2Timothy 3:16,17 where it says:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

The Holy Scriptures have been rightly called the Word of God. It is a wonderful work from any standpoint. It is known and recognized as the oldest literary writing of the world and also the most widely distributed book in the whole earth. Like no other literature it has been translated into the languages of some 200-300 lands. Its number of editions goes high into the millions, to which more keep being added.

None can doubt that the Bible is a unique work from this standpoint, and therefore will rightly be called a best seller. That the Truth has not been lost in the thousands of years and through the many translations and editions, is noteworthy and wonderful. No translator, ancient or modern, could manage, knowingly or unknowingly, to do defective work; for the linguists of all times have zealously watched over it and have immediately come on the scene, whenever any distortions of the sense of the original text have been encountered. Whether this vigilance was called forth by a spirit of professional ambition or through faith in the Bible, it was still there; either way it makes no difference in the outcome.

However, all that would still not be sufficient proof that God himself is the author of the Holy Scriptures, as our opening text claims. Despite the great age of the Bible, generally the world and its people have no appreciation for it and disregard its dust-covered texts. Since the nominal Christian union neither knows nor practices Bible study, nor is such carried on or desired by theologians, their devalued arguments remain primitive, worthless, and naive.

High social circles lay down against it a critical, however arrogant, measuring stick. They particularly like to treat biblical accounts as on an equal footing with poetry of the gods and heroic sagas from mythology. The knowledge of ancient literature is valued in the aristocratic world as a measuring stick of higher learning.

However, these teachings are of little help in understanding the gospel. Their author is not God, but Satan, who as prince of this

world blinds the understanding of the unbelieving world So that the light of the gospel may not shine upon them. Satan has succeeded worldwide, in placing mythological brick-a-brack and biblical treasures on an even plane.

But especially in modern times prominent scholars have decided to come out openly and question the biblical message. The divine basis of the curse upon mankind through Adam is rejected or doubted. Old Testament accounts of Noah and the flood, of Abraham, Israel, and the prophets up to the time of Christ are ignored or considered fables.

There are prominent natural scientists who have held fast to, and specialized in, evolution theories. This teaching is in their opinion the only explanation for the development of man and of living nature. This viewpoint is also accepted by famous Nobel peace prize-holders and many intellectuals. The arguments of such high personalities naturally achieve greater weight in the public eye. Therefore they have easy prey in their listeners and circle of readers of their publications, when they, in arrogance, ignore or belittle biblical accounts of miracles.

Even in theological circles compromise is made with science, in that it is explained that the Bible is not to be taken literally, but can only be interpreted by their authorized writers. But this doesn't make the teaching of evolution a reality; it is an inference that stands on weak footing. Even an evolutionist must believe what he seeks to prove hypothetically.

How much easier it is, on the other hand, to understand that the wonderful laws of nature, with which we are surrounded and which we bear within ourselves, are created by an all-wise Lawgiver! The eternal God has built the beautiful atoms and installed them as universal building stones for the material world. The Heavens declare the glory of God, rejoices the Psalmist David; and Paul states in Romans 1:20 that God is seen in the things made.

But the more understanding is increased in the end-time, the less faith becomes. One is reminded by this of the words in Luke 18:8 where the Lord asks: *When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* The answer has already come to us. The Lord has come and faith is noticeably on the decline. *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God,* we read in Psalm 14:1. These blind fools can be encountered in Matthew 22:29 with the words of our

Master who says: *Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.*

The Bible Records Facts

Yet we leave the unbelief of the world and of science and turn directly to the Bible. Indeed it is in book-form before us and has also been written by men; but it is distinguished generally from human literature. Many a person has already begun with honest intentions to read the Bible from beginning to end, but then has given up that good intention at the listings of the genealogy; these passages result more in fatigue than in encouraging one to continue reading. They are not quick, light-reading material.

The accurate recordings of the genealogy take a fundamental place, however, in the Holy Scriptures. They are an uninterrupted register of the names and ages of men from Adam up to the time where recorded world history is reliable. That time is around 536 BC when the Persian king Cyrus lifted the Babylonian captivity of Israel. This age is documented in world history and stated biblically in 2 Chronicles 36:22,23. Here the thread of Bible chronology is also dropped. With this the Bible is dependable and the only record in the world which, with the help of the chronology, offers a continuous chain of human history.

Although the Holy Scriptures are also not a book of sociability, nevertheless it is rich in accounts which are entertaining and exciting to read. Many of the descriptions declare a joyful outcome; others by contrast, a dramatic and bitter conclusion. We think of the account of Joseph and his eleven brothers who sold him into Egypt, sent his dress-coat stained with lamb's blood to their father Jacob, and brought heavy sorrow of heart to Jacob. To be sure, they had evil intentions; but God overruled everything, So that through it a great people had its life preserved, as reported in Genesis 50:20. The recognition that this event is a type of Christ is very valuable. Jesus' people, the Jews, truly had evil intentions, when they brought their Messiah to death. But God So overruled it, that through the ransom blood of Jesus, all mankind would be redeemed.

We think of the Jewish maiden Esther, who was chosen as queen by the Medo-Persian king Ahasuerus, and through whom the underhanded murder of all Jews in the captivity of that time was prevented. Through the stirring account was pictured before our eyes how God knows all the intrigue of the wicked ones from afar and is able to save His people today just as then.

Let's think of Daniel who, even as a young man came along in the captivity and in the times of the reigns of several Babylonian kings, remained faithful to his God of Israel. Through it he fell into the underhanded legal machinations of his enviers and spies, through which even King Darius was deceived. Daniel was to have been removed through a gruesome death. When Darius saw the devilish ruse, he was very sad and thought about how he could rescue Daniel. But the bogus law through trickery blocked the rescue; So Daniel had to be thrown into the lions' den.

The king went back to his palace sorrowful. He could not sleep. In the morning, as soon as it became day, he went hastily to the lions' den. When he came to the den, he called in a mournful voice:

Daniel! . . . is thy God Whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? [And Daniel answered the king:] My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before Him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.

We all know the further outcome of the event. Instead of Daniel, his spies and informers together with their families suffered the death in the lions' den which they had intended for the innocent Daniel.

Let us think of the many prophets who, as spokesmen for the God of Israel, likewise warned not to deviate from God's ways. And when Israel deviated, they announced the judgment due. Their experiences were far from enviable. They were abused and many of them were put into prison and delivered up to a violent death—death by their own people Israel!

Let's think about the good prophet Jeremiah, who was let down with ropes into the dungeon of a prison-courtyard where he sank into the mud. Jeremiah would have perished miserably there. It was only because of the foreign Ethiopian eunuch at the court of King Zedekiah that the prophet was freed out of the dreadful situation.

There are a great number of excellent accounts for us, as the Apostle Paul says in He 11:32, *Time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets.*

The Lord embraces the entire episode of the prophets with the words in Matthew 23:29-33,

Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites! because you build the sepulchres of the prophets, and ornament the monuments of the just, and say, If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been participators with them in the murder of the prophets. Thus you testify against yourselves, that you are the sons of those who murdered the prophets. You also will fill up the measure of your fathers. Serpents, Progeny of vipers! how can you escape the judgment of Gehenna? (Diaglott)

We are dealing here with factual accounts from the Old and New Testaments. They have nothing to do with fairy tales and legends as the super-educated in the world claim; and there they also find hearers. The Apostle says in 2 Peter 1:21, *For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*

When we investigate which men they were whom God chose to be His spokesmen and writers, we come to a singular conclusion: They were men from many generations and from periods of time that were more than a thousand years apart from each other. They came from various regions and had different upbringings and professions.

In one quality, however, there remains absolute uniformity. They were aware of their imperfections and looked reverently and humbly to God, whose majesty they knew and recognized, they being full of faith. God let them find Him because they sought Him with their hearts. Those were the holy men, with whom God dealt in a spiritual relationship and used them as His spokesmen and scribes.

Moses, who is called the meekest man, stood at the beginning of the national history of Israel and took a special position in it. The scripture testifies of him in Numbers 12:6-8,

If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold.

Moses, educated in the wisdom of the Egyptians, wrote in his five books all the time periods from Adam through Noah, Abraham,

and Israel, up until the giving of the Law on Sinai. From his birth in Egypt on and from his wonderful deliverance from out of the waters of the Nile, until his death on Mount Pisgah and the seclusion of his grave, we see unmistakably God's hand upon Moses. And God dealt with Israel only through Moses, as the Mediator of the Law Covenant. Countless times we find in the Holy Scriptures the words: *And the LORD spake unto Moses.*

We read an outstanding word in Deuteronomy 18:15, through which Moses speaks to Israel: *The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.* If Moses here as prophet announces a change from the Law Covenant to the New Covenant under the antitypical Mediator *Christ*, then he could not do that through human understanding, but only through inspiration of the Spirit of God. Through this prophecy he unknowingly strikes a bridge from the Old to the New Testament. When Peter in Acts 3:22 picked up the prophecy of Moses and prophesied concerning the Millennium, he could only do it in the power of the Holy Spirit which was given at Pentecost. Earlier the sense of the prophecy was hidden.

The prerequisite of the gifts of the Spirit, however, was only possible through the satisfaction of divine justice through means of a ransom price for Adam. Hence the sacrificial offering of God's own beloved son which pictured the crown of the love and mercy of the eternal God. Jesus' faithful devotion to His beloved Father's will unfurled into the greatest heroic deed of the universe and to the foundation of an eternal salvation. Not until through the gifts of the Holy Spirit resulting from it, were the promises of the Old Testament open and understandable.

The Divine promise to Abraham written down by Moses—that through his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed—Paul could now see clearly. He was blessed as a chosen vessel, in the power of the Spirit to unlock the prophecy. He recognized that Jesus Christ with his followers is the spiritual seed of Abraham, through which the earthly seed with all the families of the earth will be blessed in due time.

Through the harmony of Old Testament sayings, which found their fulfillment in New Testament times, is the proof that prophecy came not by the will of man.

God Authored the Bible

In closing our contemplation now a few more witnesses from the Old and New Testaments should be cited, which mutually complete it literally. These witnesses can be helpful to the confirmation that God himself is the author of the Bible, as it is written.

The Lord shortly after his resurrection suddenly stood among his disciples who, for fear of the Pharisees, had shut themselves in a room. They were very much frightened. On this occasion he said to them:

These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me .. . it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.

David, who was known to have worked a thousand years before Christ, writes in Psalm 41:9, *Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.* The prophet Zechariah, who lived some 500 years later than David, tells in chapter 11:12 of the thirty pieces of silver for which Judas betrayed the Lord.

In Psalm 22:16,18 we read:

For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. . . . They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

Whence had the prophets the knowledge of the tragic events in the yet distant future? To this the worldly wise can give no meaningful answer. We do not need to read the literal fulfillment of this prophecy in the gospel of John as our Lord was on the cross; it is written deeply in the hearts of us all.

The last minutes of the difficult life of sacrifice of the Redeemer are foretold in Psalm 69:21, *They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.* In Psalm 34:20 the prophet predicts that no bone of him would be broken. Even in the Passover lamb in Egypt the clear picture of Jesus can be seen; the prophecy held good, that no bone of him could be broken.

In the account of John 19:40-42 we find that Joseph of Arimathaea brought the embalmed body of Jesus to his private grave in which

no one had yet been laid. We find these memorable facts and details also foretold in Isaiah 53:9.

The prophets Moses, David, Isaiah and Zechariah lived in times 500 to 1000 years apart. None could have known about the other, yet their accounts were in full accord. The recorded incidents were covered with desirable accuracy, So that the fundamental prophecies of the Old Testament have found their literal fulfillment at the beginning of the Gospel Age. It was the foundation of the Church through the sacrificial offering of Jesus Christ who is her Head.

Not until this time could the training of the members of the body of Christ as the mystery of God have its beginning and continue on down to today. Through the gathering of God's covenant-people in Palestine, which has occurred before our eyes, we are reliably informed about being in the late stage of the end-time. It is Jacob's trouble, out of which God will save the faithful in due time.

As surely as the most important prophecies have already been fulfilled, the promises still open will also be fulfilled. We can joyfully look forward to the speedy blessing of all the families of the earth, as sworn to faithful Abraham. Then the glory of God will fill the entire world.

Is Thine Heart Right-Bro. Andrzej Dabek, Poland

And when he was departed from thence, he lighted on Jehonadab the Son of Rechab coming to meet him: and he saluted him, and said to him, Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, give me thine hand.—2Ki 10:15

AS WE STAND HERE we ask ourselves: What miracle makes it possible that since eight years ago, So many people from So many places have turned their heart and—for the more fortunate ones, their steps—from various places in Europe to experience the moments which remain a sweet melody for ever, moments which warm both souls and hearts when a day begins to trouble?

What do we feel when we look at our meetings with others, seeing them after many years of not seeing them? What would someone feel who watched only one fragment of our stay here, the unspeakable joy when shaking hands with each other, the love in our eyes, the shouts and tears of joy, that again after two or perhaps eight years the Lord has let us come here, to meet again to rest at his feet together?

If we greet each other in this manner today, if our hearts are So filled with joy today, are we able to imagine the joy we will experience when we meet TH ER E, our destination when the Lord will meet us? What shouts of joy will be heard then and how many earnest, happy tears will be shed from our eyes!

If Willingen is now for the second time a wonderful shelter and rest from our everyday life, then—and I come back to the question—what makes it possible for us to be here? We are separated by world borders, by the sound of our languages, by the differences of our cultures, by the color of our skin, and thousands of other problems. And yet, we are here together, at Jesus' feet, with everyone greatly desiring to worship God and His Son So that our song of love might be loud.

The differences cannot be seen, for when So much unites, can So little divide? We are united by love, the love of God and of those whom He has chosen. What is this love, from where does its power come, that makes miracles happen? The Apostle Paul in his poem about true love in 1Corinthians 13 told us about this wonderful feature of a human's and God's character. It has lasted for ages and, like God Himself, never ends.

Tolerance

An integral part of love is tolerance. And tolerance, one of love's aspects, will be the subject of our study. What is tolerance? Is it only the name of an attitude respecting the views of others?

Someone said that our vision depends on the floor from which we see. Let us, therefore, imagine a multi-story building. What can we see of the whole city from the highest floor? We can see the contours of other buildings, places of green, and the moving objects of people or cars. It all depends on how high we are, how good is our sight and perception, and perhaps how long we fix our eyes on some detail that attracts our attention.

What can we see if we stand on a lower level? We can see things more clearly, but certainly we see less. Yet again we can say that we see as much as we can and want to see, though the characteristics of perception and good vision continue to be critical.

So if God has gathered us from So many places throughout the world, and if the reason for our gathering is the same Love, the

same Truth, then let each be themselves and unique in their love to God. Let us all strive that this feeling be more strong and perfect.

In this respect, the attitude of strong-willed Jehu, the king of Israel, is really worth the attention and emulation by every true Christian. What strikes us in Jehu's question—*Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart*—is that he makes no attempt to examine the views of Jehonadab, though it is certain some of them were very uncommon and affected his important work of planting his views into his children and their children.

Long after Jehonadab's death, Jeremiah the prophet speaks with respect about Jehonadab's strict discipline of life:

Then I took Jaazaniah . . . and all his sons . . . and I set before the house of the Rehabites pots full of wine and cups , and I said unto them, Drink ye wine. But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever: neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents. . . . Thus we have obeyed the voice of . . . our father in all that he hath charged us.—
Jer 35:3-8

Jehu, who was So quick to anger, who relentlessly destroyed his political opponents and worshippers of Baal, let the pilgrim Jonadab keep his own views without imposing anything else on him. As he took his chariot he said to Jehonadab, *Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord.* (2 Kings 10:16)

On the other hand Jehonadab also did not question Jehu's way to worship God, although there probably were differences between them in this regard.

Jehu was more interested in his country's politics than in its religion. Though he destroyed his enemies and killed the worshippers of Baal, he did not commit Jeroboam's sin by worshipping golden calves. (2 Kings 10:29)

Let us consider the actual sense of Jehu's question, *Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?* What does each follower of Christ mean when asking this question to any of his brethren? Before *Jonadab* answers that it is, before we stretch out our hand toward him, what thoughts and feelings fill our hearts? I think what fills our hearts is the conviction of God's greatness and wisdom, of

His love to us His children. It is also faith that He helps all those who love Him.

If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.—Ro 10:9,10

Is Christ in your heart? *He blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us . . . nailing it to the cross.* (Colossians 2:14)

Do you through him *fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life?* (1 Timothy 6:12) Is your faith full of energy, love, and life?

Do you love God *with all thy soul, with all thy heart and with all thy mind?* (Luke 10:27) Do you only seek happiness in Him? Do you find what you seek?

Are God and His Son, Jesus Christ—those whom you worship in spirit and in truth—the basis of your hopes and goals of your consecration?

If we answer these and similar questions just like Jehonadab with an *It is so*, then how simple and natural are the next words spoken by Jehu: *Give me thine hand.*

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. In these words of Colossians 3:17 the Apostle Paul reminds us about our new life.

I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing.—Joh 15:5

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.—Eph 5:19

Jesus said, however, that if our love is only for those who love us, we cannot expect any reward. *Do not even the publicans the same?* (Matthew 5:46)

Let us show our willingness to understand others, not only our friends and those who are dear to us, but also those whom we don't know and those who hate us. Let us do this as much as possible.

If we are of this heart attitude—or even if we only want to be of this heart attitude—then perhaps some day we will hear our enemies and foes say these wonderful words to us: *Give me thine hand*, be my friend and brother.

Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.—1Co 13:4-7

As we fulfil Jesus' command about love and friendship toward our neighbors, do we realize how much we treasure love and friendship? In this large company here, the spirit of tolerance and understanding should have equal fruitage with the spirit of love. For could we say *thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself* without tolerance in our hearts? Let's take Jesus' command in Matthew 5:44,45:

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

Remember what Jesus told his disciples when they boasted that they rebuked a stranger who did not walk with them but who performed miracles and taught in Christ's name: *Forbid him not . . . for he that is not against us is on our part.* (Mark 9:39,40)

How tolerant was Jesus, saying that if only someone *is not against them*, he is with them. None of us would venture such a statement. Should we not conclude that we, as human beings, are so very often severe in our judgments against the brethren as we try to be more just than Jesus himself? Or perhaps we think we can read somebody else's heart. We should be especially tolerant toward those like us, the brethren. We should especially love those who love God.

David and Moses

In Psalms 16:2,3 David says: *My goodness extendeth . . . to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.* David set a very good example for us to follow. He was a noble man who did not take advantage of his strength or circumstance; he despised scheming and was a faithful friend unto the end.

Notice that on Saul's death, when it might appear that David should have felt relieved, perhaps even joy that the danger to his life was over, his heart was truly saddened. He even writes an epitaph to commemorate Saul and Jonathan, and he tells all the descendants of Judah to memorize it So the good memories of both of them should not perish from the nation.

Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel. How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!—2Sa 1:24-27

Let's consider Moses whom God chose to fulfill the greatest mission in the history of Israel in Old Testament days. Remember the short event which took place when Moses, tired of the constant murmuring and complaining of the people, entreated God for help. God answered Moses' request by dividing the burden among 70 elders of the people. He tells them to gather around the tabernacle and then gives them the spirit taken from Moses. Two of the elders [Eldad and Medad] did not obey Moses' command and stayed in the camp. Yet they, too, received the spirit and prophesied. When Joshua, Moses' faithful servant, informed his master of the matter, he said:

My lord Moses, forbid them. And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!—Nu 11:28,29

What a precious answer! What a wonderful attitude of that man, of whom it was rightly written that he was very meek, above all the men who were upon the face of the earth! May we not compare the answer of Moses to that of Jehu given to Jehonadab? If your heart is as sincere as mine, give me your hand!

If people have one purpose in life, to serve God with all their might and to the best of their ability, should they not try to achieve a broader and deeper view of their problems like Jehu, David, or Moses?

To be tolerant and to understand another man does not mean to give up one's own understanding of truth. A truly tolerant man who loves God will not have any doubts about the principles of faith which he has adopted and to which he devotes his life.

Those who don't have any convictions of their own also call themselves tolerant. But I don't refer to that kind of tolerance, which is, after all, simply covering up one's ignorance or the instability of one's character. What I mean is that small differences in matters which are not the most important should not split brethren, should not weaken our anthem of love for God and His Son.

Till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but seeking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.—Eph 4:13-15

Our hymns sung in this multilingual chorus to glorify God are So beautiful. I am sure God hears the words of these prayers, that He rejoices in them, and that He answers them today, and will continue to answer them in the future!

In this wonderful place where we are building ourselves up with heart-felt love, God Himself will fit particular stones So that the structure will be strong and the surface of the walls will be smooth. He will square and polish His diamonds. Let us not do anything; we are imperfect and ignorant of the depth of our hearts and feelings. What we do So easily is only hurt or wound each other.

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.—Joh 13:35

Is thine heart right as my heart is toward yours? If it is, give me your hand.

Amen.

Our Sanctification-Bro. Aldolphe Debski, France

THE SUBJECT OF OUR study is taken from 1 Thessalonians 4:3 where the apostle says: *For this is the will of God, even your sanctification.*

By our consecration we devoted ourselves to do the will of God. It is now our duty to consider what is pleasing to the Almighty and not be fashioned any longer to this world. We are to be *transformed by the renewing of our mind that we may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.* (Romans 12:2) It was a pleasure and a joy for our Lord to do his Father's will and it was his reason for living. (Psalm 40:8) It must be the same for us.

We find that the will of God concerning us is expressed in one word: Sanctification. *This is the will of God, even [our] sanctification.* The better we understand the meaning of the word sanctification, the better we will know the plan, the intentions, and the will of God concerning us.

The word sanctification in our text is translated from the Greek word hagioσmos. Hagiasmos according to Young's Analytical Concordance means *separation, putting aside.* In Strong's Concordance the word is defined as *purification, purity, holiness, sanctification.* Unger, in his dictionary of the Bible, approves of Young's definition. He says that hagioσmos does indeed mean *separation, a setting apart.* He also states that the corresponding Hebrew word qadash reveals an identical thought. Moreover, he harmonizes this with Strong's definition which says: *The dominant idea of sanctification is separation from the secular and sinful, and setting apart for a sacred purpose.*

Separation from sin corresponds to the idea of purity and holiness. We must remember that the setting of ourselves apart is done according to God's special purpose. The calling of the Church, the Little Flock, from the world is accomplished with the intention that it is to be associated with Christ, that it first share in his sufferings and sacrificial death, then in his honor and glory.

God also purposes that the Little Flock take part in the blessed work of the future regeneration of the human race. Afterward, in the Ages of Glory, it will participate in all the work God has foreseen for the Lord in the greatness of his creation. That is the purpose of the actual sanctification of the members of Christ's body.

Sanctification vs. Consecration

Let's see how sanctification operates. But first let us determine the difference between the words sanctification and consecration (for we may sometimes confuse the two words, using one for the other).

Consecration is a precise act accomplished at a specific moment. It is a person's commitment to serve God with no restrictions. It is a total submission of our will and all we possess to God's service. We consecrated ourselves when we decided to serve God without limits and said, *Behold, I come to do thy will, O God*. There is nothing more important than a complete consecration to God! And nothing is more wise and reasonable, as the apostle suggests in Romans 12:1.

Sanctification, on the other hand, is not accomplished in a single moment; it is a life-long process. It begins at consecration and continues with a constant struggle against sin and the enemies of the Christian: the world, the flesh, and the devil. It is a gradual work of transforming our characters into the likeness of our Lord's. The task is difficult, but oh how noble! It involves continual self-denial plus a great deal of humbleness, meekness, patience, perseverance, sufferings, faith, and love. It will end when the Heavenly Father says, *It is enough; go higher now!*

The Old Testament shows us how sanctification is accomplished in God's dealings with the Israelites. In Leviticus 20:7 we read: *Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God*. The Israelites had to sanctify themselves and be holy. On the other hand, verse 8 says: *Ye shall keep my statutes and do them: I am the Lord which sanctify you*. From this verse we learn that it was God who sanctified His typical people. We also find this thought in Exodus 31:13 where the Almighty declares, talking to the Jews through Moses:

Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you.

These verses indicate that there are two parts in the sanctification process: one part performed by the people of God, and another part performed by God Himself. The Israelites had to sanctify themselves, they had to separate and stay apart for the Lord's service, and they had to do His commandments and live a holy life.

God sanctified them by first inviting them to separate from the other nations and then by keeping them well apart as His peculiar people. For this purpose God gave them, and them alone, His laws and commandments. In this way they were the only people on earth who had the privilege to know the only true and living God, and to worship, praise, and serve Him.

We note that the same process in the work of sanctification applies to those who are called during the Gospel Age. They are also invited to separate from the world that they may constitute the actual people of God—the Church, the Little Flock, the Body of Christ—and become new creatures with a heavenly destiny. Here is the invitation that is given to them:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.—Ro 12:1

My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways. (Proverbs 23:26) Those who answer that call consecrate themselves to the Lord, separate themselves from the world, deny themselves, and begin following the footsteps of the Master. Their sanctification is just beginning. They sanctify themselves in the sense that they set themselves apart for God's service.

This total consecration of themselves is necessary so that God may proceed with the work of sanctification in them. But let us specify at this stage, before God's sanctification work may continue, something extremely important takes place: the merit of Christ's sacrifice is imputed on our behalf. That merit purifies us from our sins. Our imperfect offering is, from that moment, considered as perfect, holy, living, pleasing to God and acceptable by Him. And, as the Bible teaches, God accepts it by begetting us by His spirit.

Without the imputation of that precious merit, our offering could not be accepted by God because it is imperfect, stained by sin and under Adam's death penalty. This was the case with the apostles. When the Lord called them, they recognized him as the Messiah and followed him. They thus dedicated themselves entirely to his service.

They could not do better, nor do more. However, their consecration was the offering of an imperfect body, something God could not accept. For God to accept it, it was first necessary that Jesus die on the cross, that his blood be poured out, that his body be broken, and that he thus provide the precious merit needed

for the salvation of the Church and the world. It was also necessary that he be resurrected as a spiritual being and that he ascend on high to appear in the presence of God for imputing his merit on behalf of the Church. This imputation made the offering of the bodies of the apostles and the first disciples acceptable to God. God showed His acceptance by pouring out the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

This shows that it is our Lord's sacrifice, the offering of his body, that makes it possible for God's people in the Gospel Age to be sanctified by God, to be separated from the world. That is what the apostle Paul teaches when he writes in He 10:10, *By the which will [meaning the will of God] we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

How true are the words of the Lord in John 15:5, *Without me ye can do nothing.* Our Lord is needed by us in all things. Thanks to the offering of his body, he provided an opportunity for us to receive the High Calling and become God's children by a consecration, and God's acceptance of that consecration. At the time it is accepted, the Lord adds another element through which he pursues our sanctification. This element is the Holy Spirit. As the Apostle Peter declares in 1 Peter 1:2, the called ones are *elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit.*

By the Holy Spirit, which works through the Word of Truth, we are begotten to a new nature—the spirit nature. We become new creatures in Christ. The Apostle Paul explains: *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.*—2Co 5:17

As new creatures we are in Christ, and to be in Christ means to be a part of Christ's body, the Church, the little flock. We no longer have a head of our own, no longer have our own will, but hold the Lord as our head. That means we don't do our own will anymore, but do the will of God as manifested in Christ's behavior, words, and deeds.

So as the Bible exhorts us, let us look

unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds.—He 12:2,3

The Work of the Holy Spirit

As we follow his example we will grow into his likeness. And it is appropriate that we do So for God predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his son. (Romans 8:29) We will grow and develop and increase the measure of the spirit we received until we are filled with the Holy Spirit as was the Lord, the apostles, and other disciples like Stephen of whom it is said that he *was a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.*—Ac 6:5

We will be spiritually strengthened by this spirit, this power, growing and working in us. This spirit will help us face the difficulties of the narrow way. It will help us mortify our ego and overcome our flesh, the spirit of the world, and the Adversary. That spirit will be an encouraging and comforting element in our trials, difficulties, and sufferings. It is, after all, called *the Comforter* by our Lord who declared on one occasion that *I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth.*—Joh 14:16

The growing of the Holy Spirit in us will be manifested by the simultaneous development of the fruits of the spirit as mentioned in Galatians 5:22. Those fruits are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

This Holy Spirit—spirit of power, love, and wisdom—will help us purge out the fear of man and develop a respectful fear of God as demonstrated by the apostles. When our Lord was arrested, all ran away. Peter, who a few hours before said he would never deny him even if he had to die with him, found himself alone among foreigners who were accusing him of having been with Jesus, the arrested Galilean. He was suddenly frightened and denied his Master three times. (Let us say in passing that each of us would probably have done the same if we were in his place.)

A few weeks later, when Peter received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, he enrolled with determination in the ministry of preaching the gospel. On all occasions, even when there was danger, he never lost his quietness, peace, trust, and faithfulness to God. *Is it right in God's eyes for us to obey you rather than God?* This is what he declared with John to the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders who wanted to prevent them from speaking of the Lord Jesus and from preaching the good tidings. (Acts 4:19)

The Holy Spirit, working like this, accomplishes its work of sanctification in each child of God. May we also develop strength and assurance in the service of God, and may we not forget that only those who are led by the spirit of God are the sons of God, as the Apostle Paul declares, adding that if someone has not the spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him. We have not received a spirit of slavery that we may still entertain fears, but a spirit of adoption enabling us to cry, *Abba, Father!* We are not debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh; for if we live after the flesh, we will die; but if by the spirit we mortify the deeds of the body, we will live.—Ro 8:9,12-15

The Holy Spirit also enables us to obtain the knowledge of the truth, of the deep things of God, as the apostle teaches in 1 Corinthians 2:7-12. We read:

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory, which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the spirit searched all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God.

The spirit coming from God enables us to understand the things that God has given to us. It leads us in the truth, in the whole truth, and, through that truth that God enabled us to understand, He sanctifies us, as the Master said: *Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.* (John 17:17) The truth that is in the Bible, the Word of God, lets us know the Plan of God regarding mankind (in general) and the Church (in particular). It enables us to understand the character of God, his justice, wisdom, power, and love. It explains the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross at Golgotha. It reveals the special promises reserved for those who walk in the footsteps of Jesus and the wonderful future that is in store for all mankind.

It contains all the exhortations, counsels, encouragements, light, and knowledge that the disciples of the Master daily need to stay faithful to God.

It enlightens us through prophecies of the past, the present, and the future of mankind. In the troubled times that constitute our epoch, the understanding of present truth keeps us in a condition of peace and trust in this time of trouble in which we are living, while those around us are becoming more afraid of the future. It stimulates our faith, our praise, and our worship for God and encourages us to piety and purity. Through all this work it sanctifies us, it keeps us apart from the world and urges us on to holiness.

The Blood of the Covenant

There is another element at work in the process of our sanctification. It is the blood of the covenant. In He 10:29, the Apostle Paul speaks of the punishment that the unfaithful among God's people deserve but, at the same time, he reveals an interesting point: each member of that people is sanctified by the blood of the covenant. Here is what he says:

Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing.

Which blood is this? It is, of course, the precious blood of our Lord. At the last supper Jesus spoke of the cup and said, *Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood [the blood of the covenant] shed for many for the forgiveness of sins.* (Matthew 26:27,28) From the way the Lord expressed himself by saying that his blood is the blood of the covenant, it appears that the covenant required blood and that without blood it would not be valid and viable. Which covenant required blood to be shed? It was the New Covenant. Let's read the explanation given by the Apostle Paul in He 9:16-20.

For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. Whereupon neither the first covenant was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the covenant which God has enjoined upon you.

Blood was necessary for the inauguration of the Law Covenant made at Sinai. That blood was supplied by the offering of bullocks

and of oxen (see Exodus 24:5) and of goats. In the same way blood is necessary for the inauguration of the New Covenant which the apostle has in mind in his commentary and which he mentions in verse 15. This blood is from our Lord.

Let us remember that the sacrifice of the bullock on the Day of Atonement represented the offering of our Lord. At Sinai many oxen were used because much blood was required. But the sacrifice of all of them represented the offering of our Lord Jesus.

It is interesting that the apostle mentions that the blood of goats was also used. The offering of a goat on the Day of Atonement represents the offering of the Church, the Body of Christ. At Sinai many goats were sacrificed because much blood was necessary. But the sacrifice of all those goats represented the offering of the body of Christ, the Church.

Is the blood of the Church also necessary for the New Covenant to become effective? Yes, it is what is shown in the type, in the inauguration of the Law Covenant at Sinai where the blood of goats were also used in the sprinkling of the Book of the Law and the people.

How can this be? Simple. The blood of the Church is not its own. It is the blood of the Lord. And why is it the Lord's blood? Because when the Lord came before his Father 40 days after his resurrection (Hebrews 9:24), he presented his offering for the benefit of the Church. His blood is thus reserved during the Gospel Age for exclusive use by the members of his body. Figuratively speaking, that blood passes through his body. It will only be available for others when it will have completely passed through his body, that is to say, when the last member of his body ends his race and passes beyond the veil, when the members of the Great Company will have used it to wash their robes in the great tribulation. (Revelation 7:14)

The blood of the Church is nothing other than the blood of Christ passing through it. It is his blood because, as the Church is the Body of Christ, the blood of the body belongs to the head, the Lord. As a result, the New Covenant will come into effect only when that blood is available again, that is to say, not before the Church is complete, beyond the veil, and the last member of the Great Company has passed through the great tribulation.

But what interests us in this study is knowing how that blood now sanctifies the members of the Church. To begin with, it sanctifies

them simply because it was applied on their behalf, because of their faith, and their consecration, and that it has purified them from their past sins and redeemed them from their vain manner of life handed down from their fathers. (1 Peter 1:18, 19) This makes a clear distinction between them and the sinful and unbelieving world.

It also sanctifies them because it allows them to be made white through repentance and the asking of forgiveness for all the transgressions they may commit during their pilgrim travel toward heavenly Canaan. It still sanctifies them through their communion with that blood as the apostle says in 1 Corinthians 10:16, *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?*

We have communion with the blood of Christ. What does this communion and the shed blood of the Lord mean? First of all, it means his expiatory death for the sins of the world. But it also represents the sufferings he bore unjustly. The Lord referred to the most cruel of these sufferings in his prayer to the Heavenly Father in the garden of Gethsemane: *My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.*—Mt 26:39

This cup was the mockery and the ridicule that the Master had to endure later that same night and during the following day. He did not escape the slaps, whipping, beating, and such sarcasms as the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Depraved humanity reinforced by wicked spiritual powers gave free expression to its most base instincts, venting all its spleen and venom on the one who was holy, righteous, the Prince of Light, the Son of God, the Saviour and Redeemer. Hate—in all its brutality—rushed at Love, exemplified in the person of our Lord. And Love, without uttering a single word, overcame Hate. That is what the Master's shed blood means.

And to have communion with this blood means to walk in the footsteps of the Lord in the way of sacrifice and self-denial. It is to make the offering of the perfect human life we could have had in the Millennium and to grasp the heavenly hope offered in the Gospel Age. It is to be baptized in the death of Christ that we may be resurrected with him, that we may live with him forever. It is to die with him that we may live with him. (Romans 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 2:11) It is to have a part in the sufferings of Christ, to face undeserved sufferings only because we try to be faithful to God. *As*

they persecuted me, says the Lord, they will persecute you [because] a servant is not greater than his master.

Persecution will come to all who want to live a Godly life as Christians. (2 Timothy 3:12, New English) And the Apostle Peter even declares, For it is a fine thing if a man endure the pain of undeserved suffering because God is in his thoughts. (1 Peter 2:19, New English)

The Apostle Paul concludes saying that we share his sufferings now So that we might share his glory later. (Romans 8:17) And thus, by our participation and communion in the blood of Christ, the work of sanctification or setting apart for God—for His present and future service—is being accomplished in us.

So we are sanctified by the blood of the covenant, but also, as we have seen, by the offering of the Body of Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, and by the Truth.

May this sanctification go forth in us to reach God's desired objective: inheritance with Christ! And may the appreciation of this privilege intensify our worship and praise of the Almighty. May it also contribute toward increasing our zeal to develop in us humbleness, meekness, godliness, patience, longsuffering—in a word, love, a supreme love for God and for the Lord, love of the Truth and for all the brethren, for the world, and even for our enemies. Amen.

Let Your Speech Be With Grace-Bro. Jozef Garbacz, Poland

BELOVED BRETHREN IN THE LORD. It has been two years since the International Convention in DeBron which, in my opinion, still proves very much the meaning of the Apostle Paul's words that in Christ there is no division into different nationalities. We all make up one great family of God.

Since I have the privilege of service at this meeting, I would like to first greet you with the words of our Lord: Peace be with you. I also want to deliver to the brethren gathered at this convention the love of all the brethren of this same precious faith from the Lord's ecclesia in Lukowa.

Our subject is drawn from the words of the Apostle Paul's letter to the Colossians where we read these words: *Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye*

ought to answer every man. (Colossians 4:6) And the title of our discourse will be: Let your speech be alway with grace.

The Gift of Speech

Speech is a gift given to mankind by the Creator. We are perfectly aware of how it is indispensable in our lives. Of all the inhabitants of our planet only man received a larynx, vocal chords, lips, and a tongue adapted to produce such a great scale of sounds which make up human speech.

Speech is an outward picture of our experience, needs, intentions, desires or, in other words, thoughts the abode of which is the brain. The brain is the center directing all manifestations of the living organism both physical and psychological. In the sphere of the latter, our feelings find a place as a product of thoughts, dreams, creativity, consciousness of being, etc. In the sphere of our thoughts arise the words that we speak.

We often say that a wise man possesses intellect or the capability to direct by words and actions. In the book of wisdom—the holy Bible—the words *brain* and *intellect* were replaced by the word *heart*.

In Proverbs (4:23) we read: *Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.* This means that we should turn our attention to the most hidden thoughts and impulses which arise in our heart. We must also control our speech which is a reflection of our heart. We see that our speech can be good or bad. Our words can be decent, pleasant, and grateful.

It may also be otherwise: words full of evil, hatred, filth, or blasphemy may also flow from our mouths. The Lord showed this dependency on the state of the heart in the words written in the Gospel of Luke (6:45) where we read:

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil; for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

Daily as people live in society with other people we speak hundreds of thousands of words. We make ourselves understood both for pleasure and responsibility. Therefore our words should be simple, clear, and understandable for the receivers. Independent of

this, they should contain accents of friendship and good-will. An example for us in this case is our dear Saviour, Jesus Christ.

In the Gospel of Luke (4:22) we read such gracious words about him: *And all . . . wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.* It's necessary, however, to note that Jesus' speech drew listeners and even carried them away to the point where after awhile, they forgot their cares and problems.

We also have this opportunity to console others with this consolation which we found in learning the Truth. We have the privilege to witness about the gospel from the time when this message became our joy. From the time we recognized God's goodness and His glorious plan of salvation for all mankind and consecrated ourselves to God in service, we can be sons and daughters of joy in Zion.

Our speech should be well expressed, clean, free of strangeness and foreign deformations, no matter what kind of language we use. It's pleasant to hear a man who speaks fluently and tells the truth. About such the Lord's wise man writes in Proverbs (16:24) where we read: *Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.*

We are the Lord's consecrated people. The Lord called us from the darkness of this world to his miraculous light. This is why we have to daily shine as good examples just as wonderfully and clean as the various lights shining in the heavens. Our speech has to be pleasant not only for the people that listen from our immediate surroundings but also for the brethren. The receiver of our speech, our words, is after all the Creator, God, the Lord of heaven and earth. Our speech should make His heart rejoice, it should lift up His authority as Our Father, Creator of heaven and earth, and author of our salvation in Jesus Christ.

In our conversation with people with whom we introduce the truth of God's word we often use as arguments the words of the holy Scriptures which are the best explanation for different doubts. By this we stress that this information which we possess is from reading this holy book and not as a result of our own human wisdom.

Returning to the words of our subject text, we recall the words written in Proverbs (25:11) where we read: *A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.* Let's note the formation: A

word fitly spoken. Just how important this is we note in the comment of the faithful servant in the Manna for December 23:

We are to remember, when talking with those who have an ear to hear and are inquiring the way to the Lord, that there are great crises in the lives of men, momentous occasions, in which one word may be more valuable, more potent, than would be a hundred words or a thousand words at another time, under different circumstances; and we are to be instant in the Lord's service, whether seasonable or unseasonable to ourselves, gladly ready to lay down our lives for the brethren. We are to distinguish, however, between out-of-season to ourselves and out-of-season to others; and to be willing to serve others at any time, however out-of-season to ourselves, if it be in season and opportune for them. We are not to intrude even the Gospel itself at inopportune times, however convenient the occasion may be to ourselves.

In analyzing the words of the Lord's wise man, we note that a word fitly spoken is a word of prophecy at the time of its fulfillment, a word of encouragement in someone's experience, a word of admonition if one oversteps the discipline of the new creation, a word of truth directed at an open heart, a word of consolation at a moment of sadness over the loss of those who are dear to us, etc.

We can also note how many times a word fitly spoken contributed to the easing of an irritable atmosphere, an intense sadness, etc. How much encouragement and gladness can be brought by such joyful, good, and sunny words into the sad, gray lives of those who are close to us—brothers and sisters, neighbors and acquaintances, friends and relatives.

A word fitly spoken can be a blessing in the class where we participate in studies and discourses. The knowledgeable elder can quickly prevent misunderstandings and discord and be the cause for the quick easing of tensions. But we must also remember that the result of this is dependent on the general attitude of the brethren in the class. The goal of building up the class is a matter for all the brethren. Let us remember that the elders can not continually put out the fires of tension. Let's be careful that our words be not the cause of tension.

There is a saying: *The one who sows the wind will reap a whirlwind.* (Hosea 8:7) So what we desire to submit to the brethren should be done at the proper time so it may edify all who have brotherly fellowship with us, who have consecrated their time to

learn something from the word of God, then return to their daily work with fresh resolve and zeal to do God's will.

Let us remember the words of the Apostle Paul from his letter to the Ephesians (4:25,29) which reads:

Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. . . . Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

The Apostle Paul reminds us that we have become one flesh, and in this flesh we must care for each other. This is the condition of maintaining brotherly fellowship. However, we know that sometimes a word directed to a brother or sister may prove to be detrimental to them. This is why someone said that if you want to say something about someone, sift it through a triple sieve:

1. Is that which you speak beneficial for those about whom you speak?
2. Is it beneficial to you who are speaking?
3. Is it beneficial for those to whom you speak?

The words of the Apostle Peter are significant in 1Peter 3:15,16 where we read:

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready alway to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: having a good conscience, that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

The Apostle James also reminds us of the importance of the words of our topic. Let us quote the words written in James' letter (3:1-10):

My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be So great and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even So the tongue is a little

member, and boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: So is the tongue among our members, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father: and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not So to be.

The Lord's wise man's definition is characteristic: *Death and life are in the power of the tongue.* (Proverbs 18:21) The power and influence of the tongue surpasses the authority of all popular members together. Therefore the control of it and its application in the Lord's service is the most important thing for God's people as it relates to their mortal bodies and matters in which they try to serve God.

Sometimes it happens that a few pleasant words of help or sympathy have an influence on a man's whole life, and even have been the cause for a nation's change of fate. We recall that language had an influence on the continuing fate of man after the flood as we read in Genesis 11:1-4,

The whole earth was of one language and of one speech. . . . As they journeyed from the east they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Let us make brick and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Let us build us a . . . tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

But this was not in agreement with the divine arrangement in which they had to go out into the whole earth and fill it. As a result of unfaithfulness and a lack of trust in God's promise that the earth would not be punished by a flood again, the Lord God mixed the languages of those people. And that condition has lasted unto today. Sometimes in life we meet people who speak in a different language. In our contact with such people (and even in contact with dear brethren at a convention such as this), we have difficulty because of the language barrier. I think, however, that we are very glad that in spite of language differences, the beautiful Gospel of Christ joins us together.

Thanks to the recognition of this wonderful news from the word of God and the appreciation of brotherly fellowship we have found ourselves at this place So that this fellowship may be strengthened even more, and that we might encourage one another in these evil times of the end. But we also have the sad privilege to meet those who from birth into their adulthood have not uttered a single word. This is why the words of the hymns we sing are So powerful and full of hope: *The dumb shall sing and the blind will see*. All would like to wait and see such a moment. That's why we, who were given this gift of speech, should appreciate it greatly. We should make our tongue a harmonious instrument to the glory of God. However, to do that we have a lot of work ahead of us.

Speech Impediments

The first exercise is the cleansing of our speech So that the words we utter are a blessing to others. When we examine our speech closely, or the speech of those around us, we may notice elements that are not very beneficial which make our speech unpleasant for God and others. We notice such things as jokes, gossip, lies, nicknames, curses, swearing, and murmuring. It would be good if we studied these things closely So we would avoid these improper words in our speech.

Let's start with jokes. A joke is a story whose purpose is to make the listeners laugh or put them in a better mood. Sometimes the truth can hide itself in a joke, being directed to a listener to make him think of what we mean. Sometimes a joke is caustic and even painful. A joking man, full of humor, is usually liked by those around him. Therefore each of us should additionally influence those around us by our behavior and personality. A few proper sentences can lead to a nice, friendly atmosphere as well as improve the general mood.

We can allow ourselves such edifying words in a joking tone at appropriate and applicable times. We can do this at home, at our neighbors, at work, and even among brethren. But here we should consider the admonition of the Apostle Paul in the letter to the Ephesians (5:3,4):

But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not be once named among you as becometh saints. Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

The second degeneration of speech is gossip. What is it? Gossip is the passing along of unproven information generally about those close to us. In Proverbs (20:19) we read these interesting words: *He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.* Gossip, like a drop of water repetitively hitting a rock, separates friends and social ties. It has a destructive power and even commits spiritual murder. One of the wise men of ancient times, having in mind gossip, once said:

He who steals my purse steals trash. But he that filches from me my good name robs me of that which not enriches him, and makes me poor indeed. [Shakespeare: *Othello*, Act III, Scene 3]

Each of us has faults; this is why we shouldn't speak badly about anyone else. Let us first put our own lives in order. When we do this, we learn liberality in relation to our brethren. Only then are we free to speak the hard truth about someone else when eventually we want to avoid damage that would result from our silence. It may be noted among people that gossip is only an occupation for women. But that's only how it appears. Men are not entirely free of it. The Apostle Paul comments on this in 1 Timothy 5:11-13,

But the younger widows refuse, for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.

This is why the apostle directed the admonition to young brother Timothy (in 1 Timothy 4:7): *But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.* The apostle mentions the depraved gossiping of some brethren in 2 Thessalonians 3:11 where we read: *For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.* This is why we try to make sure that these words never apply to us. This is a dangerous state. Our faithful servant warns us in *Tabernacle Shadows*, page 62:

So long as we ourselves are true sacrificers in the 'Holy' or true members of the 'household of faith' in the 'Court,' we will not be revilers of any that are true sacrificers of this present time. Nor will we be blinded by malice, hatred, envy or strife—so as to be unable to see the sacrifices which God accepts. What, then, shall

we say of those once 'brethren,' sharers in the same sacrifices and offerers at the same 'Golden Altar,' and fellows of the order of royal-priesthood, who become So changed, So possessed of an opposite spirit, that they can speak evil of their fellow-priests continually! We must surely 'fear' for them (Hebrews 4:1) that they have left the 'Holy,' and the 'Court,' and gone outside of all relationship to God.

Continuing further in our analysis we note the next detrimental thing: lying. A lie is the opposite of the truth. Its father and creator is one of the enemies of the New Creation, Satan, who deceived our first parents, Adam and Eve, by lying arguments. We all know his words as recorded in Genesis (3:1-5):

Now the serpent was more subtile than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden. But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

Having had no experience with evil our first parents followed the suggestion of the adversary the result of which we observe unto this day. Since that time, lying has made itself at home in man's fallen nature. Not only adults lie, but also children. Why does this happen? What is the reason?

Some lie to establish their own understanding or self in the most beneficial light at the cost of the truth, at the cost of another's dignity, at the cost of harming another person. The scriptures condemn this in the words of Proverbs 12:22 where we read: *Lying lips are abomination to the Lord, but they that deal truly are his delight.* Having turned to this book, we note the following words in chapter 6, verses 16 to 19:

These six things doth the Lord hate: yea seven are an abomination unto him: a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood. An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

As God's people we should despise this ugly feature of character. The Apostle Paul So writes in Ephesians 4:25 and Colossians 3:9,10.

Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.

The next fault of the tongue is cursing. These are the most atrocious words which man can express and invent. People around us have a plentiful stock of them. Some have So learned to talk that every other word is a curse. But among the consecrated these words should never be found. On this point we have the important admonition of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:31 where we read: *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.*

Let us not let any situation in life lead us to cursing. Let us follow the example of Job who, despite the loss of his own children, servants, and possessions, and the unwise suggestion to offend God proposed by his own wife, did not commit that unreasonable act. In his experiences he never ascribed anything improperly to God. For us his character is an edifying example and a model of patience and surrender to God's will. His words testify to this (Job 1:21): *The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.*

The next element in human speech is murmuring. This is a concept well known to us from the holy Bible. We find murmuring when reading the story of the Jewish nation. God's word tells us that they often murmured against Moses and against God. The reason for it was discomfort they met while wandering in the wilderness. As they experienced these things they even wanted to return to Egypt, forgetting about the yoke of pharaoh under which they suffered. They also forgot about God's guidance, His powerful arm which delivered them from Egyptian slavery. These events are a lesson to the consecrated who have left antitypical Egypt—come out of slavery to sin and Satan, come out of Egypt which represents the world with its aspirations and privileges—to freedom of the glory of God's children.

As we look at Israel's experience we can see a similar situation. Sometimes temporary discomforts today incline people to continual murmuring to the point where they forget the goodness

given to them by God. We recall the words of one of our hymns:
Count your many blessings, see what God hath done.

Murmuring and complaining is unbecoming to God's people. In the Morning Resolve we often read these words: *I will neither murmur nor repine at what the Lord's providence may permit.* Let us look at our Lord. He never murmured nor complained.

The prophet Isaiah wrote about him in his prophecy recorded in 53:7, *He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth.* Let us turn our thoughts to his experiences in the last moments of his earthly pilgrimage, and let us consider that we still have not fought to the death against sin.

In recalling the history of the nation of Israel, the Apostle Paul warns us in the words of 1 Corinthians 10:10 where we read: *Neither murmur ye as some of them also murmured and were destroyed of the destroyed.* Thus we see that murmuring is a spiritual sickness which destroys Christian character. People infected with this disease possess a spirit of excessive criticism. They continually criticize brethren even for the slightest reason. They complain to brethren in the meeting and to elders and pilgrim brothers. They criticize everything. Let us not allow ourselves to become infected with the sickness of murmuring but rather let us show gratitude to the Lord for his grace and blessings. Let us be glad with the truth and brotherly fellowship, and the Lord will grant us his blessing.

The words which come from our mouths in various settings have no little meaning in our Christian lives. Let us take strict caution of the words of the Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 3:10,11:

For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him eschew evil and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.

Dear brethren, let us take note of the words of the Psalmist David: *Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.* (Psalm 141:3) We are God's people, called to the Truth and the leading of a holy life and noble ways. Let us benefit from knowledge of our tongue. May our speech serve the good of our brethren. May it be a blessing for those close to us. May it bring glory to the Lord God for His various grace, blessings, and His glorious plan of salvation.

Amen.

Present Truth and the Joys of the New Creation-Bro. Hercules Gonos, Greece

WE WHO ARE HERE feel blessed in these crucial days through which the world is going. We are happy to see old faces and are looking forward to meeting new ones. The brethren in Greece who could not be here send their fervent love. They will be praying for us and eagerly await our return with the glad tidings of the convention.

The Lord Jesus said to Pilate, *For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.* Pilate, then speaking to himself, said, *What is truth?*

What we are considering is not the truth about a vital social, economic or political subject, nor the truth about a scientific invention, but rather the truth about the great subject of the creation of the universe by God. More specifically we are considering the creation of man, his falling from perfection through sin brought about by the devil, and in general, facts about the divine plan of the ages for the restitution of all things in divine harmony, and the destruction of death and its prince, the Devil, resulting from the sacrifice of God's beloved Son, our Lord Jesus.

What, though, is the present truth of which Peter speaks in his second epistle, chapter one, verse 12, where he says that he would not be negligent to put his brethren in remembrance of these things which he spoke to them about So that they would be established in the present truth?

The phrase present truth means the truth of matters of the Divine Plan of the ages which are revealed to a certain generation of God's people and are of particular interest to that generation. It is the interesting truth of one given time, and of the present time in distinction with the truth of matters revealed at another time, the matters of which are of specific interest to the generation of that time.

Present truth for Noah and his generation was the revelation about the oncoming flood and the making of the ark for the salvation of Noah and his family. However, the creation of this earth, of Adam and Eve, as well as their falling because of sin, were not present truth for Noah, but rather were historical truths.

Present truth during the Lord's First Presence was the truth that he was the looked-for Messiah of Israel, that he was the one who offered himself as a ransom for the world's sins; present truth was also the fact that that was the time when the harvest of the prophets' sowing took place and the wheat was gathered into the barn; moreover, regarding the nation of Israel, present truth was that Jerusalem was to be desolated with that generation, an event which indeed took place.

In addition, present truth for those days was the persecution and tribulation of the Lord's followers, up to the point of thinking that whosoever killed them would do God a service. Finally, present truth was also the Lord's warning to his disciples to flee to the mountains when they would see Jerusalem compassed with armies. He also told them many prophecies referring to the distant future, such as the tribulation of the 1260-day church, the abomination of desolation by Antichrist, the Second Presence, etc., which, although not being of immediate interest to the generation of the apostles, were indeed a source of great interest and vigilance. Taking this into consideration, we can assume that these prophecies were also the present truth of that time.

As far as Biblical history is concerned, from the time of Adam's fall and up to the days of the apostles and the rest of the disciples, this was not to be considered as the present truth of their days, but rather a reminder of past days' truths and thus a confirmation of the present truth of their time.

What, however, is present truth for us today—for this period of the Lord's Second Presence in which we now live and in which we are specially interested?

At first, we will certainly all agree that present truth, in general, is the cleansing of the sanctuary by the present Lord, through the *Faithful and Wise Servant*, right after the end of the 1335 symbolic days of Daniel (8:14; 12:12). Consequently one of the chief and most interesting characteristics of the present truth is the Lord's presence, in person, and not simply through his interest referred to in Matthew 28:20: *Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*

In the August 9th Manna Brother Russell refers to the fact that one of the tests of the present *harvest*, like that of the Jewish or typical *harvest*, must be the presence of Christ. The Jews were reprovved because they *knew not the time of their visitation*. (Luke 19:44) These words mean that those who do not really see the Lord's

presence in person today will be deprived of taking part in the Little Flock. Consequently, these people must neither be approved of, nor accepted as leaders and teachers of the Lord's people, nor as judges of these supreme, spiritual benefits, since they do not have the enlightenment of the Lord's presence.

Is, though, present truth only the pleasant aspect of the plan of the ages? Is it only the glorious promises and the Lord's blessedness for only his followers, or is it maybe only the preachings about love, justice, peace, sanctification and brotherly love? No! Truth is not only the aspect of the divine plan. This is because, just as of old, truths were Jeremiah's lamentations for Israel after the flesh, as well as the Lord's woes for the scribes and Pharisees; in the same way today, truth is the severe reproof of the revelation to the Church of the Laodiceans and its woes for them that dwell on the earth. Moreover, a very much present truth is the great change of dispensation just at hand.

The Joys of the New Creation and the

Joys of the World

The joys of the new creation are totally different from the joys of the world. They are just the opposite, an odor of sweet smell toward God and hatred toward the devil; the latter are abomination and animosity towards God and friendship with the devil. *No man can serve two masters.* (Matthew 6:24)

The joys of the new creation depend upon our relationship with our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus as well as on the exceeding great and precious promises. They are the joys which flourish under such conditions as tears, afflictions and trials, rather than conditions of welfare and laughter.

It is the joy of our acquaintance with our Lord Jesus' death on the cross, with the cup of *ransom* and participation in his death. *For unto us it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.* (Philippians 1:29).

It is the joy of our communion with our Father through prayer, So that we can thank him not only for his daily blessings to us but also for forgiveness of our sins because of our imperfections.

It is the joy of our fellowship with the fellow members of Christ's body, through home visits, mid-week meetings and general conventions. It is the joy to see our brethren make progress, and

even more the joy to detect *the best gifts* and the *fruits of the spirit* surpassing our own to the point of having us imitate them. It is the joy of these brethren having a place in our hearts, *our joy and crown*. (Philippians 4:1)

It is the joy of conversing with one another about different subjects and prophecies which are more timely for us today, as Brother Russell says in the Third Volume, page 227:

As we remember that within this eventful period the promised deliverance and exaltation of the Church are due, the central points of interest to the saints now are the time, manner and circumstances of their deliverance.

Certainly *the central point of interest to the saints* doesn't mean their *chief interest* [the more excellent way] which is the edification of each one of us in the knowledge of the truth and in the love in Christ. Rather it means the most timely subject of these faithful saints by whatever is related to the special conditions of the deliverance and exaltation of the last members of the Church. Is this, therefore, an insignificant matter for us today? No, but it is a quite present and interesting truth.

It is the joy of our songs in the congregation of saints, *with psaltery and harp, with stringed instruments and organs*, and it is the joy of our singing praises when we are alone either under good conditions, in tribulation, or in prison, as Paul and Silas did in the Philippian prison. (Acts 16:25)

Finally, it is the joy of our self-sacrificing love. *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*. (John 15:13)

How different, though, are the joys of this world! Its joys are based on the pleasures of sin for a season, *on the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*. (1 John 2:16) These joys are joys that are a result of ignorance of the blessings of the divine plan of the ages for mankind, and ignorance of the exceeding great and precious promises that have been revealed to the people of God during the Gospel age.

But what else have we to say about the joys of the world? Is it worthwhile to waste more time and effort in order to enumerate some of them? Surely not.

Manifestations of the Joys of the New Creation and of the Joys of the World

Similar to the joys, the manifestations of both these joys are totally different. The joys of the new creation are hidden deep in our hearts. They are joys which are also understood by the fully and completely consecrated members of Christ's body. Those who have simply been symbolically baptized in water and have not rendered all that they have to the Lord, do not feel these joys and do not participate in them. Moreover, since these fully consecrated ones are not in compromise with the friendship of the world, they are regarded as oppressive, fanatic and exaggerated. How would it be possible for such people to enjoy privation of these goods? Furthermore, these joys are not necessarily boisterous, nor are they accompanied by the foolishness of laughter. They are quiet joys, sweet, pure, compassionate, peaceful, encouraging and spiritual.

In contrast, manifestations of joys of this world are sarcastic, ostentatious, boisterous, and are often connected with the foolishness of laughter, a condition which is greatly connected with lawlessness rather than with justice, and is an indication of lack of understanding of the seriousness of our times, rather than a manifestation of real joy of the new creation. Proverbs 14:9 and 10:23 say that *fools make a mock [Greek: laughter] at sin. It is as sport [Greek: laughter] to a fool to do mischief*. This is why Ecclesiastes 2:2 says, *I said of laughter, it is mad [Greek: foolishness]*.

The Lord's words are more suitable for us today: *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.* (Matthew 11:29)

Let Your Laughter Be Turned to Mourning and Your Joy to Heaviness (James 4:9)

This is a peculiar and strange rebuke of joy. Let us separate that which refers to joy from that which refers to laughter, because the Lord said about joy, *that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full* (John 15:11); while about laughter, what is written we have mentioned—that it is mad *foolishness*.

This one and only epistle of James had been called a general epistle because at the time of its writing he was addressing all the Jews who were scattered abroad and all proselytes. He was, however, intending, under the inspiration of the holy Spirit, the edification of God's people, and that of all the churches of the

Gospel age in general. His epistle is regarded as greatly austere because it reproves the conversation of the saints and the course of the world in a straightforward manner and with severe characterizations. The most severe of all phrases is that which calls brethren *adulterers and adulteresses*. Naturally, there must have been, within the conditions he was reproving, some brethren who were pure and very faithful to the Lord, who were an exception to this reproof. However, this phrase of James is general because the bad condition of the brethren in that period, or any other period which he may have wished to rebuke, seems to have a universal nature. Therefore he didn't wish to note the exceptions.

Because of this severe reproof, as well as his emphasis on righteousness by works (saying that *faith without works is dead*), this epistle is not very pleasant to a number of brethren, and is totally rejected as not being true by other brethren. The number of brethren for whom this epistle is not pleasant can be categorized as those who, although they appreciate the truth and love to be with the Lord, at the same time they also love *the friendship of the world*. It seems as though they are the ones who in Revelation are called *neither cold nor hot*.

The other brethren, those who have rejected the epistle as not being true, we can say, in our opinion, are those who have broken their covenant with the Lord by sacrifice and lead their lives in the world without works of faith. This the reason they tremble at this epistle *as the devils also believe and tremble*. (James 2:19)

Surely, the attitudes and behavior of these two categories of brethren—the first being displeased, the second trembling—are not only manifested against the spirit of James' epistle, but also against all the brethren, especially against those servants who lead a faithful life according to the spirit of full and complete consecration. They are called strict and fanatical. Even more, this displeasure is also manifested against those servants who, in addition to the above, reprove *the friendship of the world* as do James and Revelation, and also as Paul writes to the Ephesians in 5:11: *Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*.

The Truth is a Serious Matter

In no part of the Scriptures will we come across the Lord or his disciples jesting or causing laughter to their audience during their public sermons. Nor have we heard something similar to this about Brother Russell. We, of course, are imperfect and are sometimes

carried away in these ungracious manifestations. We must, however, come to our senses and correct these unbecoming manifestations in harmony with the seriousness of truth.

The Lord, of course, appears in the Scriptures as being sweet, and not as a jester, as it is written: *Grace is poured into thy lips; his lips are like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh; full of grace and truth.* (Psalm 45:2; Song of Songs 5:13; John 2:14)

In some cases he appeared very worried, troubled and in tears. In the case of the death of his friend Lazarus, *he groaned in the spirit and was troubled; Jesus wept.* (John 11:33,35) In the case of Jerusalem, *he wept over it.* (Luke 19:41-43) And in the case of Judas Iscariot, *he was troubled in spirit.* (John 13:18-21)

Surely though, these occasions of tears were indeed existent in these very serious situations, and not continual, event though some wish to have the Lord crying about insignificant matters. The Lord was sweet, but at the same time merciful and serious.

The truth is a serious matter which must hold us within an inward joyful state and outward sweet look, but also making serious decisions until each and every one of us says *finished* for himself as the Lord did. *I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished.* (Luke 12:49)

What Jesus Reproves

Carefully checking James' above-mentioned words, we will verify that these words, and generally his whole epistle, are very much like the reproofs of the Revelation for the Church of the Laodiceans. *Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.*

In a few words, that which James reproves is, as far as the brethren are concerned, *the friendship of the world*; and as far as the world is concerned, *the wrong use of wealth*; and even more, when wealth is wasted by brethren for the friendship of the world. *Go to now, ye rich men . . . Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton . . . Ye have condemned and killed the just.*

Friendship of the world refers to the close relationship of brethren with worldly life. It is their friendly disposition and their participation in aspirations, joys, enjoyments and life in general. *Friendship of the world* includes all those things that are not

actually sinful, but are certainly out of the narrow way of full and complete consecration on which we, as a holy people, must walk.

John, in his first epistle, chapter two, verse 16, says, *All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.* Consecration and sacrifice does not include sinful things, but just rights.

Abstinence from a sinful life is not a sacrifice to God but rather the obligation of each intelligent creature So that he or she may have an eternal life. Sacrifice is dedicating to God's service all our lawful goods, money, time, rest, convenience, fame and even quality of life, as it is called today.

This present period of time abundantly offers what John is referring to in his first epistle. Besides that, however, the present time also offers plenty of helps in the written word, as he also mentions in the Revelation to the Church of Laodicea. These are the Bible, properly classified, the volumes of Studies in the Scriptures, along with the rest of Brother Russell's writings, spiritual magazines, dictionaries, weekly gatherings, general conventions and So many more spiritual accommodations.

If we use all these spiritual means and accommodations for just simple knowledge and joy, without applying them to a consecrated, sacrificing life for works of faith, then we only have *leaves* of confession and not *fruits* of righteousness.

Is Austerity a Friend or an Enemy?

The Suffering of Leniency of One of God's Priests

On this question, let the wise Solomon answer first: *Open rebuke is better than secret love.* And again: *Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.* (Proverbs 27:5,6)

And now the suffering of one of God's priests. He is Eli. We read from 1 Samuel, chapter two:

Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial . . . they abhorred the offering of the Lord . . . and they laid with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation . . . and they made themselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people. . . . Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; . . . and he said unto them, Why do ye such things? . . . Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear . . . Notwithstanding, they hearkened not unto the voice of their

father. . . . And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him . . . Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice . . . and honorest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people? But now the Lord saith, Be if far from me; for them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

And verses 13 and 14 of chapter three continue:

For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore, I have sworn unto [against] the house of Eli.

Here the question arises: Why did God get angry with the House of Eli since he besought his sons not to do the bad things they did? The answer is given by the Lord himself: *Because he restrained them not.* There is a great difference between Eli's beseeching and the strict measures he should have taken against his sons to stop them from making themselves vile.

God's law demanded strict measures against his sons during this occasion of transgression—strict up to the point of death—while Eli only restricted himself to beseeching. Therefore, leniency deriving from selfish love, love of relations, love which is based on human weakness, brings on judgment by God in serious transgressions of His laws. Instead of benefitting our loved ones, it causes them loss.

That No Man Go Beyond and

Defraud His Brother in Any Matter

These are the words which Paul wrote to the Thessalonians in his first epistle, chapter four, verse 6, and adds, *because that the Lord is the avenger of all such.* Of whom? He mentions fornication, uncleanness, and how we must walk in order to please God.

What, however, does the phrase, *that no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter,* mean? The Greek text of the Scriptures gives the following meaning to the words from verses 1-8. When one brother teaches another brother God's leniency on sins which bring about God's wrath, then he defrauds his brother because he goes beyond God's strict laws. By being lenient he is causing God's wrath to fall upon him.

According to valid Greek dictionaries, the phrase *go beyond* means *I am above someone*, and as to laws, *I break them—I am above them*. This is the exact sin of Eli and was the cause for God's wrath to fall upon his children and himself. Consequently, going beyond God's leniency defrauds a brother rather than benefitting him.

This is indeed a very significant but also a hard lesson for us as servants, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, when we manifest our leniency to our precious ones, or when we hide the severe truth from them on matters of sanctification, works of faith, sufferings, persecutions and unpleasant prophecies, for which the Golden Rule of truth of the Lord demands the opposite, practicing such leniency, mistakenly thinking that we might hurt or scare them.

It is heard said, for instance, *Don't talk about tribulations, about trials, persecutions and prophecies of things which are coming on the earth. Neither talk about the chariot or the whirlwind which Elijah will take up in heaven; nor about the woes of the Revelation; because these cause fear to our children and our young brethren, and this might cause them to fear and turn back or be separated*. But how can we *go beyond* the Lord's words and that of his apostles and speak differently than they have spoken? The Lord did not hide anything, but rather said: *Behold I have foretold you all things*. (Mark 13:23)

And Peter added in his first epistle, chapter four, verses 7 and 12, after saying *the end of all things is at hand, Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you*. The truth, no matter how hard it might be, does not offend those who love the Lord unto the death—the overcomers—but rather arms them with all the spiritual armor So they may overcome all the trials and *stand before the Son of man*. (Luke 21:36)

Satan's Last Gospel

Love, Justice, Morality, Peace, Security

In contrast to the present truth, which includes not only messages of love, morality, friendship, righteousness or peace, but also all of the characteristics of the divine plan for humanity, and especially for the Church, Satan's gospel is only limited to those messages which we hear in all the nominal churches.

As we are nearing the end of *the fashion of this world*, Satan's gospel will further expand and will be greatly emphasized because of world situations on one hand, and because he can see *that there should be time no longer* for him, and on the other hand with the intention of hindering the message of the present truth. The harp is already making this *sweet melody*. (Isaiah 23:16)

He, though, who may wish to denounce this gospel regarding world peace and security, Satan's gospel—which will take on its most official and brilliant form in the already ascending out of the bottomless pit *Antichrist, Federation of Churches*—will be persecuted. (See Volume 4, Foreword, page iii.) About this counterfeit Satan's gospel we refer you to the article written by Brother Russell on this subject in the February 1, 1916, Watchtower (page 5847 of the Reprints) entitled *Satan's Counterfeit of True Religion*.

The present truth and the joys of the new creation, with their manifestations, are exactly the opposite from those of Satan's gospel. The truth increases our trust towards the Lord, whereas concealing the truth and ignorance sets traps.

The God of all grace, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you . . . To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. (1 Peter 5:10,11)

Amen.

Harvest Highlights: 1874 to 1916

MATTHEW, chapter 13, verses 24 through 30:

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, an enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of the harvest, I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

In many ways this parable of the wheat and the tares speaks to us of the history of the Harvest Church. If it were not for the harvesting of the wheat at this end of the Gospel Age, none of us would be here now enjoying the fellowship that we are having at this convention.

As the time drew near for the Harvest of the Gospel Age, our Lord began to direct his attention toward the earth, and specifically toward the northeastern portion of the United States. Here we witness the cleansing of the sanctuary class, the stirring of the virgins and the preparatory work of William Miller and others paving the way for one of the most important works of the Divine Plan of the Ages—the harvesting of the true Church.

How would you have accomplished this work if it were given to you? What would you have done to accomplish the gathering of the true wheat from the tare field of Christian denominations that existed at the time of our Lord's return? Let's look at this phenomena of the gathering of the harvest Church at the end of the Gospel Age.

A clear understanding of the reality of what happened between 1874 and 1916 is often lost in the string of events that we have come to talk about in our fellowship together. The joys, the trials, the blessings, the disappointments—all of these have blended together into a blur of what the harvest experience truly has been.

However, there are themes which do exist in the narrative of the harvest events. These themes have been a hallmark of our *Harvest Highlights*. In fact it is because these themes are prevalent today that we can recognize them in the record of yesterday.

In many ways the first 42 years of the harvest—the years from 1874 to 1916—are inseparably linked to the life and activities of the messenger to the Harvest Church: Charles Russell.

As we review the events of this period, we would like to keep in mind a series of thoughts. We would like to state these points one by one so that as we go through the events of the period we can better understand what has been taking place.

The Major Characteristics of the Harvest Period

Point number 1: The Bible Student movement has never been a large movement. Even at its peak it was a movement of tens of

thousands rather than the hundreds of thousands of many other denominations. Yet even though it was not a large movement, it was a movement of large influence.

Point number 2: Brother Russell did not exert a controlling influence over the brethren individually, but, as we shall see, he did exert a compelling influence on the Church as a whole. It was a compelling influence because of the ideals which he set forth and because of the truths that unified the brethren in their activities.

Point number 3: The Bible Students are an old movement, but the movement was culturally and technologically in tune with its time. In fact, the movement was in advance of its time.

Point number 4: The underlying direction of the movement was rigid and uncompromising in Christian values and essential truths, but it was flexible and broadminded in matters of individual style.

Point number 5: Although the pages of the Watchtower were used as a channel of divinely revealed truth, they were also, and more often, used as an effective tool in pastoring a geographically diverse flock.

Point number 6: Although headquartered in Brooklyn, New York, for the last seven years, the first 35 years of that 42-year period when the Church was privileged to have the messenger with them were spent in Alleghany, Pennsylvania. It was not a cosmopolitan movement; it was a movement of small towns and small ecclesias.

Point number 7: Although today we often refer with certainty to the way things were done *in the Pastor's day*, there was not a firm tradition established back then. In fact tradition was avoided at all cost.

Point number 8: Although the general call ended in 1881, the bulk of the harvest work was accomplished after 1881.

Point number 9: Although chronological reckoning has pinpointed the focal point of specific messages such as the Lord's return in 1874, the call to come out of Babylon and the casting off of its nominal systems in 1878, and the ending of the general call in 1881, these messages grew in crescendo well beyond their appointed dates up to and including 1916. Brother Russell's view and vision were that they would grow even further beyond that point.

Point number 10: Although most of our photographs show Brother Russell as an older man, the six volumes were the work of a young man. The first three volumes were written while Brother Russell was still in his thirties. Tabernacle Shadows was written when he was in his twenties.

Point number 11: Although there were controversies, dissensions, and even deceit in many affairs of the Harvest Church, the brethren were markedly joyous. They were full of blessed experiences. They were open, good natured, optimistic, and even humorous.

Point number 12: Although Brother Russell was the Lord's appointed messenger, those who survived the siftings and testings of that time were not the followers of the man, or even of the organization. They were the followers of the Truth.

Finally, point number 13: Although there was a tremendous work encouraged and accomplished, it was not accomplished because of organic unity, because the brethren were united in one organization. It was accomplished because of the promulgation of the thought that every believer was independent. It was accomplished because of the insistence by Brother Russell and those who were following and working with him that each believer stands alone in Christ.

Brother Russell's Early Years

Let's turn our attention back to the field that was left at the time when our Lord was about to return. At about the time of the stirring of the virgins in preparation for the return of the bridegroom, the attention of our Lord was centered in Alleghany, near the city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In 1852 Charles Taze Russell was born, the second son of Joseph L. and Ann Eliza [Birney] Russell.

In 1861 when Brother Russell was nine years old, his mother died. From that point forward, his father took the responsibility of being both parents and continued to raise Charles as a devoted Christian.

In 1865, at the age of 13, Brother Russell would have heard of the assassination of the President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln.

The year 1867 was very important in the life of Brother Russell. It was then, at the age of 15, in a doctrinal discussion with an infidel on the fate of those who are not saved, that Brother Russell was

routed. In this discussion the infidel brought to light scriptures and reasonings based upon the character of God that shook his faith in Christianity as it was taught in the creeds. He was shaken to such an extent that he became a skeptic of Christianity and began to investigate the oriental religions. He also began to devote his energies and keen reasoning to the pursuit of his mercantile activities.

In 1868, when Brother Russell was 16, Benjamin Disraeli was elected Prime Minister of Great Britain. Brother Russell, finding nothing worthy of pursuit in the oriental religions, began to look again at the Bible. However, instead of looking at it from the perspective of the Christian sects, he discarded these and let the Bible speak for itself.

On an old side street in Alleghany, in a dingy old hall, he met a man named Jonas Wendel, an Adventist, one who had been a follower of William Miller. The study in this hall stirred Brother Russell's interest in the subject of our Lord's return. If our Lord was to return, WHY was he to return? Brother Russell began to look for an answer to this question, not in the Christian creeds, but in the pages of the Bible.

When Brother Russell turned 18 in 1870, France's third republic was proclaimed, Rome became the capitol of Italy, and Nikolai Lenin was born. In that year Brother Russell began to study with the small Bible class in Alleghany. He began a systematic study of the scriptures which resulted in an understanding of the major features of the Divine Plan of the Ages.

During this time, Brother Russell had increasing success in his mercantile activities. He opened a chain of clothing stores and because of mass purchasing, could offer quality goods at lower cost.

1872: Brother Russell was 20 years old. In their studies regarding our Lord's return, Brother Russell learned that the object of the return is the *restitution of all things*. This expanded understanding of our Lord's work at his second advent broadened Brother Russell's appreciation for the redemptive work accomplished at our Lord's first advent.

1874: This was the year of our Lord's return. N. H. Barber, the editor of *Herald of the Morning* was disappointed by his unrealized expectations regarding our Lord's return. Barber had the correct understanding of the time features associated with the return, but

he misunderstood both the object and the manner of our Lord's return. However, a Bible Student with a Diaglott examined Matthew 24:3 and recognized that the Greek word *parousia* means *presence* and not *coming* as translated in the English King James version of the Bible.

During this time the revivals of Moody result in large numbers of people renewing their devotion to the Lord.

1875: Brother Russell was now 23 years old. In this year he wrote and distributed 50,000 copies of *The Object and Manner of our Lord's Return* at his own expense.

1876: The telephone was invented. Brother Russell at the age of 24 asked N. H. Barber to come to Alleghany to discuss matters relating to our Lord's presence and the 1874 date. He felt that a proper understanding of Matthew 24:3 might shed light on the chronological reckonings which Barber had developed. It was at this meeting that Brother Russell was made the assistant editor of the *Herald of the Morning*. Barber saw in Brother Russell not only a keen young mind that was thoroughly devoted to the Lord, but also a ready source of financial support for his publication.

During this year Brother Russell was elected pastor of the Bible class in Alleghany, and he remained in this position until his death in 1916. Recognizing from his studies that the Lord had returned invisibly in 1874, he began to vigorously herald this truth in the vicinity of Pittsburgh.

1877: At the age of 25, Brother Russell called a meeting of all the ministers in the area to speak to them on the subject of the second presence. All of them rejected his message. He gave up his secular work, leaving his several stores in the hands of his workers So he could devote all his time to preaching God's word. He began to travel extensively throughout the eastern portions of the United States and Canada, speaking to both large and small groups on the subject of our Lord's return and the restitution of all things promised in the Bible. Mr. Barber who was left behind to produce the *Herald of the Morning*, began to deviate in his understanding of the truth.

1878: The brethren, through a study of the parallels which existed between our Lord's first and second presence, expected that they would witness the resurrection of the *sleeping saints* and would themselves be *changed* to spirit nature. Although the resurrection of the sleeping saints did occur in the spring of that year, the

brethren were somewhat disappointed that they had been left behind. This was the year when Mr. Barber changed his views on the ransom merit of Jesus. The dispute that developed in the pages of the *Herald of the Morning* between Brother Russell and Mr. Barber resulted in the departure of Mr. Barber with the type and office equipment that Brother Russell had purchased. Brother Russell realized that he could better serve the Lord and the Truth by curtailing his travels and devoting his time to the establishment of a new journal. He was, however, delayed in his plan to start the journal until July of 1879. During that time he conducted a series of public meetings in the Pittsburgh area. One of those who attended was Maria Francis Actley. She attended one evening and within three months, she and Brother Russell were married. Seventeen years later their marriage ended in separation. Brother Russell testified that they had 13 years of happy wedded life during which time Sister Russell served as a devoted and loving wife.

The Watchtower

1879: The Watchtower magazine was founded with an initial circulation of 6,000 copies. It was always sent free to the *Lord's poor*. Brother Russell stated in his articles that he would always strive to be faithful to the truth contained in the scriptures, but advised his readers that they should not simply accept what was written in the Watchtower. Rather they should *sift* it and search the scriptures to be sure it was true.

1880: Brother Russell was 28 years old. The first official *Bastille Day* celebration occurred in France. The *Bible Examiner*, a periodical published by George Storrs, ceased publication and Storrs began to support Brother Russell's activities. After reading Mr. Barber's erroneous views on the tabernacle sacrifices, Brother Russell began a study of the tabernacle. He came to the proper understanding of the tabernacle types and shadows based mainly upon a clearer understanding of Hebrews, chapter 13.

1881: This was the year when the general call ended. Rumania was declared a kingdom. Again the brethren, based upon their understanding of the parallels between our Lord's first and second advents, expected to experience their change of nature to the spirit condition. Brother Russell, now 29 years old, published and distributed 1,400,000 copies of *Food for Thinking Christians*. These books were distributed to believers at the very doors of their church congregations. A notice appeared in the Watchtower: *1,000 Preachers Wanted*.

1882: The memorial celebrations in Newark, New Jersey, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, each had 60 brethren in attendance. In this year the British House of Commons recommended *home rule* for all its colonies in West Africa.

1883: Brother Russell was 31 years old. A notice appeared in the Watchtower that the book *Millennial Day Dawn* was not yet ready. (Hebrews had expected to benefit from the popularity of another book in circulation entitled *Day Dawn*, but was unable to do so.) In the Watchtower article entitled *Church Government*, Brother Russell indicated that he felt elders and deacons were not necessary because of the independent nature of the brethren and the shortness of the time.

1884: Zion's Watchtower and Tract Society was legally incorporated. Every \$10 donation to it bought one voting share in the society.

1885: Brother Russell was 33 years old. Tabernacle Shadows was distributed as a Watchtower issue.

1886: Volume one, at that time entitled *Millennial Dawn*, was published with an initial press run of 4,500 copies. Brother Russell indicated it would be necessary to publish more than that one volume to outline God's plan. The first volume presented the basics of the Plan of the Ages; the second would give the details of its times and seasons. The first volume was also distributed as the November and December Watchtower issues.

1887: The memorial celebration in Pittsburgh was attended by 150. The brethren in these early years all gathered together in Pittsburgh to celebrate the memorial. The Watchtower contained another appeal for workers in the vineyard. Articles such as *How to Preach to Those of Jewish Heritage* and *Come Out of Her My People* appeared in its pages.

1888: Volume one had 70,000 copies in circulation. For the first time the term *colporteur* was used to describe those who sold these books to the public. Volume two was not yet ready. It would be entitled *The Time is at Hand*. It was distributed in 1889 as the April and May issues of the Watchtower.

1890: Brother Russell, at the age of 38, moved the Watchtower organization into bigger and better facilities. Poems of Dawn and

Hymns of Dawn were printed. Luxembourg separated from Holland and became a separate country.

1891: The third volume entitled *Thy Kingdom Come* was distributed as the June Watchtower issue. Brother and Sister Russell made a journey to Europe, Asia, Africa, and Russia. While in Russia, he met a Jewish Christian named Joseph Rabinowitz at his home in Kishnair, Russia.

1892: Brother Russell was 40 years old. There were 400 brethren at the memorial gathering in Pittsburgh. A Watchtower article entitled *Our Critical Readers* appeared. It seems that Watchtower readers were so careful in their reading that they questioned Brother Russell and asked for clarification even in the case of typographical errors. The brethren were not docile followers but keen students heeding Brother Russell's suggestion that they *prove all things* by the scriptures.

1893: Joseph Rabinowitz travels from Russia to visit Brother Russell in Alleghany. There were 114 colporteurs in active service.

During this year, some objected to Brother Russell's role and prominence in the work. This led to Sister Russell's pilgrim trip in defense of Brother Russell which ultimately resulted in her being led astray in connection with the woman's role in the Church and her personal desire for more influence in editing the Watchtower.

1894: Brother Russell was 42. He wrote in the Watchtower of our personal liberty and responsibility to continue to prove things by the word of the Lord if we are to protect our liberty as Christians. The memorial celebration in Pittsburgh was attended by 160; 85 attended in New York. Sister Russell began her tour defending Brother Russell. Pilgrim brethren were sent out with a letter of introduction. Later the letter was withdrawn because some of the brethren thought it was a letter of endorsement for the pilgrims. Brother Russell did not want this to be the case. The pilgrims were sent forth simply as brethren of exceptional moral character, polished in the Truth, large in meekness and in their understanding of the Lord's plan, of good ability to impart the Truth to others, of known fidelity to the doctrine of the ransom in its true sense, of a humble mind, seeking to preach not self, but Christ, who did not put forth their own knowledge but presented God's word in its purity and simplicity.

1895: Brother McPhail was given special duties in connection with his role as a pilgrim. At this time Brother Russell recognized the need for electing elders and deacons in the ecclesias.

1896: At the age of 44 Brother Russell separated from Maria Francis Russell. He suggested that chart talks be introduced so that brethren who were serving locally as elders could go into their communities and spread the Truth through discourses on the chart.

1897: A series of articles began to appear on the topic of God's covenants. During this year Volume four entitled *The Day of Vengeance* was distributed as a Watchtower subscription. We now know it as *The Battle of Armageddon*. The title was changed to benefit from statements appearing in the public press.

1898: Joseph Russell, Brother Russell's earthy father, died at the age of 84. Nearly one million volumes had been distributed by the colporteurs. They were going out at the rate of 1,000 per day. A special donation of \$186,000 was made that year to the society for the buildings, the books, the press, the publications, etc. Although there is no specific mention of it, it is certain this was a donation by Brother Russell himself.

1899: The memorial celebration in Pittsburgh was attended by 250. There were only 2,501 reported to have partaken of it worldwide even though a special request was made in the pages of the Watchtower for the brethren to report how many in their ecclesias partook of the memorial symbols. Volume five entitled *The Atonement Between God and Man* was distributed as a Watchtower issue. Great personal trials began to develop as a result of Brother Russell's separation from his wife.

1900: Brother Russell suggested that the brethren avoid flattery in connection with the pilgrims who had been sent out. The memorial celebration worldwide had 2,600 participants. An admonition to Watchtower readers appeared: *We have recently learned of some of this journal's subscribers who have not read the Millennial Dawn volumes entirely. It is a great mistake. None can rightly understand or appreciate the precious truth presented herein unless he first have a clearly outlined view of the great Divine Plan of the Ages. Hence, we urge upon all that they begin this study at once.*

1901: Lenin forms the Bolshevik party in Russia. Brother McPhail begins to deviate on the doctrine of the new covenant, stating that it had already started.

1902: The memorial celebration saw 4,725 who were partaking of the emblems in 175 ecclesias.

1903: Wilbur and Orville Wright make the first manned, powered flight in an airplane. Brother Russell took a European journey and wrote in the Watchtower that the true sheep *fold* is not a *pen*. He thus encouraged the independence and personal growth of the brethren. The Russell-Eaton debates took place in that year.

1904: Volume six entitled *The New Creation* was distributed, but not as a Watchtower issue. Brother Russell suggested that the brethren put notices in local newspapers advising *Millennial Dawn* readers to meet locally So Watchtower subscribers would know of the existence of local ecclesias. As soon as volume six was published, critical remarks were received about the clarity of Brother Russell's views on the position of the Ancient Worthies in the resurrection.

1906: The memorial was celebrated by 6,267. There were 500 colporteurs in the field.

1908: The number partaking of the memorial reached 8,397. In response to a letter from Brother Horace Hollister, the *Vow Unto the Lord* was developed. It was printed in the Watchtower and Brother Russell suggested it would be profitable for the brethren to take it.

1909: Brother Russell was now 57 years old. The Watchtower organization moved to Brooklyn, New York, but Brother Russell remained the pastor of the Alleghany ecclesia. There were 9,245 brethren who partook of the memorial that year and there were 625 colporteurs in the field. Brother Russell published articles on the God's three great covenants. Objections were raised to the use of Brother Russell's photograph in the newspapers. Divisions among brethren occurred over the Vow. Brother Russell came into a clearer understanding regarding justification and the covenants.

1910: Japan annexed Korea. There were 9,600 who partook of the memorial. Brother Russell suggested that the term International Bible Students Association be used. 4,000 Jews gathered to hear Brother Russell's address in the Hippodrome auditorium in New York City.

1911: Brother Russell took both a world tour and a trans-continental trip across North America. The memorial was

celebrated by 10,570 brethren. Articles began to appear on the topic *The Church's Share in the Sin Offering*.

1912: The world's largest ocean liner, the Titanic, hit an iceberg off the North American coast on its maiden voyage and 1,513 passengers are drowned. A question published in the Watchtower asked whether or not one should marry because of the shortness of the time.

1913: The count of those partaking of the memorial was 7,944, including a large ecclesia in Glasgow, Scotland. There were over 1,100 ecclesias in the United States and Canada. Testimony meetings were encouraged. Brother Russell wrote that punctuality was a mark of character development. The *Morning Resolve* was presented to the brethren.

1914: Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary is assassinated at Sarajevo. Shortly after World War I began. The *Photodrama of Creation* was presented for the first time. This important witnessing effort consisted of hand-tinted frames of motion picture film projected together with sound from phonograph records. It was widely viewed during the next two years.

1915: Because of the disappointment of the brethren that 1914 did not end the harvest and bring the *change* to the spirit nature, funds flowing into the Watchtower began to sharply diminish. This required Brother Russell to dismiss many workers from the Brooklyn headquarters. After doing this he wrote an article in the Watchtower stating that this action should not be misunderstood because the general work was not being interrupted. Brother Russell began to study the work of Elijah in more detail and he suggested the antitypical significance of the Elijah work. The colporteurs wanted to know if it was still appropriate for them to continue to sell the volumes seeing that 1914 had passed.

1916: Brother Russell was 64 years old. The Elijah type and the smiting of the River Jordan were very much on his mind. The harvest work was going grandly on. His last trip was to the western United States. He was afflicted with many physical ailments; on October 31st he died and passed to his reward. His writings were translated and published in English, German, French, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, Finnish, Welsh, Polish, Hungarian, Hollandish, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Greek, Russian, Armenian, Arabic, Tamil, Malayan, Zulu, Esperanto, Maori, Gujarati, Marathi, Telugu, Urdu, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese.

He and those associated with him during those years of 1874 to 1916 have left us with a wonderful heritage in the truth and an encouraging example of full consecration.

Let us use our heritage wisely So that we may be found faithful and changed to the spirit nature when our work is finished.

Zadok, The Sanctified Priest-Bro. Deva Kirupa, India

GRACE, PEACE AND JOY of the everliving God be with you dear brethren of the various Bible classes gathered here.

I thank our almighty Heavenly Father for giving me this blessed opportunity to be with you brethren of one faith and one believing love in Him.

Jesus our Lord and Savior prayed, *Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.* (John 17:17) Let us contemplate Zadok, the sanctified priest. I wish today to share with you some thoughts about Zadok whom the everliving Jehovah God chose for a special task.

When God showed a divine sanctuary in vision to Ezekiel, the prophet of exile, He asked him to offer a place as a holy oblation for the *priests that are sanctified of the sons of Zadok*. In Ezekiel 48:11 we read, *It shall be for the priests that are sanctified of the sons of Zadok which have KEPT MY CHARGE, which went not astray when the children of Israel went astray as the Levites went astray.*

In the tabernacle there were four places of interest: the Camp, the Court, the Holy, and the Most Holy. But in Ezekiel's sanctuary, we note other places: the inner court, the outer court, the porch, and the unholy place. The unholy place is similar to the Camp in the tabernacle of the wilderness. The holy oblation for the sons of Zadok was provided between the outer court wall and this unholy place.

When the Levites were selected to minister in God's temple for the tribes of Israel, they disobeyed the Levitical rules on many occasions. This disobedience angered the Lord. Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, were consumed by fire when they brought strange fire before the altar. Because of iniquity, Eli's sons were killed on the battlefield. Therefore the God of heaven said, *I will raise me up a faithful priest that shall do according to that which is in mine*

heart and in my mind, and I will build him a sure house and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever. (1 Samuel 2:35)

Dear brethren, who is this priest: Zadok the literal man, or Zadok a spiritual class?

Zadok the Man

Let us study the man Zadok. He was, of course, a descendant of Aaron, of the family of Eleazar, the third son of Aaron. He and his sons were selected by King David to be governors of the sanctuary and governors of the house of God as we read in 1 Chronicles 24:4,5.

It may not be out of place to recall the history of the ark of the covenant captured by the Philistines. When the Philistines took the ark to their place, they were afflicted with a plague. The devastation was so bad that they were too afraid to keep the ark with them. They sent it in a cart to Israel drawn by calves guided by no one.

During the reign of King David when the ark was taken back to the holy city of Jerusalem, the king made only Zadok and Abiathar and six Levites carry it on their own shoulders, the right way to carry it. Thus they escaped the wrath of God who had killed Uzzah when the law had been violated by carrying the ark in a cart instead of carrying it on their own shoulders.

An interesting part of the history of Zadok occurred during King David's exile. Though he was a king of glorious Jerusalem, he was disgraced by one of his sons, banished by another, revolted against by a third, and betrayed by his friends, kith and kin. This is similar to how a child of God today is put to such tests by which he proves his mettle. When fleeing from Absalom, the king and his followers were walking on the sand of the desert. Let us turn to the Book of Remembrance (2Samuel 15:23,24):

All the country wept with a loud voice and all the people passed over; the king also himself passed over the brook of Kidron, and all the people passed over toward the way of the wilderness. And lo Zadok also, and all the Levites were with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God: and they set down the ark of God; and Abiathar went up until all the people had done passing out of the city.

The Bible gives us a vivid picture. David is marching barefooted in the wilderness and his people are wailing. Zadok, with a deep faith and love, comes with the other Levites bearing the ark of God. He seems to be saying to David: *Lord, here I am. I cannot leave you. I will follow you wherever you go, stay wherever you stay. I have not come here alone. See, I have brought the ark. The mercy of God is with us.* But King David says, *Carry back the ark of God into the city. If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again and show me both it and his habitation.* (2Samuel 15:25)

So Zadok and Abiathar returned back to the city with the ark. Then the news came that Ahithophel, a wise counsellor who had also served under David, was now with Absalom. The king was so worried that he prayed to God to turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness. The prayer was answered when a man called Hushai, a friend of David, came to him. He came to David with his clothes rent and earth upon his head asking the king to allow him to go with him. But David told him to return to Jerusalem and tell Absalom that he would serve him as he had served David. By his presence in the court he would be able to convey important information to David through Zadok and Abiathar. Hushai agreed to do this.

During Absalom's short reign, one day Ahithophel said to him, *I will choose 12,000 men and go after David this night and kill only the king and bring back all the people. So all will be in peace.* (2 Samuel 17:1-3) The plan seemed right so Absalom and all the elders of Israel approved it. But because of the prayer of David, God worked in the mind of Absalom to consult Hushai also. It was Hushai who made Absalom not to follow the wise counsel of Ahithophel. He reminded Absalom that David and his men were like a bear robbed of her cubs. Then he said, *Gather men as much as the sand of the sea shore from Dan to Beersheba and yourself lead them to battle. Attack David wherever he may be found. Neither he nor any of his men will be left alone.* To Absalom and the others this advice seemed better than Ahithophel's. Thus God defeated the good counsel of Ahithophel to bring destruction upon Absalom.

Zadok again comes into the picture. Hushai rushed and informed Zadok and Abiathar of all the conspiracies in the palace including the plan of Absalom to attack the king. The resourceful Zadok already alert and vigilant took every precaution to act instantaneously at any emergency. He had already kept his son Ahimaaz and Abiathar's son Jonathan outside of Jerusalem at Enrogel so no one would see them entering or leaving the city and

thus raise suspicion. He had also appointed a maid to pass news for David from within the city to the two outside. So the message was sent: *Do not stay in the open field tonight. Cross the river at once before Absalom catches you and your people.* David crossed Jordan immediately and not a single man stayed behind on the other side. (2 Samuel 17:15-22)

Absalom went into battle with David and was killed as he hung suspended from an oak by Joab, a general of King David. Zadok's son Ahimaaz asked Joab to permit him to tell the news to David. But Joab sent another man called Cushi. However Ahimaaz insisted on going and received permission. He overtook Cushi and was the first to be in David's presence. When the watchman told David that he saw Ahimaaz at a distance, the king said, *He is a good man and cometh with good tidings.* (2 Samuel 18:27) What confidence Zadok had earned from David. Appropriately the news of Absalom's death was not told by Ahimaaz but by Cushi. Ahimaaz only told David that there was a great tumult and that he did not know the details.

Now as David was returning to Jerusalem, all the people were preparing for a joyful *bring back the king*. But David's eyes were looking for someone else whom he wanted to accompany him on his return. He sent particularly for Zadok and Abiathar asking them to *Speak unto the elders of Judah, saying, Why are ye the last to bring the king back to his house?* (2 Samuel 19:11)

Lessons For Us

The story of Zadok does not tell us he only did his duty as a priest and remained passively in the sanctuary. He did more than that. He was a man dedicated to do his best for his master at all costs. He served David as he would serve the Lord. He did not spare any endeavor but did all in the best interest of his master as befits a sanctified priest. Here we should contemplate:

1. Are we still dedicated to the vows of consecration we made to the Lord?
2. How much more sanctified should we be as we see the day approaching?
3. Do we save much for ourselves, or nothing for ourselves? How unselfish are we?

4. Are we ready to sacrifice all that we have? Do we remember that we are not our own but belong to the one who bought us at great cost?

5. Do we have enough zeal to press toward the mark, or should we be showing more improvement from day to day?

Just as the sanctified Zadok stood hand in hand with his king, we must be zealous of our calling and election and stand very close to the Master not only in times of joy, but also in times of testing and tribulation.

We must consider this history of Zadok along the line of the spiritual seed of Abraham. Although fleshly Israel inherited the earthly sphere, the more fascinating spiritual sphere will be inherited by spiritual Israelites, a separated people, a royal priesthood which has been formed and sanctified for an unending heavenly kingdom.

The time is fast approaching when the real kingdom will be ruled by the everlasting King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We must remember the words said unto fleshly Israel, and which, after their fall, was said to spiritual Israel by Saint Peter:

Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. (1 Peter 2:9)

Dear brethren, note the words *show forth the praises of him*. It is our duty to proclaim to the world the meaning of the sacrifice of our dear master Jesus which was done for us and for the world at large, and by which God proved His love toward humanity. When the high priest in the tabernacle was performing the sacrifices of the bullock and goats, his work was proclaimed to all Israel encamping around the tabernacle by the sounds of the bells on the fringe of his robe. In the present time the faithful followers of the head, Christ, who obey all the laws and commandments of him, are the priestly class. They proclaim the good tidings as much as they can be rightly proclaimed with as much force as possible. Like Zadok, we must be dedicated to our Lord and Master in all that we do. Just as Zadok was faithful to David, we must be faithful to our Lord and Master.

Let us ponder the words of King David in 2 Samuel 19:12, *Ye are my brethren, ye are my bones and my flesh, wherefore then are ye*

the last to bring back the king? How endearing are these words of fraternity with a wonderful unmatched friendliness. Charmed by these sonorous words Saint Paul wrote to the Ephesians (in 5:30), *For we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones.* As Zadok was David's bone and flesh, we are Christ's bone and flesh, constructed in the likeness of him, living for the very same purpose, doing our utmost according to our Master's will.

During King David's reign, both Zadok and Abiathar were priests (see 2 Samuel 17:15). Abiathar rendered David loyal service during Absalom's rebellion, but he joined Adonijah when he sought to seize the throne from Solomon (see 1 Kings 1:7). After Solomon's accession to the throne, Abiathar again favored Adonijah and for that reason the king deprived him of the office of High Priest and banished him. Zadok became the High Priest (see 1 Kings 2:26,35).

With the deposition of Abiathar, the rule of the house of Eli came to an end as it had been foretold 150 years previously in 1 Samuel 2:31,35.

The prophet Amos wrote regarding Israel, *You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.* (Amos 3:2) They had faithful patriarchs, great prophets, prudent judges, and mighty kings. But they did not want to accept Jesus as their own king who would give them peace. Even though Abiathar was faithful to David, he rejected his son Solomon who represents Jesus in his millennial kingdom. This is the destiny of fleshly Israel. But Zadok was loyal to both King David as well as King Solomon. We, as spiritual Israel, must be loyal to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ now, and forever in the coming glorious kingdom.

Even though the Jewish people suffered banishment and torture of every kind, yet at the set time of restitution and restoration, they have had a resurrection as foretold by Ezekiel in the vision of the valley of dry bones. At last the Jewish state was born in 1948. The dry bones received flesh and skin, but as yet there is no spirit in them, there is no right spirit of knowing and recognizing their Messiah. *And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them.* (Ezekiel 37:8)

However, a higher calling was given to the heathen to partake of the blessings which come through the Redeemer's blood. They are yet to be anointed as royal priests in his kingdom in the same way

that Zadok, a sanctified priest, was anointed High Priest by Solomon who placed him in Abiathar's place.

Though Solomon and Zadok had already been anointed separately as king and priest at different times during David's reign, it is wiser to observe the comparative lesson that both were made Governor and High Priest, respectively, at the same time by the congregation. This signifies that Christ with his resurrected Little Flock will begin their offices as kings and priests to bless and rule the world in his everlasting kingdom at the same time as revealed in Revelation 22.

Our goal and expectation is high. But very, very low are our day-to-day activities. Our spirits are willing but the flesh is weak. Yet all who know our beloved Master's voice above every other voice will hear ringing in their ears, *Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.* (Luke 12:32)

Finally, dear brethren, the name Zadok means *just*. How appropriate is the name, describing a character formed of God-like qualities and bestowed by God. But how bereaved and bereft is present-day man of that image and likeness. Today's need is not to have many religions, but, as one noble poet has said, *An honest man is the noblest work of God.* The present world order has no solution for the problems that mount like *climbing waves*. Only the Book of Remembrance has the solution of salvation So that all humanity may know the justice of the everliving Jehovah God through the word of our Lord Jesus.

As the just live by the faith, we shall follow our Master's footsteps. Let us be up and about, doing his will. Like Zadok, let us be conformed to our Lord and not conformed to the world. Let us be transformed by the renewing of our mind to the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Let us do everything we can to make our calling and election sure.

May the peace of the everliving God which passeth all knowledge keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

As It Was in the Days of Lot-Bro. Dymitr Kopak, Poland

DEAR BRETHREN IN THE Lord, companions in the narrow way! I thank God for his providence and help during the trip to the

convention. It is a great privilege for me to speak before such a wonderful audience.

I bring Christian greetings and brotherly love to you from the Lord's people in Bialogard. The brethren wish you God's blessings and care while you listen to His word.

With the grace and help of God we will attempt to consider the subject entitled *As it was in the days of Lot*.

Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. —Lu 17:28-30

Among many signs which signify that the Lord is present, attention is drawn to Lot and to Sodom. It is the Lord's answer to the disciples' question, *When will it all happen and what is the sign of your presence and the end of the world?*

Let's consider the time, reasons, and circumstances that led to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. These will show us the time of the second presence of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The expression *Days of Lot* covers not only the end of Sodom (its very destruction) but the whole spectrum of events preceding the cataclysm.

Lot's Biography

Abram and Lot with their families left Ur of the Chaldees and settled in Haran. Abram's grandfather Terah died there. Then God said to Abram:

Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee. —Ge 12:1

Lot was the son of Haran and Abram's nephew. He was probably the same age as his uncle Abram. The Bible tells us that Lot and Abram left Haran together and traveled through Canaan in peace while they were only moderately rich. They shared the joys and sorrows of their trip.

From their example we can derive a practical lesson: when we are poor in material goods there seems to be greater love and brotherly

kindness. There is unity and harmony among the Lord's people. There are no murmurings, hurts, etc. All try to make an effort toward a common goal. When we are poor in material good and in spirit, there are fewer splits. Everyone respects and helps one another.

However, as soon as we consider ourselves rich, independent from others, possessing a wide knowledge of the deep things of God, then frictions and even divisions occur. The Apostle Paul states that *knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth*. (1 Corinthians 8:1) The resurrected Lord says to the Laodicean church in Revelation:

Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. —Re 3:17

Imagined spiritual richness leads at times to pride, divisions, and separations. Abram and Lot immigrated to Egypt from Canaan during the famine. Then they left Egypt in search of the promised land.

Abram's riches consisted of cattle, silver, and gold. Abram represents Christ's church who favor gold (God's promises) and who like silver (God's Word, His truths). Lot was gaining riches such as sheep, goats, and tents. He represents the Lord's people who are attached to earthly, material things. The name Lot means *covered*. Lot represents the Great Multitude.

When the riches of both men increased, internal trouble increased as well. An argument arose between the shepherds of Abram and Lot. The story is recorded in Genesis 13:7. We read: *And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.*

Why does this verse mention the Canaanites and the Perizzites? What have they to do with the quarrel between the herdsmen? We think that the Perizzites would have supported one side and the Canaanites the other side. Thus their argument would have been transferred to the surrounding nations.

The name Canaanite means *flat land* or *a merchant*. Perizzite means *a horseman*. Today we have a similar situation. The world is divided into two camps. The lowest instincts take over and each side wants to take advantage of the other. Different divisions also occur in classes because of bad intentions, earthly desires, and

aspirations. Each argument has people who support opposite sides. Abram suggested a good solution. He said:

Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself . . . from me. —Ge 13:8,9

Let us ask ourselves a question: Are we like Abram? Are we willing to compromise our material things, our reputation, our opinion, and even our understanding? If our conscience tells us that we are willing to sacrifice for the sake of peace and unity, then we can be pictured by Abram who represents the Little Flock. Let's apply the wise advice of Abram. Let's say, *Let there be no strife between me and thee for we are brethren.*

Abram suggested to Lot that they part in the spirit of love and brotherly unity where one will miss the other. Lot took advantage of Abram's suggestion and settled in the valley of Jordan. We read in Genesis 13:10,

And Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.

The expression *lifted up* shows that Lot thought about the land often, but he did not have any occasion to separate from his noble and just uncle. Thus Lot rose to the occasion and left for Jordan thinking it was God's will for him to increase his material possessions and riches.

What was the proper thing to do in this situation? Lot should have given Abram the first choice. He should have said: *You were called by God; the promise of the land was given to you. You have the right to choose first. I'll be happy with less.* Lot made a choice that he was later to regret on two occasions: 1) when he found himself in captivity; 2) when he lost all his property and riches, the work of his hands.

Lot pictures those of the Lord's people who do not mediate conflicts but rather embellish them. They don't compromise anything and always want to prove that they are right. During debates they never change their mind, even though they know that the other side is right.

The Jordan valley abounded in water. Water stimulates growth and vegetation. The area resembled the Lord's Garden of Eden. We read in Genesis 2:10 that *a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from thence it was parted and became into four heads.* In the same way the waters of Jordan watered the valley of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were situated in a mountainous area. There existed a micro-climate conducive to rich, physical plant growth. Now the Dead Sea covers the area. The Dead Sea is 1286 feet below sea level and covers about 370 square miles. It is over 1300 feet deep and is one-third salt. Today it is difficult to determine where the waters of the Jordan drained in Lot's time. It is possible that there was a sea beneath or that the waters were distributed by canals.

The area of Sodom is compared to the land of Egypt (the area of Goshen). The word *land* refers to fertile soil, cities, their prosperity and civilization. Where the soil is fertile everything flourishes. The people of Sodom were rich, evil, and sinful before God. Where there is prosperity and pleasures, vice dominates. The sin of Sodom caused God's intervention.

The Sin of Sodom

God through Ezekiel in chapter 16 verse 49 says:

Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

These were the sins of Sodom: 1) Pride; 2) Fullness of bread; 3) Prosperous ease; 4) Selfishness (they would not support the poor).

PRIDE

Of all the various human sins God hates pride the most. We read, *Pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.* (Proverbs 8:13) Solomon says: *Pride goeth before destruction and an haughty spirit before a fall.* (Proverbs 16:18) Thus we conclude that their pride and evil deeds caused God's intervention and the destruction of sinful Sodom.

FULLNESS OF BREAD

The Lord said about the days of Lot that *they did eat, they drank, they builded*. It was a period of prosperity with an excess of material goods. There was growth in the construction business; the standard of living and civilization increased.

A question arises: Is fullness of bread a sin? The wise man says, *The full soul loatheth an honeycomb, but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.* (Proverbs 27:7) The wise man asks: *Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me lest I be full . . . and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.* (Proverbs 30:8,9) A satisfied or prosperous man should give to the needy and store up goods for himself.

ABUNDANCE OF IDLENESS

The Sodomites had the peace of idleness, the peace of this world that leads to laziness, an immoral life style, and bad habits. Laziness and idleness (meaning no interests) deteriorates one's character and is the cause of physical and mental sicknesses.

SELFISHNESS

Sodom abounded in material goods but did not strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. The neighboring countries often suffered from famine. People would go to Egypt in search of food, a destination much farther than Sodom.

The Sodomites were insensitive to the needs of their neighbors; they were a closed society that paid no attention to the unhappiness of others. The etymological meaning of the word Sodom is *burning*; Gomorrah means *the valley of sheaves*. Both represent the present evil word which is nearing its end, the end of the social, political, military, and religious structures. Sodom pictures mystical Babylon—nominal Christendom in its various forms.

The Sins of Present-day Sodom.

PRIDE

We can observe pride everywhere: social pride, national pride, and religious pride. Pride exists among nations, various societies, Christians, and marriage. It is wherever man is. Pride leads to moral, physical, and spiritual poverty and dullness.

The nations which are full of hatred for one another exemplify the pride and envy of the present world. When a society is sick with

pride, there are no moral ideals, no human feelings. There is a lack of respect for leaders and those in authority. Pride divided Christendom into sects of various sizes. Pride is also the cause of divisions among the Lord's people who possess present truths.

When humanity, contaminated with pride, reaches the depths of deprivation, they will find themselves in the fire of the great trouble. Pride motivated man to reach for the sky (the cosmic adventures), leads to star wars, and inspires humans to search for other civilizations in outer space. These things are contrary to the will of God. God will surely punish the sin of pride.

FULLNESS OF BREAD

Presently we are seeing the explosion of material goods. The world takes big steps toward the increase of technology in all areas of life. One invention leads to another and there seems to be no end to new possibilities. Construction, technology, electronics, automation, robotics, the increase of travel: we find comforts everywhere. While some countries overproduce, others suffer extreme poverty and famine.

Famine is a known phenomenon on our planet. One third of the world's population suffers from starvation, another third suffers from malnutrition. Only one third has *fullness of bread*. Statistically 30 to 50 million people die each year because of famine and malnutrition, including 15 million children. Instead of spending billions for arms (which are the source of unhappiness), the nations could use that money to help poor countries to make a better start.

Some have so much that they do not know what to do with their riches. Others suffer the very extremes of poverty. They see no way out. Is not this a great sin which God will punish?

ABUNDANCE OF IDLENESS

An abundance of idleness leads to the loosening of morals and deprivation. This kind of peace makes man self-conceited and he forgets about God. Good habits are being destroyed. Society is advancing into degradation as it eliminates all moral and high ideals. There is an increase of sexual immoralities; venereal diseases grow, especially the terrible AIDS disease. Homosexuality, which is condemned by God, is spreading. God said to Israel:

If a man also lie with mankind as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. —Le 20:13

We hear that some homosexuals are demanding their right to marry (one man with another); some countries have already approved of such rights. Sodom's laws approved of homosexuality. That sin had to be punished. Now the same sin will lead to global tragedy.

SELFISHNESS

Selfishness reigns in our world. People see only themselves; one's fellow man is unnoticed. Everyone is preoccupied with himself and his own affairs. He thinks about himself; he is egocentric. Things around him are really of no consequence. The Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 described our present society in the following way:

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come, for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away.

The apostle mentions all the characteristics that come from selfishness and which are visible everywhere.

Genesis chapter 14 describes a war in the valley of Siddim. It was there that the Sodomites were defeated and taken into captivity. Lot and his family were among the captives. When Abram heard that his nephew was taken captive, he pursued the enemy and successfully defeated them. He brought back Lot and the other captives.

It says in Genesis 14:10, *The vale of Siddim was full of slimepits.* The Sodomites increased their prosperity not only because of their fertile soil, but because their land abounded in mineral resources. The slimepits were used to build roads and for other important economic applications. The Sodomites did not share their riches with other nations because they were influenced by selfishness and greed. Let me substantiate this statement by quoting Abram's words:

And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich. —Ge 14:22,23

Abram said these words because he knew their attitude, mentality, and their greed. If that had not been the case, Abram would not have said, *lest thou say I have made Abram rich*. Evidently from time to time the Sodomites would help others and then brag about it extensively. More of Lot's history is recorded in Genesis chapter 19.

Chapter 18 describes angels who visited Abram. It was the Logos and two other angels. Through them the Lord revealed to Abram the mission and purpose of their visit to earth.

And the Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know. —Ge 18:20,21

Another Polish translation renders this: *The complaint about Sodom and Gomorrah is heard loudly*. Who cried? Who was complaining to God? The complaint and cry about great injustice came from the surrounding nations. These were dependent upon Sodom and Gomorrah. They worked hard for them without a just reward. These nations became more and more dependent upon Sodom which increased their poverty.

The Sodomites employed foreigners in their mines as well as in farming. In this way they multiplied their riches and the oppressed nations cried to heaven for help. Listen to what the Apostle James says about our present times. We read in James 5:1-6,

Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth, and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.

That is the cry of our world. Lending money with high interest and taking advantage of the poor developing countries is a great injustice and sin. Some swindler borrowed money and misused it for his personal needs. Now long after the money is gone it is the poor people of the country who have to pay it back. The poor nations are unable to pay back the interest, much less the principal. This is a great sin but the Sodomites were not ashamed of it. They rather emphasized it. The prophet says in Isaiah 3:9,

The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul for they have rewarded evil unto themselves.

Because in our time we see the sins of Sodom among Christian nations, we read of the punishment:

And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. —Isa 13:19

I Will Go Down Now, and See

The Logos said to Abram, *I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.* Did the Lord not see from heaven the things that were happening on the earth? Did he have to come to verify the facts? Did he really have to go to Sodom?

In our opening text our Lord said, *Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.* (Luke 17:30) The Greek word apocalypses is used in this text. It means *to uncover*. Christ's second presence is personal. He comes as a judge of the earth. This court case is open to all.

Christ's activity during his second presence has many aspects. He came as the King, Mediator, Harvester, and Judge. In Isaiah 3:13,14 the prophet says,

The Lord standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people. The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof.

In addition David in the prophetic words of Psalm 96:13 says:

The Lord cometh, he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness and the people with his truth.

We see the Lord's judgment. The leaders of the nations, dictators, presidents, kings, and prime ministers are being judged by the Lord; they are subject to public opinion. We will see more of this kind of judgment in the near future. The Lord says *whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it*. Sometimes the subjects demand too many privileges which is not right. The Lord's just judgment will reveal everything; it will uncover injustice on both sides.

Genesis chapter 19 states that Lot was visited by two strangers. They turned out to be angels. We also have two messengers: the Old and the New Testaments. The Lord said in Matthew 24:14, *And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.*

When the angels were with Lot, the inhabitants of Sodom surrounded the house and demanded that they come out *in order that we may know them*. This suggests homosexual intents. When Lot asked that they leave his guests in peace, they said: *Stand back. And they said again, This one fellow came in to sojourn and he will needs be a judge?* —Ge 19:9

These words prove that Sodom and Gomorrah were closed cities. They did not receive any outsiders; nobody could settle there. We don't know why Lot was received there, though they did not fully accept him. A similar situation exists now. Rich countries close their borders. They are all afraid of immigrants from the poor countries.

The angels blinded the Sodomites. WE see blindness everywhere. At the dawn of the 21st century some believe in ghosts and ceremonies. Even leaders of nations take advice from spiritism, occultism, and different magicians. Is not faith in healings and the gift of tongues darkness? Some believe that a cross can bleed. Others carry pictures of the Madonna from house to house in the hope of miracles. Such phenomena are practiced in Poland. This is blindness [darkness] —really blindness, isn't it. On the one side we encourage the reading of the Bible; on the other, darkness and superstition are rampant. The angels announced the object of their visit to Sodom:

For we will destroy this place because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it. —Ge 19:13

Justice demands the restriction and punishment of sin. Our society is enlightened and we are all responsible for practicing such things. Lot was not able to convince his sons-in-law about the approaching destruction of Sodom. There are many noble people in this world. They are acquainted with the word of God, but they have doubts. There were many human prophecies and many unfulfilled expectations of the end of the world. Thus many are very skeptical about new predictions; they may even laugh at them.

When the morning star rose, Lot and his family left Sodom. The rising of the morning star represents the presence of the Lord, a time when prophecies and current events convince us of the importance of coming events. The voice of admonishment sounds: *Come out of her my people that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. —Re 18:4*

The command of the angels was *Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain lest thou be consumed.* (Genesis 19:17) Lot requested that they escape to the town of Zoar. The small town of Zoar represents an ecclesia of the Lord's people, a safe haven on the way to God's kingdom. The Apostle Paul encourages us:

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and So much the more as ye see the day approaching. —He 10:25

Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities and that which grew upon the ground. —Ge 19:24, 25

The lightning started the asphalt pits on fire and all the inhabitants were destroyed. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah represents the destruction of the old order in the fire of Armageddon. Lot's disobedient wife looked back and became a pillar of salt. This is a memorial to human disbelief, stupidity, and the love of this world.

Dear brethren, Christ Jesus warns those living in the last days to *remember Lot's wife.* May we escape her fate.

Let None of the Words Fall to the Ground, Bro. Timothy Krupa, USA

Pages 49 through 51 of the original book contained the words to the hymns that will be sung by the choral group.

MANY YEARS AGO there was a man from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah. His dearly loved wife, Hannah, was without child. For the two of them it was a sad situation and a difficult experience. Each year this man and his wife made a pilgrimage to worship and sacrifice at the tabernacle at Shiloh. This annual pilgrimage was one of the ways they showed their love and devotion to the Lord. They did this year after year.

Hannah made a vow that if she ever had a son she would give him to the Lord. In the course of time, the Lord remembered their devotion and loyalty and Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel. While Samuel was still a young child, Hannah brought him to the tabernacle and said to Eli the high priest, *I prayed for this child and the Lord has granted me what I asked. So now I give him to the Lord.*

Samuel lived at the tabernacle with Eli and one night the Lord called Samuel. Samuel ran to Eli and said, *Here I am; you called me?* But Eli said, *I did not call; go back and lie down.* The Lord called to Samuel two more times, but each time Samuel ran to Eli. Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, *Go and lie down and if he calls you say, Speak Lord for your servant is listening.*

Again the Lord called, *Samuel, Samuel.* This time Samuel said, *Speak Lord for your servant is listening.* The Lord then told Samuel how he was going to remove Eli and his family from their priestly role. Eli and his family did not heed the many warnings the Lord had given them. Despite the warnings the sons of Eli continued in their immoral and blasphemous ways and Eli did nothing to stop them. The Lord told Samuel that for these sins Eli and his family would be removed.

Samuel lay down until morning. I suspect he did not sleep. The next morning he was afraid to tell Eli the vision. But Eli called him and said, *Samuel, my son. What was it he said to you? Do not hide it from me. May God deal with you severely if you hide from me anything he told you.* So Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing from him. Then Eli said, *He is the Lord; let him do what is good in his eyes.*

As we close our convention here in Willingen, this story from the first book of Samuel, chapter three, has some important lessons for us regarding our responsibilities and privileges as we return home. It's been a privilege to be at this convention and each privilege bears its responsibility.

One lesson we can gain is to observe the example of the very devoted family of Elkanah. Not only do we admire their faithfulness year after year, but at this moment we particularly appreciate their devotion as expressed in their annual pilgrimage to worship at the tabernacle. We like that part of the account because we too have made a pilgrimage to worship and learn at the tabernacle. That shows that some things about the Lord's people do not change regardless when they live. In our desire to worship and sacrifice, we traveled great distances to assemble and we know that many others wished they could have had such a privilege but were not able.

Secondly, we appreciate how this family of Samuel kept their vows. Hannah made a promise to the Lord and even though it was difficult to keep according to the flesh, the promise was kept. Samuel also was a good example in his cooperation and willingness to serve the Lord.

The purpose of this week was to instruct us and encourage us in the keeping of our vows. After having been at this great gathering we should all be encouraged to more zealously fulfill our vows of consecration.

On the other hand, there is a sad part to this story. Sad and serious. It is the account of Eli. Eli, the high priest, had a great heritage. He was a descendant of Aaron. He was chosen of all his Levitical brethren to be responsible for the Tabernacle. The Lord dealt with him, spoke to him, explained things to him. And yet Eli permitted dishonorable behavior in his family and in the service of the Tabernacle.

Eli was consecrated, but he failed to keep his vows. It didn't matter that he was the High Priest. It didn't matter that he lived at the Tabernacle full-time. It didn't matter that he was daily slaying animals for sacrifice. It didn't matter that he was wearing the official robes. It didn't even matter that some thought very highly of him. None of those things meant that he was pleasing to the Lord.

Eli was not a man of principle. He was weak willed. The words of the Lord had no energizing effect on him. He made his decisions like a worldly man. And within his daily life and the life of his family their overriding concern was for the things of the flesh.

In great contrast was the young Samuel: devoted, consecrated, with a single mindedness in his life. Samuel devoted his entire life to the work of the Lord. It was a difficult life, often lonely, often a life of hardship and affliction, but Samuel never lost the focus of his life.

In 1 Samuel 3:19 a statement is made that summarizes Samuel's consecrated life. It tells us that the Lord was with Samuel and Samuel LET NONE OF THE LORD'S WORDS FALL TO THE GROUND.

Not only did Samuel hear, listen, and understand, he obeyed. He let none of the words fall to the ground.

As we look at this week of convention and try to understand why we were here and what must we must now do, I believe this scripture tells it all. That scripture summarizes our responsibility for the privilege of attending this convention: *Let none of the words fall to the ground.*

Like the family of Elkanah we have made a great pilgrimage. That part of the story we have duplicated and accomplished. Despite the travel expense and difficulties of getting here, making the trip was really the easy part wasn't it? But the keeping of vows, putting God's word into action in our daily lives, and living a lifetime of consecration is going to be more difficult than just making a trip.

We have the same clear choice in our lives that Eli and Samuel had. This week we have had presented before us many words, the words of life, the Lord's words urging you to live the life of Samuel. If the spirit of God was and is alive in your mind and heart, you heard the words of God. Maybe you thought it was the brother from Germany, or a voice from France or Africa. But no, my dear brethren, as Eli told Samuel, it was the Lord.

You heard the words of faith, love, prayer, doctrine, prophecy. Words of the kingdom, of study, of trials and testings. Words of decisions, words of warning, words of encouragement, words of joy, words of sacrifice, words of the spirit. You heard and understood words no one else could understand. Who else would understand *three frogs*? Who else could understand Zadok, the

priest? Who could understand the invitation, the call, the ancient worthies, the New Covenant?

It is our responsibility to not let these words fall to the ground. What would it mean to let these words fall to the ground? It would mean the words might have been heard but they weren't appreciated, weren't valued. The words were to be absorbed, digested, consumed, studied, considered, remembered, and acted upon. It is your privilege and responsibility to do something with the words you heard this week.

And it was not just the words you heard from the platform. You also heard just as many words in your fellowship. You heard testimonies, you heard of the joys and sufferings of others. You got an appreciation of how God works in the lives of others. We heard of miracles this week.

The words of fellowship, for some of you, will be what you remember the most. In our conversations we have grown closer to each other in the bonds of Christian love. We heard each other's heartaches and failures. We told each other how much better we wanted to serve the Lord. Those of you who were here for the first time especially received a fellowship blessing like never before.

We also heard words of song. Our singing was a praise to our heavenly Father. As time passes some of you will remember the singing the best, the multiple languages praising God, the music transcending the language barrier.

We will remember bits and pieces of this Willingen convention for the rest of our lives. It may be a word of fellowship, a word of doctrine or a word of music. In other instances we will listen to tapes or read copies of the discourses for years to come.

Whichever words struck you the most, whichever words you appreciated the most, let them work in your life, let them make you a better Christian for having heard them. Let the words of Willingen this week give you a greater zeal in running for the prize of the high calling.

And how did it go with our friend Samuel in later years? He experienced many trials and testings. He had his *up's and down's*, but he was always beloved of the Lord. The Lord protected him, instructed him, fed him, and blessed him. The Lord performed miracles on his behalf.

All these things will happen to you: the trials, the testings, the up's and down's. You may feel rejected just like Samuel felt on occasion but the Lord will bless you spiritually. He will instruct you, he will perform miracles on your behalf, and he will care for you until the end.

That expression of 1 Samuel 3:19 that was used regarding Samuel as a young man was just as true of him when he died an old man. It could have been said of Samuel that in all his life he let none of God's words fall to the ground. May the same be true of you.

Only God knows when we shall see each other again. It has been a great blessing to share this week with you. I am glad that each one of you could be here. It was a joy to see you, to shake your hands, to embrace you, and to feel your love. I pray that it might be said of you and me, that we let none of his words fall to the ground.

God bless you and God be with you until we meet again.

The Light-Bro. Marius Kwarciak, France

DEAR BRETHREN IN Jesus Christ our Lord. I rejoice to be among you, among such a great spiritual family, and I thank the Lord for this privilege that he has given us. He has reunited us, as a part of the great family, to a spiritual feast So we might study his Holy Word. For it is a great privilege, a blessed occasion, to be able to leave our homes, our work, our daily worries, and return to a place of calm and rest, a place where the promised peace of our Lord is omnipresent.

You have all made efforts and sacrifices, you have surmounted greater or lesser difficulties to be here. Knowing this, I become aware of the enormous responsibilities that weigh upon me. How might I thank you, how might I repay your efforts? Which subject should I choose, a subject that would be a little stone added to our edification and which would be, at the same time, a sweet savour to God?

I would like to share with you a few thoughts on the subject of The Light. The word light, frequently used mostly in the New Testament, is translated from the Greek word phos. Today we find it still in words with the prefix photo, such as photography. Photo means light and graphy means to write. We could translate the word photography as *writing with light*.

Other words certainly have their roots in the Greek word *phos*, such as photocopy or photolysis, in which the prefix *photo*—or *light*—plays a dominant role. In the Bible light is presented to us as one of the first creative acts of God. It is characterized by brightness and is often represented by the sun, fire, or lamps.

Light as a Symbol

Light always symbolizes goodness, prosperity, joy, and confidence. We all look for such light. We appreciate the rays of the sun, the light of day. When night falls, we light lamps, usually by electricity. So we might have light to prolong our activities and not find ourselves in darkness.

Such seeking for light is often unconscious. When you enter a dark room, your hand goes automatically for the switch. *Click*, the light goes on, the room is illuminated—it is no more difficult than that.

Have you not been surprised and troubled by an electrical outage in your community or city? Quick! You look for matches, a candle, as you bump against furniture or other objects in the room.

You have certainly noticed the same phenomenon in nature with plants. Place them far from a window and their stalks orient themselves toward the window in search of light. And the sunflower? Throughout the day it follows the sun by turning its face toward it.

Light gives us a feeling of well-being, of security. The psalmist in Psalm 27:1 expresses similar sentiments:

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Yes, dearly beloved, it is God who is our shield and our armor, our protection. He is also the one who is the source of life. There could be no life on earth without light. The light of day from the sun causes growth and development in plants and all greenery. Light is necessary for plants, but equally necessary for man. We have need of light for our growth and development, and especially in a symbolic sense. The light of the holy scriptures shows us God, creator of heaven and earth, and His only begotten son Jesus.

We have already read the words of the psalmist: *The Lord is my light and my salvation*. Jesus himself told us in John 8:12, *I am*

the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

Jesus came into the world. As a perfect light he came to enlighten a wicked world, one that lived in darkness. But there were few of humble character who accepted him. Having come to enlighten the Jewish nation above all—the nation selected by God—he was rejected by the majority of them.

Few accepted and followed him. The 12 apostles, the most loyal among the believers, left the darkness of sin and error. %They followed their master step by step So they might better understand his teachings and learn the life of one who was perfect.

They benefited from the enlightenment of Jesus, from his wisdom, and all the lessons he gave them during his 3 year ministry. Yet despite that, one of the 12 betrayed the master. That one fell back into darkness, into sinfulness greater than previously.

To follow Jesus and witness his miracles was not sufficient. It was necessary to have a profound and immovable faith in him and his mission.

In John 12:46, we read another statement of our Lord that seems to complement the first: *I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.*

Faith in Jesus, in the past as today, frees one from darkness. To believe, not superficially but in depth, to believe with our entire being, with our heart, with our thoughts and works, this alone frees us from darkness.

It is interesting to note that the words which we just quoted were uttered by the Saviour after his baptism in the Jordan. It was at that moment, when he was filled with the holy spirit, and starting from that place, that he became the light of the world.

The invitation to follow Jesus, to believe on him, to leave the darkness and benefit from his light is valid for all the Church during the Gospel Age. At our consecration we are also anointed by the holy spirit. This anointing permits us to have a better comprehension of the truth, a better insight of the spirit. We have the light that allows us to read and comprehend the plan of God.

The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:6 tells us:

For God . . . hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

God by his power, his influence, and by the holy spirit allows us to comprehend His glory and His character. But in order to do this, we must contemplate His son, who is His true image. It is necessary to follow the light.

It is fitting to compare the holy spirit, as oil, to light. The Bible from the beginning speaks of lamps and lights where oil was used as a combustible. One had to pay attention that the oil be clear, in order to have a flame that is clear and bright, and that more oil be added when necessary.

The holy spirit is our energizer, the combustible that permits us to shine. As far as we're concerned, we must guard against extinguishing it. *Quench not the Spirit*, says the Apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:19.

It is a warning for all of us. We must always have a sufficient quantity of holy oil so that our lamps shine with full brightness and splendor. One should not be like the foolish virgins. During the time when they had gone to buy oil, the bridegroom came and took the wise virgins who were ready.

The wind can agitate the flame and put it out. So we must protect this flame to prevent it from going out. The wind of human theories, difficulties, and anarchy tries at times to blow out our flame. One of the ways to protect it is to reunite, to assemble ourselves together.

Have you seen the wind blow upon a match? The match dies out. But have you seen the wind blow upon a campfire? The flames rise ever higher. That's why it is important, dearly beloved, to come together in our conventions, in our ecclesias which are for us true campfires.

And at times the wind—meaning tests and difficulties—can have a beneficial effect upon our assembly. A fire that was weakening into a heap of glowing coals, suddenly awakened, stimulated by a wind, can provoke a new spiritual activity of even greater importance.

We must therefore direct all our efforts to have the most of the holy spirit possible. Our Lord counsels us to pray, to ask the Heavenly Father to give us the holy spirit. In Luke 11:13 we read:

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

Our prayers, our efforts much be concentrated on this objective: to have the most of the holy spirit possible, of the light from on high, not just for the purpose of better explaining such and such a prophecy, but equally to sanctify our everyday life So that our works bear witness to our knowledge.

How might we prove to ourselves and others that we have the holy spirit and this light? We can recognize it by the fruits of the spirit enumerated by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 5:22,23. We know them all: love, joy, patience . . .

Those are the fruits which outwardly embody our light. We can have knowledge, a deep comprehension of the truth, and keep them to ourselves. But the world around us does not see them. However, it does see precisely those fruits of the spirit, and it is good if it distinguishes them all. The quality and quantity of the fruits of the spirit determine how much light we give forth.

Reflecting the Light

I would like to add something, in my opinion, very important. The visible light we have, by which we shine, does not come from ourselves. We are not the source. We only reflect the light that we have been given by our Lord through the power of the holy spirit.

We are like mirrors that reflect the true light, as the moon reflects the light of the sun. We are precious stones that are cut, polished, and fitted by the hand of God to better reflect His light.

Let us look again at 2 Corinthians 4:6, a verse we have already cited: *For God . . . hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

While looking at the radiant face of Jesus, we reflect his light. We shine through our hearts which must also be clean to reflect the truth with its insights. Our knowledge and intelligence, in truth, do not come from ourselves. They are a reflection of the glory of God because man himself was created in the image of God.

Do you recall the blessings for Israel described in Numbers 6:24-26? *The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make his face*

shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace. By our behavior and works we should always seek to find ourselves before the face of God, in front of his face, his countenance.

Because from there emanate many different kinds of light. This light is the same for all. The force that emits it is the same. What differs are the mirrors—us. At times we are not sufficiently smooth, our characters are rough.

This is why we have little brightness, why we reflect the light poorly. We must work more on ourselves, on our characters to make them polished, acceptable to God, able to reflect the light well. The fruits of the spirit that we have already mentioned are for us an exterior coating, a varnish that is visible and observed by the world.

We must work So it becomes denser, the smoothest, the most durable. Let it not be only a veneer but a complete filling of the holy spirit. Look at the parable of our Lord on *the light* as recorded in Matthew 5:14-16.

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light So shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

We all must shine before men, before our neighbors, before our co-workers and our school mates. By our character, goodness, gentleness, peace, love, and even by our love for our enemies, we must be different from our associates. We must have good works, we must use our talents.

By our works and our behavior, we offer a witness to the truth, to the one who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light. (See 1 Peter 2:9.)

Yes, dear brethren, we all must shine! Glow! Illuminate! Reflect the true light of our Father and His Son before men! Brethren of Europe, Africa, North and South America, Japan, Australia, no matter where you live or where you conduct your earthly pilgrimage: You must shine!

The brightness of this light is perhaps slightly different in each country because of the situation and available opportunities. But,

in truth, we must glow and shine everywhere in the same way because we are energized by the same source. The energy or symbolic *electric current* which animates us is the same everywhere.

To shine by good works, by a good example, is our duty and our privilege. *One does not light a lamp to put it under a bushel.* We are this lamp, we are this city set on a hill. We are thus exposed in the sight of the world, exposed to every wind of difficulty and testing. We must constantly endeavor to do our mission well, else it could be given to another. We all know how difficult this is.

Has Jesus told us to shine on just one day per week? Preferably Sunday? No, that would be too easy. We must not shine only before our brethren but also before those we call *the world*. Our Master, during his first presence, was not accepted. Although the perfect light, he was rejected by men. They could not bear this light which, by definition, is contrary to darkness.

That's why we should not be astonished if we are rejected by most of mankind. For some, the truth that we preach—this light—is too strong, but fortunately to others it becomes bearable and acceptable.

Let us question ourselves: In the place where I live, in the office where I work, have I contributed something positive? Do the people around me use less profanity than they did before they knew me? Are they more tolerant? Calmer? Have they more respect for God? Do they know the gospel?

If I sincerely answer yes, I have already been shining somewhat. But if I answer no, I have perhaps hidden my lamp under a bushel. I need to work much more on myself.

To shine in the darkness requires much courage and perseverance. The light can disturb, can even be painful, especially if it blinds. Those who have been in the night of sin and evil for a long time, in the darkness of falsehood and corruption, do not tolerate the light very well. They prefer obscurity.

They often admit that we are right, but to leave their gloom, to leave the life they lead, actually costs them too much effort and sacrifice. They often perceive the difference between good and evil, between righteousness and unrighteousness, but they do not have enough will power to leave that which is wrong.

The end of the verse we previously read tells us of the glorification of God by men: *So that THEY may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.* %In telling us this, our Lord does not say that our role is to convert the world. A lighthouse on a sea coast is not there to illuminate the sea, but to show the way, to warn against danger.

Our role is the same. Our light is to show the way to follow, So that those who are lost on the world's ocean may find in God a haven of peace and rest. For the reasons we mentioned, the world today will not go down on its knees. It has too many privileges and pleasures it would have to abandon.

One of the Apostle Peter's phrases in 1 Peter 2:12 helps us understand this problem: *That they may glorify God in the day of visitation.* We are actually living in the day of our visitation. For humanity their time will be the Millennium. Then the Father will be equally their Father. The quicker they accept the truth—the light—now, the easier and more rapidly they will attain to everlasting life on the earth in the Millennium. Our work today will bring forth the fruits in that age.

The Day

We have considered light from several points of view. Let us now look, if you please dear brethren, at light from another aspect. Light of the Bible is often compared to day, the period enlightened by the sun. After the night of sin and death there must come a new day, a day of blessings, of the restoration of all things.

For us night frequently represents the Gospel Age. This night which extends from the death of Jesus, is truly a somber period in the history of humanity. But it is in this period that God chooses the Church, the Bride for his son.

The Millennial day, the seventh Millennium since the creation of Adam, begins with a morning. The psalmist tells us in his marvelous 30th Psalm, verse 5: *Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.* The delight and joy of day will replace the weeping and sadness of night. *The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings* says Malachi 4:2.

Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, Matthew 13:43 tells us. The sun here represents the complete, glorified Church of Christ—head and body. Through their participation in the *first resurrection* its members are changed

from an earthly to a spiritual nature. Although they suffer for Christ today, they will reign with him.

The 144,000 will be rewarded with a much more noble and grander prize: eternal and immortal life on the divine plane. Dearly beloved, we live at the dawning of this glorious day. Since the second present of Christ we are in the morning where the night is progressively diminishing and the dawning of the new day increases. The light is also gradually becoming known.

The two dispensations overlap one another. Sin is still here together with sadness and weeping. But the rain of blessings, the dew of divine favor, the morning dew, is visible everywhere and certainly on the Jewish nation. Since the second presence of Christ, the world is awakening. Mankind has invented beautiful and useful things.

Knowledge has been considerably increased in every branch of life. Unfortunately many inventions initially meant to improve life are redirected and utilized for an evil objective. This is still the ending of night and the beginning of morning, a mixture of good and evil. With knowledge, with the liberation of nations, with new rights and laws has also come general discontent. We see this phenomenon to some extent everywhere in the world in its different forms (strikes, demonstrations, etc.).

This day is born in pain, in the pangs of child birth, because practically every good thing has been *born* in pain. The birth of the Jewish nation was preceded by their sufferings. The birth of Israel in 1948 was preceded by years of persecutions under Hitler. Likewise the day of blessing is preceded by a night of suffering.

The Apostle Paul in Romans 13:11-13 exhorts us:

It is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day.

Let us awaken! Night is ending. Let us be prepared for a new day of work. Let us renounce everything that is evil, corrupted, that belongs to the night. Let us all walk in step, brethren, as in broad daylight. A great and difficult work awaits us.

This is my desire for all of you, those united in this room and those left behind in your countries, in your congregations. And I desire it

for myself and my family. Let us shine out with all our strength, send out the light more clearly all around us. May we be worthy of being found among the *more than conquerors* and of enlightening the world in the Millennium. The shining of our light in the new holy Jerusalem is described in Revelation 21:10,11.

And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain and shewed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. [verses 23,24] And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory into it.

Amen

Samaritan-Bro. Jan Litkowicz, Poland

DEAR BRETHREN IN OUR Savior: the partakers of like precious faith and primarily those of the Bialogard ecclesia send you much warm Christian love with the words of Psalms 34:3, *O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.*

Dear ones in the Lord: the fellowship that is present here is a work of God. Our God, to whom we belong, showed us His mercy and gave us this precious book. And this book has become the bond of our fellowship. Together, we have been learning to look beyond appearances to see the depth of our feelings, to see the hearts filled with the Lord's cause.

It is about looking at the heart that God speaks to Samuel: *Look not . . . as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.* —1Sa 16:7

Bearing this thought in mind, we will be talking about the scriptural name Samaritan. It is through the Bible that the name Samaritan, so hated by the Jews, became a symbol of one with a great heart, who would not hesitate to bring help to those in need.

The people who were resentfully called with this name, are shown in a different light in the Bible. This light pierces *even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow and [it] is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*, says the Apostle Paul in He 4:12. Our Lord Jesus in the parable recorded by Luke in chapter 10 showed a compassionate Samaritan

who proved to be a more noble man than a Levite from the heights of the social hierarchy or even than a priest.

Another Samaritan of the Bible is the grateful man who, after being healed from leprosy, returned to the Lord with thanks for his healing. The nine Israelites forgot this. Here are Luke's words from Luke 17:15,16:

And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

Joh 4:5-42 describes Jesus' trip through Samaria, to a place where Samaritans dwelt. Many Jews watched Jesus; his stay in Samaria was the reason why they resentfully called him a Samaritan. We read in John 8:48, *Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?*

Now, let us join the group of our Lord and the apostles. Let us imagine that together with him we enter Samaria to see the area and the people living there, but especially the one Samaritan who did not hesitate to help those in need.

The Land of Samaria

Samaria is a geographical region where many historical events occurred. It was a country that Jesus knew well. He knew it better than anyone else. He knew all its paths, mountains, and valleys. As he walked side by side with Jesus, John, as it were, guesses at our Lord's thoughts and tells us: *The parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.* (John 4:5)

Together with John, let us try to enter our Lord's mind: it is at this place that Jacob buried the strange gods and earrings of his family described in Genesis 35:4. It was at this place that, in Jacob's days, *the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them.* Genesis 35:5 It was at this place that Jacob erected an altar unto the Lord, about which we read in Genesis 33:20. Probably the smoke of those sacrifices spread throughout the whole area.

I think the Lord could enjoy the flavor of those memories flowing over the paths along which Joseph ran to find his brethren as they kept their father's flocks. Genesis 37:17 tells us that the brethren *were departed hence . . . to Dothan*, about eight miles away from mount Ebal.

When you examine the historical records of this area, you will find that the city of Samaria was built near Dothan about the year 870 BC. This city became the capital of the Kingdom of Israel. However, let us go to the place where Jesus arrived.

There was a well dug out of the limestone rock. One researcher says it was a very deep well. But because many strangers who passed by threw stones into the well to measure its depth, the well has become very shallow. In 1694 the well was 105 feet deep; by 1883 it had lost another 30 feet. Today its present appearance is altogether different: the whole area is filled with many buildings including one that encloses the well itself.

Still another image that might have accompanied our Lord is one from Deuteronomy chapter 27. The Lord's command is that great stones with the commandments written on them should be put up as soon as the people crossed the Jordan. Those stones were to be erected on mount Ebal. Let us try to imagine that country.

As we stand at Jacob's well, we are in the valley separating mount Ebal from Gerizim. These not-too-high hills are each some 2,400 feet high and are located about 16 miles from the Jordan River. The city of Sychem is east of there; the city of Samaria is to the north. The Lord commanded the Israelites to stop between these two mountains immediately after crossing the Jordan. It was here at Jacob's well that, in the presence of God's law, they were to hear the promises of blessing and of cursing.

In still another book, 2 Kings 6:15-23, we find an equally interesting description of historical events. To this valley Elisha brought a Syrian army, defeating it without bloodshed. At Elisha's command the whole army of the enemy was fed with bread and water.

Now that we have seen a little of the historical character of that area, let us go back to the gospel of John, chapter 4.

It was noon. Jesus was tired and sat at the well. His mind could focus on those historical days. He could hear the echo of the blessings given. Jesus, like Joseph, wanted to find his brethren, right here, near mount Gerizim from which the blessings would come. Yet the Israel of Jesus' days had gone far toward mount Ebal instead.

Ebal means *uncovered or naked* and such was the nation of Israel in Jesus' time. The shepherds of the people, like Joseph's brethren,

fed their fathers' flocks far from the place of the blessings. They went closer to the mount of curses. One could say they had waited for Jesus to lay their hands upon him at that empty well of Talmud.

They had been there a very long time; they had their capitol there; there the kings of the kingdom of Israel reigned. The Bible tells us that they were evil kings and it was on them that the word spoken from mount Ebal was fulfilled. In 2 Kings 17:6,7 we read:

In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away into Assyria . . . for So it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods.

The leaders of the nation did not do as Jacob—they did not bury their strange gods and So they were no longer *Israel*. Paul explains this in Romans 9:6, *For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel*. In 2 Kings 17:24,25 we read:

And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon . . . and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria and dwelt in the cities thereof. And So it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they feared not the Lord: therefore the Lord sent lions among them, which slew some of them.*

And here the situation of Jacob's days was repeated. *The fear of the Lord* came upon the inhabitants of that country. This fear was the lions which slew them. Many events that were to come later were pictured there. Let us notice this lesson once again.

The Lesson for Us

We know that the whole house of Israel became desolate, that favor was taken away from Israel and given by God to another nation which was not Israel. Thus God shows our standing after we personally pass over Jordan. As a result of consecration we enter the land of the faith of our fathers. We come between the mountains of blessing and cursing.

The monumental tablets of God's Law as set for us are clearly discernible to the eyes of faith. God's Law of Eden is clearly readable. His Law of the Kingdom is within our sight. In Deuteronomy 30:19 we are told that the Lord has *set before you*

life and death, blessing and cursing. Additionally, the Lord's voice advises us to, *choose life that thou . . . may live.*

If we entered by faith between the two mountains, we can see God's providential guidance and can hear His voice. Then we can bury our gods and earrings. If we do not listen to God, the fear of Him will come upon us and *lions* will devour us.

In Romans 11:20 we are warned: *Because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded but fear.* In 1 Peter 5:8 we read: *Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*

The safest solution for us is to go to the well, to abide there, because the Lord passes there and he can protect us from evil.

It does not matter that many consider us renegades, heretics. Various Scribes will think so with peculiar determination. In the same way did Jews think of Samaritans. The Pharisees and the Scribes thought them inferior to Gentiles and publicans. And in that same way they treated Jesus.

This mocked *Samaritan* well knew the Samaria of his time. He also knows the Samaria of today. He knows its inhabitants, their concerns and worries, and he knows all their secrets. And if he knows them, does he mock them? When we, in our lives, came to Jacob's well, he showed us his mercy. And yet he could have ignored us. We were strangers to him because he was sent to a different house. How could he accept us? The fourth chapter of John, which we are considering, tells us about that.

The Samaritan woman came to draw water. Suddenly Jesus spoke to her: *Give me to drink.* We were surprised, just like the woman, that the Lord wanted to talk to us, that he wanted us to serve him. The Samaritan woman saw that he was a Jew. She stopped and asked with astonishment, *What? You, a Jew, are asking me, a Samaritan woman, to give you drink?*

Don't we have similar sentiments? The Lord of heaven wants to talk with us, sinners! The situation is quite similar.

Here is Jacob's well, growing shallow through various stones of offence thrown by unbelieving bypassers who study how deep it is to satisfy their curiosity. Many use the well thinking that life is in it. But it only bears witness to the one who sat by it. So says John 5:39.

We, the Gentiles, were brought to the land of favor and the blessings of Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph. Without working we received this well and found ourselves in the path of the works of the men of God, of the fathers of our faith. They served us, they dug this well, they wrote the Bible which we use. It was at this well that we met the Lord and he told us that he needed us, that we could pass a cup of cold water to him. We read about this in Matthew 10:42 and 25:40, *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it to me.*

Jesus did not look at what men see. He looked at our hearts. Behold, a despised, condemned Samaritan woman, unworthy of a Jew's attention. The Lord saw her great heart and she received mercy. Jesus revealed himself to her in a most direct way as he did to another woman in Luke 7:47, *Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much.* Jesus told her directly: *I am the Messiah, the One who is speaking to you.*

Her reaction to this statement was wonderful. She left her waterpot with water and ran to the city, to her neighbors and others, to tell them, *Come and see a man which told me all things that I ever did: is not this the Christ?*

Didn't our hearts respond similarly when we stood before the Lord, when we understood that no sin of ours was hidden from him, when we understood what the Psalmist says in Psalm 103:8, *The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, plenteous in mercy? And again: He knoweth our frame.* Our hearts respond as the Samaritan woman's. We also shout, *Listen Everybody, Neighbors! Brethren! The Lord told me everything; he is the Christ, he's sitting at the well now!*

So shouted the woman, So shouted the first Christians, and So do all *Samaritans* who want to help those in need. And there are many in need. How true are our Lord's words from John 4:35,36:

Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

Many Samaritans from the city believed in him through the witness of that woman who said, *He told me all things that I ever did.* In our day there are many who foretell the future, but the Samaritan woman was convinced by the truth of the past. When we

understand that the Lord knows our past and that he wants to cover it, our joy is enormous.

We rejoice that the Lord is So close, in this Samaria of ours. He has been here already for almost *two days*—two thousand years.

The Coming Samaritan *Warfare*

Here is what is still before us: In the near future many enemies of God and of mankind will be brought to this place. They will be as numerous as an army. That army will be brought there as it in the days of Elisha as previously mentioned.

The prophets will bring God's law to this valley of many nations, and the Samaritans will show their wonderful warfare, as in Proverbs 25:21. The enemy's army will be fed bread and given water to drink. These circumstances will enable them to change their hearts while in this land.

That time is still before us. But as long as what is called *today* lasts, while we see what has been happening to us, that the sin, which So easily besets us is taken away from us, while we see this great miracle of the healing of the leprosy of sin, overwhelming gratitude fills our hearts. The Lord pitied us, though by the flesh we were not of the tribes of Israel, though we were brought like the Samaritans into the land of God's favor. Therefore it is here by Jacob's well that we glorify the Lord and offer him our thankfulness for his healing, for his pleasant voice addressed to us.

Let us hold fast to this place for if we go away from it, when we get occupied too much with our own matters, we might act as the other Samaritans mentioned in Luke 9:53. When Jesus wanted to visit with them, they refused to receive him. They were aware that his head was turned toward Jerusalem. Now his head is again turned toward Jerusalem.

Our mere presence in Samaria is not sufficient: we need to abide by the well—by the Bible. We need to talk with the Lord and this is possible through the ecclesia, through fellowship.

Paul warns us: *Do not forsake the assembling of ourselves together*. These opportunities enlarge our hearts. When on our way of sacrifice we see someone in need, we'll be able to help just like the compassionate Samaritan who pitied the traveller wounded by thieves. In the present time, God seeks such hearts to worship Him

in spirit and in truth. So did the *Great Samaritan's* heart which burst of pity on the cross.

May the lesson be a greater impulse to stimulate our hearts to beat in the rhythm of the spirit of sacrifice, whose favor will for ever remain over the land of Samaria.

Let us praise the Lord who showed us mercy, the God of this wonderful land of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, and of ours. Let us exalt His name together.

Jesus, the True Vine-Bro. Avel Lupsor, Argentina

OUR LESSON TODAY is based upon John 15:1-12 which we will not take time to read. After the institution of the Memorial, the Lord and his apostles, except for Judas who had gone to betray the Lord, left the upper room and headed for the garden of Gethsemane. The admonitions of our Lord during this last night are recorded in chapters 13 and 14 of John's gospel, where our Lord tells his disciples he must leave them to return to the Father from whence he came.

During their walk to Gethsemane, the disciples were worried by the declarations of our Lord concerning the suffering and death on the cross which he anticipated. Keeping in mind his imminent separation from his disciples and foreseeing the experiences which awaited them, the Lord left them with the parable of the vine. This is the theme of our discussion today.

One might suppose that this, as with the other parables of the Lord, was a lesson based upon something they had all seen while on the road to Gethsemane. It is also probable that they had passed in front of the door of the Temple over which there was a large vine forged in gold. The Hebrew historian Josephus wrote that the trunk of this vine had a circumference of a human body. In any event, our Lord and his apostles frequently saw this golden vine.

In this parable our Lord declared that he represents the vine, the heavenly Father the Husbandman, the disciples the branches of the vine. The words the true vine causes us to understand the existence of a false vine. In the book of Revelation, which was the last revelation of our Lord to his people, the Lord speaks to us of the harvest, or the gathering of the clusters of grapes from the vine of the earth, and of how these were cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God at the end of the Gospel Age. (Revelation 14:14-20)

We live in a time when the true vine, planted by the heavenly Father, and the false vine, which belongs to the earth, are fully developed. And we have the privilege to appreciate the great difference which exists between the two. If we analyze the parable in the light of God's word, we can better understand the lesson of the Lord, obtain more benefit for our daily lives, and be less exposed to the temptations of the false vine and its branches [closely related to its fruits] that are evidently not under the care of the divine Husbandman.

By its fruits, the vine of the earth can be identified as the nominal Christian system. Organized according to earthly wisdom, its branches are the sects. Its fruits are the cathedrals, temples, and churches decorated with gold, the schools and hospitals, the respect of politicians, the honors of men, earthly position, social position, well-organized choirs, etc.

This vine is very large and has much influence in the world. The sap which runs in its branches is the spirit of the world governing all its activities. The fruits that it produces are not all bad, but they are earthly. For this reason they are more appetizing, more attractive, and easy to produce, in contrast with the fruits of the spirit required by the divine Husbandman.

This vine has developed in an extraordinary form. At this point it numbers more than a thousand sects and more than a billion members. By its riches and prosperity, and by the number of its followers, one can say that it exercises its influence throughout the world. Evidently this vine is great and powerful, but at the end of the harvest one will see that it was not planted by Jehovah. During the second presence of the Lord it will be uprooted and thrown into the winepress of the wrath of God as we read in Revelation 14:19:

And the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

The winepress of the wrath of God is the time of trouble which is even now upon the earth. It is exactly during this time when the branches of the true vine are proven and prepared for the work of restitution and the blessing of all the families of the earth.

The branches of the true vine are NOT the sects or organized religions, as the Adversary would like us to believe. Many have accepted this error as truth. The Lord's people cannot accept this

erroneous teaching. The apostles never accepted the sects or partitioned groups. All were united by the heart with the Lord. They guarded their faith, hope, and love with devotion and faithfulness, and recognized Jesus as their only chief. For this reason the Lord's people must all remember the words of Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians (chapter 1, verses 12 and 13):

Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

Later Paul warns us in 3:1-7 that they who act in this manner are carnal, as we read in verse 3: *for ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men?*

Those who wish to be true Christians must become one with the Lord to be a member of his body or a branch of the vine and thus partake in his sap, which is to say the Spirit that comes from God and his word. As we read in Romans 8:9,

But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if So be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

The sectarian sap does not have the power to produce the fruits desired and looked for by the Lord. The sectarian sap is a factor which impedes the production of the fruits. This does not mean that no one in the nominal church system can be a branch of the true vine. We say this because we know the call by the Lord in Revelation 18:4 which says, *Come out of her my people that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not of her plagues.*

The teaching of the parable is clear when we understand that the true vine is not denominational, not sectarian, but is rather formed of individuals. In verse 2 the divine Husbandman does not prune sects or denominations from the vine. He prunes people individually. All of the scriptures teach that our salvation and relationship with the Lord is individual, which is to say, personal. Salvation is not collective and cannot be obtained by belonging to a sect, family, or organization. All true Christians must be united in the Lord by his word and obey him. This is the only road presented by the scriptures to belong to the Church of Christ whose names are written in the heavens. (Hebrews 12:22,23)

Our Unity with the Lord

The Lord gave us a multitude of examples to describe his unity with his consecrated followers. From the mineral kingdom we have the illustration of living stones which become a part of the temple where the cornerstone is the Lord. As we read in John 10:11,14:

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. . . . I am the good shepherd and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

In the human family we have the illustration of a husband and wife and their unity in all the activities of life. We see this in Ephesians 5:28,30:

He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones.

In the scriptural family there is another illustration of unity: God the Father, Jesus his oldest son, and his followers, the brothers of Jesus. In the human body we have yet another illustration. Jesus is the head of the Church, and the Church is his body. So Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 12:12,27 and in He 2:11-13,17. In Matthew 12:49,50 Jesus himself shows us his unity with us in making us part of his family:

And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

The proportion in which we understand these declarations is in the same proportion as they build our faith and confidence in the promises of the Lord, and through which he will complete the work begun in us. All who with sincerity of heart believe and obey these teachings obtain by this the strength and power, by the grace of God, to face difficult times. Only those who understand clearly the relationship the Lord has with his followers can recognize that all the experiences of this life work for good as we are assured in Romans 8:28.

The declaration of our Lord saying that where two or three are gathered in my name, there will I be, indicates that they also can be a part of his Church or body. He will be with them to guide and bless them if they remain under his direction and faithful to his

word. This statement of our Lord tells us that he works personally with each of his followers, and with groups of people who maintain the unity of the spirit with him.

One of the conditions to be a branch on the true vine or a member of the body of Christ, is a complete consecration to the Lord and his cause. But what is total consecration? We have the perfect model and example in Jesus. At the age of 30 Jesus went to the Jordan River saying, *I am he who comes, O God, to do your will.* (Hebrews 10:7) From that moment Jesus consecrated himself to do the will of the Father, forgetting his earthly interest. During his entire ministry we find him repeating: *I descended from the heaven not to do my will, but the will of him who sent me.* (John 6:38)

The true followers of the Lord follow the example left by him. They consecrate their lives, with all their rights and privileges, to do the will of God. The will of God, in accordance with our text, is that they bear much fruit. For this reason the divine Husbandman completes the pruning of the branches, eliminating the faults, which is to say, the factors that impede the development of spiritual fruits. Because of this, some may suffer the loss of worldly goods; others may have earthly projects or longings canceled; others still may suffer persecution and physical and moral violence; some may receive slander and defamation of their good name and their moral integrity; others may lose friends.

We must be attentive and uncomplaining when we are proved and disciplined. These are evidences that the Lord takes care of his consecrated one. The Apostle Peter calls these *trials by fire*. (1 Peter 4:12-14; James 1:2-4) He tells us that the test of our faith produces patience. Paul also exhorts us to make us understand that God disciplines us for our own good that we might be sons (Hebrews 12:5-11).

My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord . . . for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

And also:

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.

The Fruits of the Holy Spirit

The Lord assures us that if we remain in him and his word we will bear much fruit. But what is the nature of these fruits; what are they? Because of an erroneous concept introduced by the nominal systems, many suppose that these fruits are the great temples to help in religious services and the pompous ceremony. Others consider the construction of schools and hospitals as an essential part of these fruits. We do not criticize these institutions of public good because they are good and necessary. What we want to note is that the world possesses sufficient material resources and people to occupy itself in this type of work. The invitation of our Lord to his disciples is to remain separate from this world and to seek first the kingdom of God and righteousness, and all else will be added unto you.

Some consider that the works of the spirit are activities in the service of the truth, such as the distribution of literature, witnessing, and bringing some into the light of the truth of our Lord. All these works are good and necessary. The Lord's people must be active in this work of witnessing. But in spite of what many others believe, these are not the fruits of the spirit. The fruits are something more noble, something of more value, as mentioned by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 5:22,23: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and faith. The Apostle Paul declares that they who have these things will not be idle and without fruit regarding the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-11)

In reality these fruits can be summed up by the single word love. The foundation of the patience of the Christian is love. The motive for our joy, hope, and faith is the love which the Lord manifests to all people, and especially to those that are in the faith. This is the basis of our confidence in God and his promises because God is love. As it is said by John in 1 John 4:16,

And we have known and believed that love that God hath to us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

We also read in John 3:16,17:

For God So loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

It is for this reason that the Lord asks us that we reflect in our lives the love of God, as we are told in John 13:34,35, that we must love each other that the world might know that we are his disciples.

These fruits can be found in all of the truly consecrated of the Lord. Without these fruits of the spirit, no one will receive the divine approval because they are to be treasures to be gathered in heaven, as Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:19,20. All of the good works—like witnessing for the truth in newspapers, book, and by word of mouth—are accepted and appreciated by the Lord if they are the result of these fruits of the heart. To assure us that this is true, the apostle declared in 1 Corinthians 13:3,

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

This signifies that by divine grace (his holy spirit and his word), we can develop in our hearts the fruits of humility, goodness, mercy, patience, and brotherly love, the love of God, of his son, and of the truth. Thus we will be able to bear much fruit and glorify our heavenly Father. (John 15:8)

All these fruits have distinct channels of manifestation. One of them is the desire and the joy to speak of the Lord who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. Having this light and the knowledge treasured in our minds and hearts, all that we possess and could ever possess will be considered as nothing in comparison with the privilege of announcing the good news. As Paul tells us in Philippians 3:8,

Yea doubtless and I count all things but dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.

Because of this, the Lord's people felt that the word of God and his truth are as an ardent fire in the heart as Jeremiah also felt in spite of his sufferings. (Jeremiah 20:9)

All the bearers of the truth of God suffered persecutions. This happened to the prophets and to our Lord by the scribes, Pharisees, and the doctors of the law. The apostles and all the consecrated during the Gospel Age have suffered and received persecution. We must keep in mind that those who belong to the house of the Lord are in judgment. (1 Peter 4:17) But to belong to the house of God

and be a branch in the true vine, we must remain united to Christ in spite of all the problems and difficulties. The branches that separate themselves from the vine dry up and are then burned by fire. (John 15:6)

In verse 7 of John chapter 15, the Lord promises great blessings for those who remain in him and his word: the possibility of asking for what we want, and of receiving it. The only requirement for receiving what we ask is to ask correctly. Because of this, we must study and carefully search for the Lord's will. But what IS that will? The scriptures inform us that the Lord's will is that his people renounce their own will (as his son did—because Jesus wished at all times to do the will of his Father). (John 4:34)

On the other hand, the scriptures declare that the Father's will is to give to his sons the holy spirit, as we read in Luke 11:13. And this will be manifest in the spirit of truth, love, peace, joy and sacrifice, and works in the Lord's cause. The true disciples of the Lord are distinguished from the false because of these fruits. The Lord says this in Matthew 7:17, *Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.*

We are living in prophetic times when one of the most extraordinary promises made to Abraham and to his seed will have complete and total fulfillment. *All the nations of the earth shall be blessed.* (Galatians 3:16,29; Genesis 22:18) Since Christ is King, it is the privilege of the Lord's people to announce the good news of God's kingdom. (Isaiah 11:2-10)

The Word exhorts us to follow only Christ and to stay joined to him as the branches of a vine which are attached to the main stem. If we are separated from Christ and his teachings of love, goodness, and unity, we cannot do anything; nothing we do will please the Father. Only those who live according to the scriptural standards will remain as branches joined to the true vine and will bear the fruits acceptable to God.

So those who do the Lord's will stay in Christ according to the promise as part of Abraham's seed, and will participate with the Savior in the blessing of all the families of the earth.

Three Frogs Are Roaming the Earth-Bro. Paul Mali, USA

UNCLEAN SPIRITS, like frogs, are roaming the earth today! They are not exactly frogs, but they look, sound, and behave like

frogs. Do you hear them croaking? If you don't hear them, maybe you are not listening! Maybe you are not aware that you should be listening, for they are given to us to mark the time of the end.

In Revelation 16:13-16 we read:

And I, John, saw the unclean spirits like frogs, come out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of devils working miracles unto the kings of the earth and the whole world to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty, unto a place called Armageddon.

Armageddon is a term long known by Bible Students—a term that stuns those who hear it, for it suggests the greatest cataclysm of them all. It will be a time when family and churches will look for *life boats* as old values disappear. It will be a time when states and governments will be paralyzed against uprisings and revolutions. It will be a time when the *man on the street* will say the world has gone mad because catastrophes abound. It will be a time as Jesus said in Matthew 24:22, *Except those days are shortened, no flesh will be saved.*

The issues, the conflicts, the policies, in the time of the end, will be big enough, explosive enough, critical enough, to involve most nations and most societies on a global scale and will bring about the end of an old civilization and usher in a new civilization.

Note the Revelation scripture. There are three agencies connected with the gathering of all nations to the last battle: the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. From these three agencies, three doctrines or policies (symbolically represented by frogs) have a guiding influence throughout civilized earth. These doctrines or policies lead, inspire, influence and direct governments to a great conflagration.

To interpret these symbols, may I suggest the following. The dragon represents civil power or governments: powerful, huge, and political like the Egyptian dragon in Ezekiel 29:3 and the Roman dragon in Revelation 12:3. The beast represents the Papal system, a terrible form that roams the earth, like the Papacy beast in Revelation 19:19 that was in union with the kings of earth. The false prophet represents the Protestant system of churches, a reflected image of the Papal system in its doctrines and practices. (See Revelation 19:20.)

Frogs are small, amphibious animals. They represent the influences and doctrines enunciated by the three agencies and permeate all aspects of human society. *Through the water* means through the masses of people; *through the land* means through stable economic, political, and social institutions of society; *through the air* means through ecclesiastical heavens with spiritual power and penetrations.

The frogs give the appearance of superior wisdom and intelligence with their big eyes and camouflaged skin. This would suggest the doctrines enunciated by the three agencies seemingly go unnoticed. But when noticed, they appear wise, well-informed, intellectual, and the needed solutions to perplexing world problems.

Frogs puff up and croak. Their croaking can be heard at some distance. Several frogs croaking produces indistinguishable sounds. They appear to be croaking the same tune—croaking in unison, croaking in harmony, in agreement. Their croaking appears to be well orchestrated. This would suggest that the doctrines go unnoticed, but their implied and shouted-out value is very much noticed. All who are within hearing range are convinced of the great works of these agencies.

When the frogs come out of the three agencies, they hop to the great Battle of Armageddon. The kings, mesmerized by the croaking confluence, follow unsuspectingly only to find themselves in a process from which there is no turning back. They find themselves in disorder, confusion, and anarchy. Let's examine what these doctrines and policies might be.

Frog Number One

From the mouth of civil governments comes the doctrine of *coexistence*. The governments of the world are saying the dangers we face are not only of crisis proportions, but can bring about the demise of civilization. The doctrine of coexistence has been embraced by most governments of the world to engender cooperation and a sense of world community.

Coexistence is a policy of living peacefully with other nations, other religions, other economic systems, other philosophies despite fundamental and conflicting disagreements. Coexistence is *détente*. Governments of the world are saying, *We must live peacefully together or we will destroy each other. We must live harmoniously together or be destroyed violently together.* To government leaders, this doctrine makes a lot of sense!

What are the dangers that could bring about this destruction?

FIRST DANGER: Overpopulation of the *Have-Nots*.

Overpopulation is depleting our resources. Never before has the population been so high. It now stands at 4.9 billion people. There is, on a world-wide basis, approximately 100 to 125 million babies born each year. That's three babies every second. The estimated annual deaths in the world is 60 million. That's approximately two deaths every second. This results in a net increase of one baby per second, or between 40 to 60 million new people each year on planet earth. If one follows a simple linear growth projection [which understates growth compared to the geometric growth we have been seeing], that's 90,000 net additional people or the equivalent of one moderate sized new city each day. This population growth will increase poverty, famine, crowded conditions, violence, riots, housing shortages, and unemployment. It also decreases our energy, materials, oil, and food. This population overcrowding is occurring in a world that is already overcrowded. The world is divided into 159 nations. Economically it is divided into two categories: the *haves* and the *have nots*. Of earth's five billion people, 700 million have annual incomes of less than \$50. These people are starving.

Another 2 billion barely have food, but nothing more. That is approximately 3 billion people who are the *have-nots*. These *have-nots* want what the *haves* have. Their rising level of economic expectations are generating a powerful social force for revolution, rebellion, and the overthrow of values, traditions, and government. Already Eastern Europe is affected by the *have-not* force. The demand for democratic government and freedom is a demand for bettering the economic life style of the individual. This huge *have-not* force may very well be the great army of discontents (Joel 2:2-11) that will overthrow all present institutions preparatory to the reign of Christ.

SECOND DANGER: Emerging economic wars. President Bush and Chairman Gorbachev have announced that the cold war is over. The removal of the Berlin wall is symbolic and suggests a coming period of transitory peace and safety. But 1 Thessalonians 5:3 states, *When they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them.*

The new hostility and world insecurity might possibly come from the emerging competition of food shortages, runaway prices, escalating taxes, staggering national debts, and economic

confusion. The year 1992 is expected to produce a *United States of Europe* when all trade barriers will be removed to create a single economic unit of 320 million people. A single European currency, called the *ecu*, will be managed by a European parliament with representatives from the nations who will make economic policy and market exploitation decisions.

Gorbachev wants Russia to be a part of the European economic restructuring. He speaks of a future in a world community. He has appealed for help from the United States and European countries for membership. He has even gone to the pope for help, admitting the failure of Communism and the need to re-introduce religion in the ruined communistic civilization. We now see the new coalition of Church and State. (Revelation 17) Competition in limited markets will incite economic wars. Huge consumer demand for products by the *have-nots* will chase declining supplies from an earth that cannot handle a rising level of expectations. Scientists predict that by 2034 AD global equilibrium will occur.

Global equilibrium is the level of consumption of earth's resources to sustain its population. When the population goes beyond this level, the earth can no longer supply what mankind needs. Civilization as we know it will come to an end.

During the interim period, merchants will become rich (Revelation 18:3), but their silver and gold will not deliver them. (Zephaniah 1:18) We are reminded that *peace and safety* will also prevail in Israel (Ezekiel 38:11), but Gog of the North will invade Israel in Jacob's Trouble (Jeremiah 30:7) to take a spoil. Unquestionably the spoil is an economic commodity. The implication is the new European Parliament will be involved with Israel's spoil.

THIRD DANGER: Technology out of control. This is by far the greatest fear of mankind. The image of a nuclear explosion, or the release of germs into the environment, or the release of chemical gas such as the accident in Bhopal, India, or the Chernobyl nuclear melt-down in Russia, terrifies people. There are over 100 nuclear power plants in the world. The United States has 42,000 nuclear weapons. The Russians have an equal number. All can be released by pushing a button and the earth could be destroyed. Added to this is the awesome pollution problem of the environment. Approximately 50,000 chemicals are commercially produced. 35,000 have been classified by governments as hazardous to human health. These chemicals run off into wells, rivers, lakes, and oceans. They are ingested by fish, by plants, by trees, and by animals. Most of the cities of the world do not have sewage plants.

Man-made problems have now become as great or greater than natural disasters. Even World War Three is predicted by Ezekiel 21:14, *Let the sword be doubled the third time*. Double-edge sword refers to the east and west. Struck the third time means World War Three.

FOURTH DANGER: Religious wars. The India war of 1949 saw Hindus fight against Moslems; the Tibetan war in 1959 had Hindus against Buddhists; Northern Ireland has Catholics fighting Protestants; the Lebanese war of 1975 has Christians against Moslems; Iraq vs Iran had two branches of the Moslem faith fighting each other. Religious wars are dangerous because the participants consider God to be their motivation. They will die for a God-inspired mission. They believe if they die for a Godly cause, they go to heaven. Do you think the middle-east crisis is merely about the partitioning of Palestine? I doubt it. When the PLO say they will put a flag over Jerusalem, they mean a Moslem flag. They incite both Jews and Christians alike into aggression and warfare.

FIFTH DANGER: Moral decay. The world has lost its sense of right and wrong. Premarital pregnancies are at epidemic proportions. Homosexuality is expressed openly. Drugs are a world-wide problem. Sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS are causing monumental problems.

There you have it, brethren. The first frog from government croaks loud and clear: *We must cooperate. We must act together. We must restructure—Perestroika—for one world. We must do this and co-exist or collapse together.*

Frog Number Two

The second frog comes from the Papacy. It is croaking *Compromise*. Liberal Catholic theology is splitting from traditional Catholicism. Progressives of the left advocating birth control and abortions are in head-on conflict with the traditionalists of the right. In the middle are the main-stream Catholics who go back and forth between the two. There are splits developing and the new doctrine of compromise is proposed as a bridging solution. The leaders speak of compromise to keep Catholicism from splitting into many pieces. All the leaders want is *obedience to Rome*. Everything else is negotiable. Look at the compromises the Catholic Church has already made:

- a) Reading the Bible, once prohibited, is now encouraged.

- b) Salvation outside the church is now recognized.
- c) Abstaining from eating meat on Fridays, which at one time was a mortal sin, is now permitted.
- d) Mixed marriages with Protestants are now sanctioned.
- e) Mythical saints have been eliminated from the church's calendar.
- f) Greater freedom is given to priests and nuns in political activities and dress.
- g) The laity is involved in services and sometimes officiates.
- h) Repetitious prayers are being eliminated.
- i) Greater emphasis is given to the Bible and lesser emphasis to creed and oracles.
- j) Collegiality between Bishops and Pope exists to share power and authority.
- k) Doctrinal discussion is now permitted. Hell-fire, purgatory, and the trinity are doctrines being challenged by progressives. In France alone, as reported by the daily newspaper *Le Figaro*, 71% of French Catholics doubt there is life after death, 58% deny the existence of hell, 54% reject the concept of purgatory, and 34% do not accept the trinity.

Incidentally, friends, if the papal system as now constituted with all its many changes existed during the days of Martin Luther, Luther would not have rebelled. All Luther wanted to do was to institute some changes while remaining in the papal system! It was Luther's excommunication trial that stimulated the start of the Lutheran Church. That trial also sparked the reformation movement among the protestants which Luther was sad to see. (This view of Luther was confirmed to me by a Lutheran minister.)

The Papal system is having a difficult time holding itself together! The American bishops have quietly talked about a schism. Cracks are appearing in the church structure as a preparation for being shattered to pieces. The frog coming out of the mouth of this *beast*

is croaking, *Compromise, compromise, compromise—or we will fall apart.*

Frog Number Three

The third and last frog comes from the Protestant churches. Here the cry is to unite since Protestantism is already in pieces. They see union as their only hope of survival. Hence the croaking of the third frog is *coalitions—unify into one working group*. They say we must have an alliance to solve problems together.

The search for Christian unity through ecumenical dialogues has been going on for some time.

a) In 1910 the World Mission Conference started with a plan for unity.

b) In 1930 at Utrecht, Holland, steps were proposed for the World Council of Churches.

c) In 1948 at Amsterdam the World Council of Churches was formally organized.

d) In 1957 in Ghana a proposal was made to merge the World Council of Churches with the International Missionary Council.

e) In 1961 at New Delhi, India, this merger occurred. A Vatican representative was present as an observer.

f) In 1965 the third frog croaks loud and clear for coalitions. The three groups consisting of the World Council of Churches, the International Missionary Council, and the Vatican Secretariat formed a committee whose purpose is unity among the Protestant segments and the Vatican. Over the years Christianity has been in two *tracks*: Catholicism and Protestantism. The committee proposes to merge them into a single track.

The motivation for unity is to wage war on poverty. *We must unite to rid the world of hunger. We must unite to control pollution. We must unite to reduce population growth. We must unite to turn the tide of moral decay.*

For Bible Students these events are highly significant because the great Battle of Armageddon follows these three events:

- a) The return of the Jews to Israel. (This has already happened. Matthew 24:32.)
- b) The wars and revolutions in the vision of Elijah. (This is happening. 1 Kings 19:11,12.)
- c) The transformation of the image of the beast into a living force. (This is starting to happen.)

John the Baptist is a type of the church in the last days (Malachi 4:5,6). Herod pictures governments, Herodias pictures Papacy, their marriage pictures the union of Church and State. Salome, the daughter of Herodias, pictures Protestantism. Her dance will be an activity of Protestantism that greatly pleases governments. Salome's request for John's head pictures the great trouble that will fall on the feet members of God's true Church. John's beheading will be the Church's glorification and union with Christ, their head.

So the three frogs croak in harmony: *Coexistence, compromise, and coalitions*. We haven't identified Satan in one of these because he supports all three. He wants coexistence to maintain his kingdom. He wants compromise to appease his followers. He wants coalitions to breach the gaps in his kingdom. His great spiritual empire is shaking.

As the three unclean spirits like frogs lead the kings of the earth to Armageddon, it will be the end of an old civilization. But it will usher in a new civilization. As the old moves out, the new moves in.

These *last day* prophecies should give us a great sense of urgency to *work for the night is coming*.

May God help us to be faithful to the very end.

Address of Welcome-Bro. Michael Nekora, USA

IT IS WONDERFUL TO SEE YOU HERE. The Lord has graciously kept us in the faith and in his love, and granted us the privilege to meet together for the fifth time as an international body of Bible Students.

In the USA someone often begins a convention by expressing words of welcome on behalf of the home ecclesia. But I cannot do

that since there is no local ecclesia sponsoring this convention. Brethren from many countries have worked to make this a blessing for you. And I know that most of you have worked hard to be here. So in a way, I am speaking for you. I want to express your feelings of warmth and welcome toward those around you.

This convention is the result of the cooperative efforts of brethren in many places. But effort alone is not enough. Consider the first verse of Psalm 127: *Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.* The International Convention Committee has representatives from England, France, Germany, Greece, Poland, and North America. Every representative tried to make decisions he thought would please the Lord. Each knew that without God's blessing, nothing would prosper.

Most of us find ourselves controlled by circumstances, at least to some degree. We must work to feed, clothe, and shelter ourselves and others. We have to find the time to do those things that need to be done. Life seems to provide little opportunity for quiet reflection. At times even our Lord and his disciples found this true. We read in Mark 6:31,

And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going and they had no leisure So much as to eat.

Are we in such a quiet place now? Yes we are even though the world is all around us. We as Bible Students constitute only a fraction of those staying in this hotel. We confront the world when we leave this room. But we ARE away from our usual environment with its responsibilities and commitments. For one week we will sit at the feet of Jesus and learn of him. Let us use this time wisely. Let us be alert to hear the Lord's words, whether expressed from this platform, through testimonies, or through our personal fellowship with others who value the truth as we do.

Dwelling in Unity

David writes in the first verse of Psalm 133, *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!* Does this mean we will all see everything exactly alike? Certainly not. That won't happen until we actually receive our perfect, spiritual bodies.

Brother Russell wrote:

The most favorable condition for unity is that all seek to have the Lord's will done in their mortal bodies. . . . The working of a new engine is very slow at first because there is a certain amount of friction engendered when the parts begin to move. When the parts are worn smooth, there is little danger of friction. So with the members of the body of Christ. When they are new in the body, we must expect some friction, and then we should exercise more of the Spirit of the Lord. And we should be very sure of our own spirit, of our own intention. (Z5229)

You are a child of the heavenly Father. It is normal for children to grow and mature with the passing of time. Because our relationship to God is so important, we must grow strong and mature if we are to be pleasing to Him. You will not be a part of the heavenly kingdom because you belong to the right ecclesia, live in the right country, or study the right books. You will be a part of that kingdom if you become a mature Christian.

One mark of Christian maturity is the ability to interact with others with a minimum of friction. Br. Russell said we should exercise more of the Spirit of the Lord to minimize friction. When we see friction heating up the air around us, let us *lubricate* the situation with the *oil* of words fitly spoken, with the exercise of patience toward those who may be a new member of this *engine* or body of Christ. Try to listen to others without judging what they say in advance. Research has shown that most people don't listen very well. The schools teach reading, writing, and arithmetic, but they don't teach listening. The result is that many people only hear with their ears and rarely listen for understanding.

You may think that the strength of a relationship depends on how much you have in common with another, how often you agree in thought. But agreement is an unrealistic goal because each of us experiences reality in a different way. If you listen only for those things with which you agree, any difference sets off an alarm. You may even be personally offended. You are, of course, concentrating on yourself and your reactions. Don't try to eliminate differences. If you are mature, you should be able to listen to a viewpoint different than your own and then be able to summarize it correctly. It is possible to understand another point of view without necessarily agreeing with it. Listening for understanding is much different than listening for points of agreement. We listen to learn and to understand why as well as what another believes. We do not listen to force conformity of view.

Brother Russell wrote:

We are to remember that if we have a thought and present it to the brethren, and it does not seem logical to them, we are not to force it upon them, nor are they to force their views upon us. The difficulty seems to be that there is a tendency in such matters to fight each thought to the finish, to want everybody to agree with us, whereas the proper way is to be content and let the matter rest.
(Z4995)

This seems to be the same thought Paul had in mind. In 2 Timothy 2:24, 25 we read: *The Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will give them a change of heart leading them to a knowledge of the truth.*
(New International Version)

We want to be pleasing to our heavenly Father. We would do anything for Him. We love the sound of His voice, the path he selects for us, and even our trials. We prize our relationship to Him. Sr. Violetta will now express these sentiments in song. As she sings we'll see pictures of the wilderness and the holy land where our Lord might have withdrawn from the world to have a few private moments with his disciples. The hymn will be sung in Polish.

The Convention Program

There will probably be a total of ____ brethren from ____ countries at this convention. Some have been at an International Convention before. But more than half are attending their first International convention. To make it easier for them, let's look at the program.

There will be more than 20 discourses on Biblical subjects. In some instances, you will hear cherished truths reaffirmed, such as our relationship to God and how it was made possible through the gift of His son. We may also hear things we haven't thought about before. What, for example, are the four classes that will exist in the kingdom and how are they pictured in Ezekiel's last vision? Who was Zadok and what lessons can we learn from him?

We will hear why Present Truth in the past is not the same as Present Truth today. Even though we now are in a place of rest, we will be told how God uses His testing providences to make a place of rest one of unrest to accomplish a purifying work within us. Another speaker will suggest how the Apostle John may have used

the hot water spring at Laodicea as a picture because its waters gradually became tepid and unpalatable as it descended from its source.

The first regular testimony meeting will begin at 3:45 pm tomorrow. It is the first of four such meetings during the convention. Use this time to share with the brethren any messages of love, your thanks to the heavenly Father for blessings you've received, or describe some experience you're undergoing. Please try to make your testimony an encouragement to your brethren. We ask that you testify only once during the convention because our time is so limited.

On Thursday afternoon the testimony meeting will have the theme: How I got the truth. We would like to hear from everyone who did not get the truth in an ordinary way. Most of us have not had such an experience. I was an infant when my parents got the truth, so I never knew anything else. But some have seen the Lord's hand directing them to the truth. Let me tell you about a young man in Japan.

Ten years ago 1,000 First Volumes were printed in Japanese and distributed in the Tokyo area by the few brethren in Japan. Only 1% of the Japanese population claims to be Christian. Last year a young Japanese law student named Akio was looking at used religious books in a store in Osaka, about 400 miles south of Tokyo. Although he had a Buddhist background, Akio became interested in Bible study. At first he studied with the Jehovah Witnesses but he was not satisfied with their explanations. He saw a First Volume in this used book store. It was one of the 1,000 that had been printed years earlier. He bought it and read it. Because he liked it, he wrote to the organization name at the post office box number printed in the book.

Although the Japanese brethren had stopped renting the post office box, the postal authorities were able to redirect Akio's letter to Sister Junko whose name was still in their file. The Japanese brethren were overjoyed when the letter arrived. They telephoned Akio and offered to pay his train transportation to Tokyo so he could meet two American brethren who were studying with them. He made the trip and has continued to rejoice in the truth ever since. This year he spent several weeks in the United States studying with different brethren to improve his knowledge of the Bible.

Truly this was an exceptional experience both for Akio and the Japanese brethren. If you have also had an unusual experience, please share it with us on Thursday. Don't use that meeting for testimonies on other subjects.

Most people say there is too little time for fellowship at conventions. But there is one special time on Tuesday: all afternoon is reserved for fellowship. Use this time to have a long talk with someone. Take a walk through the park if the weather is nice. If your body needs extra rest, then rest.

Of course there are other times for fellowship. We have intermissions, meals, and time after the last session of each day. Let me give you one word of advice: at meals, sit with brethren who are not from your own country especially if you know a little of another language. Try to learn more about your brethren from other countries and to appreciate the Lord's hand in their lives. If you don't know another language, look at people's badges. If you see your color, you've found a translator.

Let's talk about the colors. A blue badge means the person comes from a country where English is the primary language. (Yellow means French, Brown means German, Green means Polish, Pink means Greek, and White represents all other languages.) A colored disk placed on a badge indicates that the person speaks another language. The color of the disk represents the language; its size indicates fluency. A small disk means communication in that language is possible only if simple words are used and spoken slowly. A medium disk means the person speaks the language reasonably well, but not fluently. A large disk means the person is fluent in the language. Sometimes people invent their own codes when they think these sizes are not precise enough.

Always wear your badge. It tells others you are a Bible Student and what language they must use to talk with you. If you need a colored disk, see the Service Desk.

Sunday School sessions have been arranged for the children and teenagers in meeting rooms close to this auditorium. Programs are available at the Service Desk. Parents should know where their children are at all times. Please instruct your children that an elevator is not a toy. It is to be used only when absolutely necessary.

Brethren, do NOT take flash pictures anytime during any service, even vesper services. We know we cannot stop someone who

decides to do as he pleases, takes flash pictures, and disturbs others. If you see this happen, the rule has not changed. Someone is simply violating it. (We do not object to pictures without flash because these are less disturbing to others.)

The hotel emphasizes that no-one is to be in a room overnight unless assigned and registered to that room. This is a requirement of German law. If you, for any reason, cannot be in the room assigned to you, talk to the Service Desk. They will make the change you want.

The hotel has another rule: no food is to be taken from the dining room. Although none of us wants to waste food, if you cannot eat it, leave it. If you feel you simply must have food in your room to use at odd hours of the day or night, we suggest that you go into the town and buy it.

This year we are not providing a money-changing service. If you need to change your currency into German marks, visit any bank in town. The hotel's front desk will also change money.

If you have any questions, need medical attention, require special services, or have any problem, see the brethren at the Service Desk. If you have an emergency, contact the front desk of the hotel.

Many of us have been looking forward to this convention with great anticipation. Now it begins. All too soon it will be over. Two weeks from today we may not easily remember a specific point or lesson from the discourses. But if we return to our homes with fresh courage to fight the good fight of faith, to resist the world, the flesh, and the adversary even unto death, and with a new resolve to understand our brethren better—then this convention will have been worthwhile. No matter how wonderful our experiences may be during the next week, our test of faithfulness will come in meeting the general responsibilities of each day. The great Russian writer Anton Chekhov said that *any idiot can face a crisis; it is this day-to-day living that wears you out.*

On behalf of all your brethren, we bid you welcome. May this convention provide you with those spiritual things that will help you grow as a new creature So that when you finish your course, you will hear the words:

Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. (Matthew 25:21)

Ezekiel's Last Vision-Bro. David Rice, USA

THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL is sometimes called the *Revelation* of the Old Testament because of its unusual and highly symbolic prophecies. It is a book of mystery because we do not understand everything in it. But if we are eager to know and when it is God's good pleasure, we can learn some of its mysteries.

Most of the book contains prophecies of judgment. The first 24 chapters are addressed mainly to the two-tribe kingdom of Judah; then come prophecies against Ammon, Tyre, Egypt, and Edom. But after that, Ezekiel adds a message of hope for the future because there will be a bright tomorrow. As Lamentations 3:31,32 says, *The Lord will not reject forever, for if He causes grief, then He will have compassion according to His . . . lovingkindness.* So God, through Ezekiel, kindly tenders the prospect of renewed blessing to follow the punishment.

This begins in chapter 36. There we find a prophecy of the return of Israel. Chapter 37 contains the vision of the valley of dry bones which represent *the dried hopes of the children of Israel.* Remember how the prophet sees one bone join to another, sinews and flesh come on them, then the body is covered with skin, and finally the breath of faith from the four winds of trouble brings the nation to life again. This was fulfilled in a small way when Israel returned to Palestine after their punishment in Babylon. But the larger fulfillment is in our day, and it has been in process for over 100 years.

Chapters 38 and 39 tell us in detail the troubles Israel will endure to bring them back to God. There it is predicted that Gog, of the land of Magog, will sweep down from the North with his allies. Then God will rescue his people *and the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel.* (Ezekiel 37:28)

So, what comes next? The Kingdom! The Ancient Worthies will be raised during the trouble to point Israel to their deliverer—Jesus, the Messiah. Then Israel will mourn for grief, but that will turn to joy and gladness. And soon life and peace will begin to flow out to the weary world.

And that is pictured next in Ezekiel. The prophet's last vision is a grand vision of the Kingdom, operating for the blessing of men on earth. It is recorded in chapters 40-48, and closes the book. That is the subject of our lesson today: Ezekiel's Last Vision.

A Vision of the Kingdom

As we get deeper into this vision, we will see more and more how it is a picture of the Kingdom. But right on the surface there are a few things that tell us we are on the right path. Here are four things from the vision which show this.

1: Mountain — City on the South

In this vision Ezekiel is taken to the land of Israel, to a very high mountain, and there he sees a city. (Ezekiel 40:2) This reminds us what John the Revelator saw about the Kingdom. Revelation 21:10 says, *He carried me . . . in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending . . . from God.* But in Ezekiel, the city he saw was on the south side of the mountain. Is there a meaning to this? Yes. South is the direction that symbolizes earth, just as North is the direction that symbolizes heaven. Remember the prophecy of Zechariah 14:4? The Lord stands upon the Mount of Olives and it divides in half—part falls to the north and part toward the south. It is a picture of establishing the kingdom in its two phases—heavenly and earthly. Since the city Ezekiel sees is on the south side, it may mean that the focus of this vision is the kingdom on earth.

2: River of Life

In this city there was a temple. Chapters 40-46 contain a lengthy description of it, and the court and gates around it. In chapter 47 Ezekiel was taken to the door of the temple. Verse 1 says, *water was flowing from . . . the house.* This water formed a river that grew larger and larger the farther it traveled, and wherever it flowed it brought life. Verse 9 says, *Everything will live where the river goes.* Verse 12 says there were luscious, fruit-bearing trees on each side of the river, for feeding and healing the nations. But you remember this same picture somewhere else! In Revelation 21 there is a river of life flowing from the throne of God and the lamb, going out to bless and nourish the world. Both are visions of the same thing—the Kingdom.

Incidentally, Ezekiel 47:2 says *the water was flowing . . . from south of the altar* perhaps to show that the merit of Jesus' sacrifice,

represented in the altar, will then go to help men in the earthly kingdom.

3: Sabbath/New Moon

Eze 46:1 says the east gate leading to the court around the temple will be opened at particular times: only on the sabbath and on the day of the new moon. The sabbath probably means man's thousand-year sabbath day now dawning. And the day of the new moon may mean the day of a new arrangement, a new covenant, with Israel by which God will bless mankind.

4: Day of Atonement

Even the timing of the vision gives us a clue that it is about the Kingdom. In the opening verse of chapter 40 the vision is dated *in the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month*. The beginning of the Jewish year is in the fall of the year starting with the seventh month, called Tishri. This may seem strange, but it is true! Even today the Jewish calendar shows New Year's day to be the beginning of month seven rather than month one. And it was the same in Ezekiel's day. So this vision came on the tenth day of the seventh month. It was a very special day. This was the great *Day of Atonement*. How appropriate that this vision of the Kingdom came to Ezekiel on the very day which God used to represent reconciling the world back to Himself!

Four Classes in the Kingdom

Now, having some reasonable evidence that this does represent the Kingdom, we will look at parts of this vision in detail. If we are on the right path, what we find should confirm what we know from other scriptures about the Kingdom.

Chapters 43 through 48 include a description of four classes of people that will be operating in the Kingdom. First there are the priests. Second, as helpers to the priests, there are Levites. Third there is a class of leaders who have the title *prince*. Fourth there are the *people of the land*, which includes all the others. This is the class that the city really is for. All the services and arrangements of the city are for the objective of bringing the *people of the land* to fellowship with God. They, of course, represent the people of the world. That is who the kingdom is for!

But what of the other three classes? Let us look at each of them carefully.

1. The priests. (The Saints)

Who will be priests in the Kingdom? Revelation says the saints will be the priests. Revelation 20:6: *Blessed . . . is he that hath part in the first resurrection . . . they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him.* They are the most honored class in Ezekiel's vision. They are described in chapter 44, verses 15-18:

The priests . . . the sons of Zadok who kept charge of my sanctuary when . . . Israel went astray . . . shall come near to minister to Me; . . . they shall offer Me the fat and the blood. . . . They shall enter My sanctuary; they shall . . . keep My charge.

Their clothing is described in verses 17 and 18: *They shall be clothed with linen garments . . . they shall not gird themselves with anything which makes them sweat.* Revelation 19:8 tells us *fine linen is the righteousness of saints.* There is no sweat because beyond the veil the service will be pleasant, not laborious. And, the priests will teach and judge the people. Verses 23 and 24 say *they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the profane, and . . . between the unclean and the clean. And in a dispute they shall . . . judge . . . according to My ordinances.* Remember what Paul said: *Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?* (1 Corinthians 6:2)

Now let's turn to the second group.

2. The Levites. (Great Company)

The Levites were dedicated to God, as were the priests, but they went astray. Ezekiel 44:10-14 says:

The Levites who went far from Me, when Israel went astray . . . they shall bear the punishment for their iniquity. Yet they shall be ministers in My sanctuary . . . they shall stand . . . to minister . . . [but] they shall not . . . serve as a priest . . . I will appoint them to keep charge of the house.

These Levites we believe represent the Great Company, those who turn aside from full devotion and do not build their characters as they ought. They will not receive the reward of the saints—the divine nature. That is why John the Apostle urges us, *Watch yourselves . . . that you may receive a full reward.* (2 John 8) But because God still loves them and they still love God, they are spared and given service beyond the veil.

It is Paul who spoke most clearly about them. In 1Cor. 3:12-15 he says some will build with the valuable materials—gold, silver, precious stones—but others, also building on the foundation of Christ, would build poorly, pictured as using wood, hay, and stubble. When the test comes, their work will be symbolically burned. But Paul says, *If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet So as through fire.* They are saved, they get life, but not the reward of the saints. They do not become priests. Instead they become servants of God in heaven. Of course even this will be a wonderful privilege, because God is very gracious.

The most familiar reference to the Great Company is in Revelation 7:9-17. There John sees a *great multitude . . . from every nation . . . standing before . . . the throne . . . clothed in white robes, and palm branches in their hands.* When John asked the angel who these were, the angel replied that they were a class who went through special purging, and *washed their robes . . . in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple.* (Verses 14 and 15) Yes, they are in heaven. That is where God's temple is. Mankind will never enter God's temple. Only spiritual beings enter the temple, and this shows the Great Company to be a spiritual class.

Ezekiel says the same thing. He specifically says that the Levites *shall be ministers in My Sanctuary.* (Chapter 44, verse 11) Notice who DOES and who DOES NOT enter the Sanctuary. The priests do—verse 16 says *they shall enter My Sanctuary.* They represent the Church. The Levites do. They represent the Great Company. No one else does: not the prince, not the people of the land. The temple is a spiritual place and only spiritual beings can enter it.

There is another scripture which, though not as clear, teaches the same thing. It is in Psalm 45. The psalm is prophetic of the marriage of King Jesus and his bride. And the bride is shown having virgin companions at her side—the Great Company. Along with the bride and groom these *enter into the King's palace*—the spirit realm. (Psalm 45:15)

3. The Prince. (Ancient Worthies)

That brings us to the third class in Ezekiel, and in many ways the most interesting class of all: the *Prince* class. We believe they represent the Ancient Worthies, those who will be made *princes in*

all the earth. (Psalm 45:16) There are three passages in Ezekiel that help us identify them:

(a) Ezekiel 45:17. *And it shall be the prince's part to give . . . offerings . . . for the house of Israel*—that is, the people of the land, representing mankind. The *prince* class assists them in their offerings to God. They are a go-between class helping mankind in their approach to God. This is the role we expect for the Ancient Worthies.

(b) Ezekiel 46:9,10. *When the people of the land shall come before the Lord in the solemn feasts . . . the prince in the midst of them, when they go in, shall go in; and when they go forth, shall go forth.* Again notice the role of the *prince class*, mingling with the people apparently helping and directing them. That is what the Ancient Worthies will do for the people in the Kingdom. They will show them how to approach God, what is required, and what worship is acceptable. This honorable service will be given to the Ancient Worthies.

(c) Ezekiel 44:1-3. Here Ezekiel is taken in vision to the eastern gate of the sanctuary. But Ezekiel found the gate shut. The Lord tells him that the gate will remain shut and not be opened. The reason it is shut is in verse 2: *The Lord said unto me; This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the Lord, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut.* Ezekiel had seen the glory of God enter by that gate, and recorded it in the previous chapter (Ezekiel 43:1-3). Many brethren believe that the *glory of the Lord* entering the temple represents the saints entering into their spiritual reward. They point to texts like Haggai 2:7 which says the desirable things of all nations will *fill this [temple] with glory.* And they recall that Solomon's temple, when it was dedicated, was filled with the glory of God when the ark of the covenant—the Christ class—was brought into the temple. We think this view is correct. And it is true that after the saints are complete in glory no one else will enter the way they did. That call will be closed forever.

Yet that east gate does have special meaning for the Prince class. Verse 3 (chapter 44) explains:

It is for the prince; the prince, he shall sit in it to eat bread before the Lord; he shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate, and shall go out by the way of the same.

Notice that the prince never goes through that gate into the temple. They only go to the gate and there, at the porch of the gate, have fellowship. They *eat bread before the Lord*. Then they go out again. This fits so well with the Ancient Worthies. During the Kingdom they will not gain access into the heavenly realm but they will have communion with the saints—with the Lord, with the spiritual kingdom—in a special way. They will receive the direction they need from the heavenly rulers. Then they will go out to give the instructions of the heavenly kings to the people of earth. They will be a special *go-between* class, the connecting link between the heavenly kingdom and the world of mankind.

So these are the four classes that will operate in the Kingdom:

1. The Priests—the saints.
2. The Levites—the Great Company.
3. The Prince—the Ancient Worthies.
4. The People of the Land—all of mankind.

Division of the Land

In Ezekiel's vision each of these four classes is given a certain possession of land. Much attention is given to it including the first seven verses of chapter 45 and all of chapter 48. So there is certainly something of value here. We will follow chapter 48 since it is the clearest.

The first portion of land is in the north end of Israel in a strip running east to west across the full length of the country. Verse 1 says it is *northward . . . running from east to west, a portion for Dan*. Notice Dan's portion on the diagram at the very top. Verse 2 says *by the border of Dan, from the east side to the west side, a portion for Asher*. In the same manner the next verses assign portions for Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben, and Judah.

Then there is a special offering of land set aside: 25,000 cubits deep all across the land from east to west. That is described in verses 8 to 22. We will return to this soon. But first we will jump to verse 23 to get the portions for the remaining five tribes of Israel. *As for the rest of the tribes, from the east side unto the west side, Benjamin shall have a portion*. Next comes Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun, and finally Gad. These are all shown on our diagram.

But now to that special offering in the middle of the land. Verse 20 says that in this area there was a special portion of land shaped in a square: 25,000 cubits deep by 25,000 cubits wide. This square leaves some excess to the west and to the east which is shaded on our diagram. We will discuss those shaded parts later.

The square portion is considered in verse 9 which tells us that it also was divided.

The first part of it was for the priests. Verses 9 and 10 say: *The allotment that you shall set apart to the Lord shall be 25,000 cubits in length and 10,000 in [depth]. It . . . shall be for . . . the priests.* Notice on our diagram we have written the word *Priests* in this area.

Verse 13 gives the next division. *Alongside the border of the priests, the Levites shall have 25,000 cubits in length and 10,000 in [depth].* We have labeled that *Levites*.

This leaves a strip of land 5,000 cubits deep. Verse 15 tells us what it is for: *And the remainder, 5,000 cubits [deep] and 25,000 cubits in length, shall be for common use for the city, for dwellings and for open spaces; and the city shall be in its midst.* In verse 16, measurements are given for the city: it is 4,500 cubits square with 50 cubits of open space all around. This leaves some land on each side which verse 18 says is used for farming to feed the people who serve in the city.

Notice the order we have in this special area of the land. First the priests, in the north—the direction that represents the heavenly realm. Next to them are the Levites. In the south—the earthly realm—there is a place for the city, the earthly government.

Everyone has now been given a place except for the Prince class. What portion is given to them? Remember the shaded portions on the west and east sides of the holy square? That is given to the Prince class. Verse 21 says so: *The remainder shall be for the prince, on the one side and on the other of the holy allotment.*

But this does seem strange. Everyone else has a strip of land running east to west in a regular fashion. Only the Prince class has this unusual portion running along the portions of the priests, the Levites, and the city. But notice how well this suits the Ancient Worthies. It shows them as the *connecting link* between the heavenly classes of the north and the earthly city in the south. And that is what the Ancient Worthies will be: connecting links

between the spiritual government of Christ and the earthly kingdom of man. That is just what Ezekiel 44 showed. The Ancient Worthies are the *link* between the temple class and the people—they go to the porch of the gate, commune there, and then go back to serve the people of the land. They will be the vehicle of communication between the spirit and earthly phases of the Kingdom.

An Altar for the People

Now as the people of the land learn of God, they will want to make offerings to Him for praise and thanks. A customary way to do this in Bible times was to offer sacrifice to God on an altar. So in Ezekiel's vision there is an altar. But before it could be used, it had to be dedicated with special offerings.

This dedication is described in Ezekiel 43:18-27. The first offering was *a bullock for a sin offering*. (Verse 19) The blood was put on the altar and the bullock was burned. On the following day they offered *a male goat without blemish for a sin offering* (verse 22), and it was handled like the bullock. A goat was offered this way on each of seven consecutive days. Verse 25 says: *For seven days you shall prepare daily a goat for a sin offering*. Only then was the altar consecrated to accept offerings from the people. Verse 27 says: *On the eighth day and onward, the priests shall offer your burnt offerings . . . and your peace offerings; and I will accept you, declares the Lord God*.

What does this picture? The bullock for a sin offering probably represents Jesus. Before God could accept anyone or their offering, Jesus had to give his life to remove sin. But then before God helps the world, He prepares the Church to be heirs with Christ. They first share his sufferings and later his glory. Remember how Israel's Day of Atonement showed this very thing? First the bullock—Jesus—then the Lord's goat—the Church. Afterward the blessing came to Israel, a picture of the world. Here in Ezekiel we have almost the same picture. But in Ezekiel rather than one goat, we have one each day for seven days. Here the Church is viewed in seven parts. That is just how Revelation shows it. There were seven stages of the Church—the one great Church of God in seven parts.

When the Church is complete and their sacrificing is over, then the blood of Christ will be used to remove the sins of men. Then mankind will be accepted. Then *the one who wishes [may] take the water of life without cost*. (Revelation 22:17)

Love and Power Free to Act

Then God's attributes of love and power will be sent out to bless and heal the groaning creation.

Do you remember back in Israel's tabernacle, the two cherubim looking in, over the mercy seat, as though waiting to see the atoning blood applied? These were love and power waiting until they could spring into action. Ezekiel sees those cherubim also. He sees them in the sanctuary, carved on the walls. Ezekiel 41:18,19 says:

It was carved with cherubim and palm trees . . . and every cherub had two faces, a man's face toward the palm tree on one side, and a young lion's face toward the palm tree on the other side.

These are God's attributes, love and power—the face of a man and the face of a lion—no longer waiting because the ransom will then be paid. Instead they are upright and look inward to a palm tree, the evergreen symbol of life. The curse will be removed and men will receive life forever.

A Grand Vision of Life!

Yes, Ezekiel's last vision is one of hope and wonderful prospects. It is a grand vision of life, peace, and help for men. But we can see that vision by faith now, before the time. That vision fills us with gladness. And it is meant to change us also. We are to work into our characters the graces and fruits suitable to such a vision.

In fact, that is just the reason the vision is given. Ezekiel 43:10,11 says:

Son of man, describe the temple to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities and let them measure the plan. And if they are ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the design of the house, its structure . . . exits . . . entrances . . . all its statutes, and all its laws. And write it in their sight, So that they may observe its whole design and all its statutes, and do them.

When Jesus came to Israel as the Son of Man, he showed them something of the standards of God. And those that listened and changed their hearts got something deeper. Jesus showed them more truths and at last they saw the structure and beauty of God's plan.

When Christ returned and the time for the harvest came, the Son of Man caused the same work to be done again. He came to spiritual Israel through his messengers and showed them some of the truths that had been lost such as the truth of universal redemption. Those that heard and appreciated it received a fuller knowledge of the gracious plan of God, with all its details, *its designs, its statutes, and its laws*.

Dear brethren, we have that vision! What a glorious one it is! Soon that vision will be a reality.

Except Those Days Be Shortened-Bro. Lutz Ruthmann, Germany

DEMONSTRATIONS AND PROTESTS are expressions of our time. The media report these events daily. Rarely does a day pass in which something is not being protested.

One particular demonstration occurred at the Vienna Opera Ball in 1988. The newspapers reported that thousands of people demonstrated in the streets of Vienna while the upper echelon of politicians, scientists, and artists gathered for the ball. The demonstrators carried placards containing this slogan:

The earth is dying and its murderers are dancing!

The earth is dying! We need no prophets to prove this to even the uneducated. Our fields are poisoned, the seas are contaminated, the fish are sick, the forests are dying, the rivers are biologically dead, the ozone layer protecting our earth contains great holes, and the tropical rain forests are being harshly cut down. Names like Seveso and Chernobyl are seen by mankind as symbols of death and destruction.

The earth is dying and its murderers are dancing! Through selfishness, fallen man has ruined the earth. The influential and powerful are at fault for exploiting and destroying the earth due to greed and the desire for profit.

People fear the future. If the earth is dying, what is to become of man? *First the forests will die, then the people*, is the expression of protest by ecologists against the killing of forests.

Who can believe that there will be a happy or better future? The more or less unbelieving masses ask the scientists and the learned

ones of this day. But the scientists have no answer. Their prognoses for the future are terrifying: *When the current burdens on ecology widely stop, perhaps the ocean can be saved—apart from irreparable damages.*

Yet nothing can be changed because greed motivates mankind's dealings and the circuit of destruction by mankind will not be stopped.

And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. —Lu 21:25,26

The earth is dying! Long ago Isaiah prophesied:

And the foundations of the earth tremble. The earth breaks asunder, the earth cracks asunder, the earth shakes asunder; the earth reels like a drunkard, and sways like a hammock; its rebellion lies heavily upon it and it will fall, to rise no more. —Isa 24:19,20 [New American Standard]

These are words of grave meaning which, if not understood in the proper way, might paint a picture of the horrors of a global atomic war which would annihilate the physical earth. We know there are enough bombs stored in depots to destroy the earth many times over.

But atomic war shall not occur as says the words of the prophet Isaiah:

For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord and there is none else. —Isa 45:18

Let us also think of the wonderful plan of restitution of all things, for the world as a habitation for mankind shall be made glorious and the wilderness and barren places of the earth shall blossom.

The words of Isaiah 24 seemingly speak of the destruction of the physical earth. When taken in the right way, when read as a symbolic picture, we discover a completely different meaning which harmonizes with the prophecies pointing to our times.

The Foundations of the Earth Tremble.

It cannot be said that the earth *reels to and fro like a drunkard or sways like a hammock* since it is set in an exact orbit around the sun. This is only an expression. We come closer to an understanding when we particularly notice the last words of the verse: *Its rebellion lies heavily upon it*. Although it IS true that the willfulness of man has cursed the earth through sin, we should not apply these words to the physical earth. They apply more particularly to earth's inhabitants: mankind.

It is the curse with its consequences that burdens man and his social order. Thus we can truly say that law and order—the foundations of every human and political society—do shake. This shaking of the foundations of law and order is something we can follow in the television and radio news each day as we hear of political and social *shakings*.

There are tumults and roarings reported from earth's different countries. We experience anarchistic shakings from terrorists, airplane high-jackings, hostage situations, political extortions, corruption, and scandals. All of these crush the foundations of law and order.

The Earth Breaks Asunder.

It is clear that this scripture does not describe the physical earth. It is another symbolic picture to be considered. The earth, that is ideological mankind in its social order, is split into two camps: east and west, socialism and capitalism, rich and poor, oppressed and the oppressors, the *haves* and *have nots*, the *hungering* and the *over-abundant*.

Yes, the *earth* is breaking down more and more. On the one hand there are the influential who have become wealthy at the expense of others; on the other hand there are those who were easily cheated due to their ignorance. James speaks of these:

Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure of the earth and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts as in the days of slaughter. —Jas 5:3-5

James shows clearly that this breaking down of the rich and powerful, and of the poor, who gradually are recognizing their undeniable rights, will take place in the last days of this old order of things when he says, *ye have heaped treasure together FOR THE LAST DAYS.*

The Earth Reels like a Drunkard

This reeling to and fro aptly describes the aimlessness and unrest of mankind. This comes from perplexity—the distress of nations in perplexity.

When we speak of a drunkard, we often say he does not know what he is doing because his thoughts are confused, his vision is not clear, his ears hear *voices*, his speech is slurred, and his thinking is clouded. When we think of the senseless armament race between the world powers and of the devastation of nourishment as the greater part of earth's people go hungry, and of the destruction of the rain forests which are necessary to the lives of all mankind, when we think of the thoughtless association with atomic power, of the annihilation of the environment for a quick profit, then we can come to only one conclusion: Mankind, especially the ones who bear the greatest responsibility, is no longer behaving rationally, for only a madman would destroy his environment in this way.

Yes, the earth breaks asunder and no one can stop it. This old world order of unrighteousness must fall. *It shall fall and not rise again.* Should this sadden us? Not at all. We know that this heaven and this earth must pass away to make room for a new heaven and a new earth in which dwells righteousness. (See 2 Peter 3:13 and Isaiah 65:17.)

The earth is dying and its murderers are dancing. How much longer? Are we surprised that mankind rises up in protest and demands the rights which have been denied them? No. We have already been living for more than 100 years in the Laodicean period. The word Laodicea means *the people seek their rights.*

It is a conflict between the rich and the poor, between those who live an over-abundant life at the cost of the poor and those who are awakening and uneasy, who recognize that these things cannot be God's desire for us, that they deserve the same rights as others.

We quote the following words from a newspaper article of March, 1988, which appeared under the title *Rain Forest*:

The Amazon region of Peru is three times as large as West Germany. It is still intact. But for how long? Bulldozers are already at work, streets are being laid through the primeval forest. It is speculated that the mineral wealth is being irresponsibly exploited—the least of which is caused by Peru's government needing to clear its national debt. Thus the life principles of the Indian people of Aguarun and Huambisa are being destroyed. Already for some years now the Indians are gathering weapons: they are organizing themselves and promote their inalienable rights of their land.

We can only ask: Why hasn't this awakening of the people come sooner? Why hasn't the call to freedom and the desire for inalienable rights happened centuries ago?

The answer is not hard to find if we think of all the opportunities the *age of technology* has brought us: television, radio, telephone, satellites, and computers. The continents have become connected, bound by worldwide air routes. Different cultures and lifestyles of men are being brought together. Ignorance about things foreign is diminishing. Preconceptions which have arisen through ignorance are being demolished.

Thus we can watch what happens in faraway China, Australia, or Africa on television news even though we don't travel there personally. We can be taught of the problems of the black race. Satellites observe every speck of our earth. If anything happens in remote Siberia, the public soon knows it.

Why haven't these technological achievements come sooner? Is it because of man's intelligence? Has his intelligence improved so much over the past 100 years?

When we stand in awe before the architecture of ancient times—whether it be the pyramids or other wonders of the world—we ask ourselves how these things were possible without the use of today's technical advances. Therefore the increase of knowledge and technology by leaps and bounds must be the result of some other cause.

The prophecies of the holy Scriptures are the only place we can find the right answers. These words were given through spiritual inspiration centuries before our time. They were to be understood at *an appointed time*.

The Time of the End

Daniel prophesied at the time of the Babylonian exile that *knowledge shall increase*. He described this appointed time with the words, *the time of the end*. This increase of knowledge is something we wish to first consider in conjunction with truth, for Daniel speaks of the *book* many will read. (Daniel 12:4) We are blind if we cannot apply this in a broader sense to the increase of knowledge in science and technology.

Daniel also speaks of *running to and fro* which we clearly recognize today in automobile and airplane travel, particularly traveling from one continent to another. At the large airports of the world planes are landing and taking off almost every minute. They take thousands of people from one part of the world to another. Whoever sees the large traffic jams on the freeways during the tourist season must be convinced of the meaning of *running to and fro*.

Both the prophecies of the *increase of knowledge* and the *running to and fro* are signs of the time of the end which has become apparent worldwide during the past decades. *But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, even to the time of the end.* — Da 12:4

The opening of this seal—the understanding of the prophecies—should be a sign that the time of the end has arrived. Although the meaning indicating the *1335 days* has existed for centuries in a *sealed* form, the truth could not be understood before the presence of the Lord brought complete light. This was the *appointed time* in which the enlightened of the prophecy would understand. Daniel 12:1 reads, *And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time.*

We know from the scriptures who Michael is. The word Michael means *one like God*. It describes our beloved Lord in his exalted position of honor, glory, and power. *One like God* who is seated at the right hand of God, as the scriptures declare.

Daniel also tells us that the coming of our Lord in this power and glory will not be a time of untroubled joy for the unbelieving world. Not at all. The opposite will be the case. *And there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time.*

We thus recognize that the presence of our Lord is associated with this *time of trouble such as never was*. In Matthew chapter 24 the Lord expresses himself in a similar way in answer to a question from his disciples about the signs of his presence and the end of the age. Here are the words of several verses:

And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars . . . but the end is not yet. [vs. 6] For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. [vs. 8] For then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved. [vss. 21 and 22]

We do not wish to comment upon these verses individually, but merely point out that it appears to us that the Lord wanted us to understand that the time of trouble, which we believe began in 1874, would start with his second presence. It would continue to increase until the climax at which point mankind would destroy itself were it not for God's intervention and a *shortening* of those days.

When we quickly glance over this period of time which stretches across more than 100 years, we recognize in the events of these times that the time of trouble has continually worsened. It has finally reached the degree where even non-believers can see the death of our earth.

As it is written in Matthew 24, the cries of *wars and rumors of wars* have not come to an end as yet. For the elect this should mean that an even greater time of trouble can be expected and that we should be prepared.

During the First World War not one of God's people could have anticipated that the horrors of war with its afflictions could worsen. Yet it happened a second time when nation rose against nation. That second war ended with many millions dead on all sides and with the unimaginable sufferings of the Jewish people in the concentration camps.

The rising up of nation against nation should be understood as the beginning of sorrow and a signal to the *feet members* that the time of trouble will grow worse. We know that the trouble shall increase as upon a woman in labor.

As the Second World War ended, the threat of annihilation of the earth arose through the presence of the hydrogen bomb. But today, more than 40 years after the end of that war, our earth is dying without the help of another war. We can see how true are the words of the prophet, *and except those days should be shortened, there should NO FLESH be saved.*

It is an open question whether the days are shortened by the will of the elect or, as it is properly stated in another translation, through the elect. It is a fact that the Church will not permit all flesh to be destroyed.

Thus we live at a time when the time of trouble continues to move forward to its climax—complete anarchy. The earth is dying little by little. If there were no end, no flesh would be saved.

This may well indicate to us how short is the time for the existing *feet members* to make their calling and their election sure. Whosoever builds his house of faith upon a rock will survive this stormy period.

The adversary knows that his time will soon run out. Like a roaring lion, whose attempts to lead people astray are more and more limited by the ever-increasing light of the presence of our Lord, he tries with his last bit of strength to harm the *feet members*, to destroy them spiritually.

When our Lord spoke to his disciples for the last time, he said, *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.* (Matthew 28:18) Should we expect that our Lord had no use for his power or might in heaven and in earth during the last 100 years of his presence? No. That would certainly be unrealistic.

We should expect that the presence of our Lord and the time of trouble are not coincidentally tied together. It is cause and effect: the time of trouble is a RESULT of the presence of our Lord.

Why Do the Nations Rage and the People Imagine a Vain Thing?

The darkness hates the light, as the scriptures tell us, because the light reveals the works of darkness. Whoever does injustice would like to roam in the dark and not have his evil deeds revealed.

Why do the nations rage and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel

together, against the Lord, and against his anointed. —Psalm 2:1,2

We can personally experience how the kings of the earth (the influential men of high finance) set themselves, and the rulers (political and business experts) consult with one another. Whoever follows the news knows what hectic unrest reigns among the politicians and businessmen. They travel from continent to continent to determine how and with what devices this old social order can be upheld. In So doing they take counsel AGAINST Jehovah and His anointed since our Lord has returned to destroy this old unrighteous order and create a foundation for the blessing of all mankind.

Why do the nations rage and the people imagine a vain thing especially since the Lord has come to bring that which is longed for? In 1916 Brother Russell wrote these words in the Foreword to Fourth Volume:

In other words, the increase of knowledge is responsible for the increase of discontent and fear which are bringing Armageddon, or the Day of Vengeance of God, upon the whole world . . . The conflict between capital and labor is along this line, and we are to expect that such things will go rapidly from bad to worse.

Nothing can be kept secret today as in the past. Every man, even the poorest, has enough opportunities to inform himself about everything. And that which he sees awakens his dissatisfaction. The scriptures tell of the dissatisfaction which shall come to man. As is So often the case, it is described in symbols: the rushing multitude. *Woe to the multitude of many people which make a noise like the noise of the seas.* —Isa 17:12

We know that this stormy, fear-inciting noise of the people cannot be quieted by the hand of man. Only the Lord can say, *Peace, be still.*

When we examine the cause of this dissatisfaction which produces the widening of the distance between classes and peoples, we see that the reason is greed, a result of original sin. Thus all the negotiations of man serve personal advantage, the advantage of groups or classes of people no matter on which side they stand. They work *against Jehovah and against His anointed.*

Until now God has allowed the nations to go their own way So they might learn from experience. But now the times of the

Gentiles are fulfilled. This is the advice given in Psalm 2:10, *Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.* This only stirs up rejection and thus brings down God's wrath and the wrath of His anointed upon them and upon all the inhabitants of the earth.

The old order of things must be completely torn and destroyed in a time of trouble such as never was. Then the blessings provided for man can be poured out by Christ and his glorified bride.

For thus said the Lord of hosts: Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come. —Hag 2:6,7

The final shaking of the earth and all nations shall take place for only *a little while*, and this is like the words of Paul in Romans 9:28 where he states that the Lord will make a *short work*.

Why a *little while* or a *short work*? Because this climax of the trouble will be so terrible that no flesh would be saved if these days were not shortened. Just as the climax of this trouble will be very terrible, God's driving out of all lies and unrighteousness of this order will be even more powerful.

The scriptures point out that the last members of the Church will have passed beyond the veil before the total collapse occurs. Certainly we should belong to those who watch and observe the things that happen on this earth telling us in which time and hour we are living. We live in a time in which the *feet members* can be called out as in no earlier time. *And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.* (Luke 21:28)

In his second letter, Peter speaks of a dissolving of the things of the old world order, but he also mentions the disciples of the Lord: *Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner ought ye to be in holy conversation and godliness.* (2 Peter 3:11)

We live in a time of great trial where our depth of faith will be tested, *in which we have believed*. It is our faith that is presently being tried. May you win your souls through your diligence!

Amen.

Dwelling Under the Anointing-Bro. Adam Siwak, Canada

THE SUBJECT OF *Dwelling Under the Anointing* is of momentous interest to you and me who are living at the latter end of the Harvest. Yet it is no less important for us than to those who came under the anointing of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the Age.

For almost 2000 years wholly unknown to the world in general, the divine program of selection, training, and development of a people for God has been secretly going on and is not yet completed. But evidences that the harvest is drawing to a close and that the work of the Holy Spirit of anointing all the body members of Christ is nearing the end are all around us.

The anointing of the Church is a means to an end. It is used to transform you and me from the natural to the spiritual life. It is impossible for us who by nature are flesh and blood to inherit the heavenly inheritance of a *spirit* body unless we undergo a change of nature. This anointing that we receive is the agency for our transformation from human to the divine nature. *This mortal must put on immortality.*

This anointing cannot be purchased by money nor by good deeds or works, nor can it be inherited as a gift. This anointing that we receive is granted as a gift only if certain conditions are met, and in fulfillment of God's foreordained design and promise.

Of this anointing and promise we read in 1 John 2:25-27:

And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

The anointing which our Lord and the body members receive is different from anything else in the whole world. It is often spoken of in the scriptures as *the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of a sound mind, the Spirit of love, the Spirit of power, the Spirit of holiness, the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit of promise.*

What is it then? It is the spirit, the disposition, which is associated with holiness, truth, with the word of God. All of these titles

repeated many times in scripture assure us that they relate to the same Holy Spirit of God.

Anointing vs. Begetting

The anointing of the Holy Spirit is slightly different from the begetting. The Holy Spirit which came upon Jesus at Jordan was both the begetting and the anointing power of God. Our Lord was anointed from the moment at which he was begotten.

The anointing and the begetting seem to be two pictures which represent the matter from two different standpoints. We are individually begotten, but are collectively anointed. If we cease to be in the body of Christ, we cease to be anointed. If we lose the spirit of our begetting, we shall die.

The begetting represents the beginning of our experience and the resurrection, the completion. Each is individually begotten and born of the spirit. If we have received this anointing, we are entitled to all that God has promised to The Christ, head and body. Thus we are anointed with the Holy Spirit sent by the Father and bestowed upon the Church by Jesus.

When Jesus reached the age of 30, he set out to do the Father's will. He was perfect in the absolute sense, without sin, *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners*. (Hebrews 7:26) He, as a perfect human being, had sweet communion with his Father, as Adam had before he sinned. Jesus, up until the time of his baptism by John, was human minded, like Adam, and was like Adam in perfection.

With the sacred records before him, Jesus studied all that had been outlined by Moses and the prophets. The result was an inward urge to do the Father's will and set things right. Coming to Jordan, the language of his heart was, *Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me!* (Hebrews 10:7) *I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.* (Psalms 40:8)

Symbolizing the sacrificial death of his perfect human nature by water immersion, the heavens were opened unto him and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove. And a voice was heard saying, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.* (Matthew 3:16,17)

Thus a great change came upon Jesus. He was no longer human minded because he came under the anointing of the Holy Spirit

which opened his understanding and appreciation of spiritual things. Jesus there received the Holy Spirit without measure. The anointing he received was dynamic. He was energized to the point where he wanted to be alone in the wilderness. All natural food was waived aside. His whole concentration was intensely absorbed in the things that he had so long stored in his mind. There he developed into one harmonious whole, all that had been prophetically recorded concerning him and his mission.

This anointing was so important that without it Jesus could never have understood God's mind and purpose. We note that for Jesus to understand God's mind and purpose, he would have to study thoroughly all that was written of him by the prophets under the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus returned to Nazareth and began his ministry under the power of this anointing which he had received. Jesus could not understand spiritual things unless he received the anointing. It is in this light that we can see the importance of this anointing to you and me, for without this miraculous aid or agency, no human being, no matter how genial or talented or intelligent, could comprehend and understand the deep things of God.

We have an example of this in the apostles. Up until the day of Pentecost they were, for the most part, unable to comprehend deep, spiritual things. They were natural minded while they were with Jesus in the flesh. We do, of course, acknowledge that they received a measure of the Lord's spirit from the Lord, even to heal people, cast out devils, etc. However, Jesus himself realized that they would be unable to receive a full understanding of truth until the day when they would receive the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth.

It was on the day of Pentecost that they were electrified and transformed in a way that astounded themselves and others. It was similar to what happened to Jesus at Jordan. The anointing received was dynamic. It had first come upon Jesus, as head of the New Creation. Now the body came under the anointing and the apostles were the first to experience and actively exert this energy through the power of the Holy Spirit working in them. It was in fulfillment of the promise Jesus made to them in Acts 1:8, *But ye shall receive power after the Holy Spirit is come upon you and ye shall be my witnesses.*

The apostles were no longer minding earthly things, for they were now able to grasp deeper truths. They were energized by the Holy

Spirit to proclaim boldly the gospel, the good news of Christ, to others. They became Sons of God because under the power and anointing of the Spirit, they experienced sonship whereby they could trustfully and affectionately cry *Abba, Father*.

It is interesting to note that a rabbinical commentary on the traditional teaching of the Jews states that slaves were forbidden to address the head of the family by the title of *Abba*. It approximates to a personal name, in contrast to *Father*, with which it is always joined. The two words together express the love and intelligent confidence of the child of God. This intimate union is comprehended only by such as come under this anointing, surpassing all relationships of a human kind, for this is of the highest order.

This anointing with the Holy Spirit corresponds to the anointing of Israel's priests and kings with the holy anointing oil. After Aaron was anointed he could no longer be as the rest of the people of Israel because he thereby was accepted of God as His property. This was God's seal upon him.

So it is with us and our Head. The anointing separates us from the remainder of the race and thenceforth we are no longer a part of it, nor have any share in its hopes and ambitions, but have higher ones. This anointing signified (in type) the setting apart of Aaron (and his family) for God's service. It typified the anointing of the Royal priesthood to be set apart for God's service. Not only was this oil used to anoint the High Priest into office, it was also used to anoint the vessels of the Tabernacle, to anoint the kings of Israel, as well as the prophets. It could not be used for any other purpose. The antitype of this is the Holy Spirit of Sonship with which The Christ is anointed. This *Head and Body* is also anointed to be prophets, priests, and kings.

David, a Type

When we look at God's selection of David to reign over Israel, we see that God chose one who aptly prefigured The Christ, Head and Body, selected during the Gospel Age and anointed to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the Lord.

What kind of characteristics did God see in David? He found in him faith, meekness, courage, energy, and loving obedience. David was but a youth when he was anointed. However, he learned not to waste precious time on foolish things. He was a noble youth—courageous in the line of duty, brave to face danger and able to

endure hardship in any good work, especially when the interests of God's people were at stake. Because David manifested such a sterling character, God called him to a higher service. So God has been calling and anointing with his Holy Spirit a similar class all through the Gospel Age. They are the Lord's anointed kings, though their share in the kingdom is in the future. In the meantime, they are surrounded by enemies on every side as was David, and the time of their sojourn here on earth is one of continual warfare as was David's. David's reign represented the work of Jesus and the Church in the flesh. Solomon's reign represented the work of the glorified Head and Body in the kingdom. Thus we see in the two reigns the work of the Lord's anointed.

The name David signifies *beloved*, which is a type of our Lord and Master and of whom it was said by God, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.* (Matthew 3:17) So it also applies to all the body members, each of whom must be beloved, else he cannot be acceptable as a member. Jesus says of such that the Father will love you and make His abode with you. Again Jesus says that we should love one another as he has loved us. It is certain that all who receive of this anointing of the Lord must ultimately be of this *David* or *beloved* character, possessing the spirit of love which the Father manifests toward us through Christ, and that we also may manifest this same spirit of love, patience, kindness, cheerful endurance for one another, else we are none of his.

We are instructed by the Lord not to despise even the weakest of those who manifest sincerity, faith, purity of heart toward God and who give evidence of having come under the power of the Holy Spirit of God. We are to rejoice with them if we see the Lord's blessing and favor is upon them regardless of their earthly conditions and surroundings, for the Lord knoweth them that are his. It is incumbent upon us to cooperate with and recognize such as the representatives and ambassadors of Christ.

Because David manifested such a heart condition, he was called a man after *God's own heart*. And as far as King Saul is concerned, David manifested no jealousy, hatred, or animosity toward him, but showed kindness and respected his anointing as king and would not raise his sword against Saul but patiently waited upon the Lord for further guidance and direction. If we are abiding under the anointing, there is no room for jealousy, hatred, or any works of the flesh.

Growth

If we are dwelling under the anointing, there should be evidence of growth, of fruit bearing. This would constitute to you and me a witness of the spirit.

In John 15:1 Jesus gives us a parable about the need to abide in him and for his word to abide in us. As a branch in a natural vine or as a member in the body of Christ we must grow. Otherwise we will be cut off from the vine, from the body of Christ. One way to bring forth proper fruitage is by doing what Jesus asks us to do: Abide in him.

Thus Jesus declared, *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away*, or cuts it off as a sucker from further affiliation and privilege. Those who would gain the crown originally set aside for them must be fruit bearing branches. If this is not so, the Lord rejects such and calls another to take his place. Therefore dear brethren, just because we may be a branch in the vine does not necessarily mean that we will remain as such.

Growth in Christ also means to experience a pruning work which the Heavenly Father performs if we, as a branch, abide in Christ. This is also true of any tree. The best branches which give evidence of fruit bearing require pruning so that they would not devote their energy for wood making. The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:12 tells us to build with gold, silver, and precious stones in order to preserve our work, our foundation, our character, in the fiery furnace to which we will be exposed and tried. The fact that we are a branch in the vine does not make us immune from trials and difficulties. Whether we are young or old in the truth, we will require the Lord's discipline, his constant care and overruling in our affairs of life, or soon we will run in the direction that a branch in a tree does, namely wood making.

It is the Father, the Husbandman, who with great skill removes the unnecessary ambitions or sprouts which would only hinder our growth in Christ. How much we stand to lose if we do not abide in the vine. We can forfeit not only our oneness with Christ, but we can forfeit everything we gained through consecration as the apostle tells us in 1 Corinthians 9:27, *But I keep my body under and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached to others I myself should be a cast away.*

Jesus taught the same lesson in John 15:6. *If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered.*

As faithful and loyal Christians, we want to be led of the spirit of the Lord to a proper appreciation through His word of the necessity of trials in our lives So that we may be weaned from earthly things. If our consecration is complete and we are fully abiding as a branch in the vine, we will then not question God's wisdom when we are put to the test as we read in Psalms 66:10-12,

For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidst affliction upon our loins. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.

We never want to get into the attitude of murmuring and complaining against the Lord or the brethren because we are experiencing scourgings and disciplines. This attitude would prevent us from learning the needed lessons the Lord desires to teach us. The attitude we want to develop is one of joyfully taking the spoiling of our goods and the ability to rejoice in the Lord in spite of any suffering we may have to endure.

Heavenly Aspirations

Another witness that we are abiding under the anointing is our heavenly aspirations. Do we set our affections on heavenly things? Do we feel as strangers and pilgrims upon this earth, who have no abiding place, earnestly longing to be clothed with our house which is from heaven? (2 Corinthians 5:2) In Colossians 3:1-3 the Apostle Paul earnestly exhorts the Colossian brethren to set their minds on heavenly things:

If, however, you have risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is enthroned at God's right hand. Give your minds to the things that are above, not to the things that are on the earth.

Jesus left us a good example by word and conduct of having one's affections turned heavenward The apostle mentions this in He 12:2, *For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross.* Again we quote from Colossian 2:5, *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.* The apostle is here referring to Christ's humility as a very important characteristic for us to develop and to realize that we must have this spirit if we are to dwell in Christ. Our work must be a heavenly work. Otherwise we have no evidence of being quickened by the Holy Spirit to newness of life. In fact we should experience an increasing desire for spiritual

things, such as conventions, meetings, and studying God's word, as well as longing for the fellowship of our dear brethren. Having the mind of Christ then means to develop the disposition which is loving, generous, forgiving toward others, humble and seeking to dwell in heavenly places by meditating on God's glorious character and plan. If we do not have this witness, we should examine ourselves very carefully.

Another evidence that we are abiding under the anointing is love for the brethren. In 1 John 3:14 we read, *We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.* Again the Apostle John gives a very powerful admonition in 1 John 5:1, *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God, and everyone that loveth God that begat, loveth the brother also that is begotten of God.*

In the March 16th Manna comment, the Pastor suggests that one of the most searching tests of the brethren and the one under which probably the most of these once awakened and armed will fall, will be love for the brethren. We find the Pastor warning and admonishing us over and over again regarding this test in this harvest period. If we fail this test, we shall not have an abundant entrance into the Kingdom.

We must be very near to God if we wish to get near our brethren's hearts. Christian communion must be the result of true, deep communings with God. The lamp is not nourished by the flame; it is nourished by oil which has to be constantly renewed. Let us bear in mind that love is the essence of communion, and love means sacrifice. Christian fellowship without love is but a shadow without the substance; there can be no true happiness in it. It is in seasons of affliction, persecution, and suffering that Christian fellowship prospers and becomes crystallized.

Why will so many fail this test of love? The Word of God informs us that, *Love is the fulfilling of the law.* (Romans 13:10) *The end or purpose of the divine commandment is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience.* (1 Timothy 1:5) The standard of God is so high that only a few will make sufficient effort in the development of this greatest of all graces which is love supreme for the Creator, love for our brethren, and even love for our enemies.

If we are to abide under the anointing, then it behooves us to develop through faith and knowledge the love that will endure for all eternity, for *love never faileth.* How could love fail when we are

told that *God is love*? We should realize that present faith and knowledge will be dwarfed and entirely lost sight of in the perfection of knowledge into which we shall be ushered in our glorious change in the first resurrection. Even our present hopes will then expire because the realization will have come. Only love will endure throughout eternity. Perhaps there is much room for progress to be made in this direction, until love shall be perfected in our hearts.

Psalm 133

Let us now look at the 133rd Psalm for a beautiful portrayal of the anointing of The Christ, Head and Body. In this psalm we also see that those who come under the anointing of the Holy Spirit are privileged to have fellowship with those of like precious faith far beyond anything which the world may have to offer. The Apostle Paul grasped the full meaning of this wonderful and rare experience which we as Christians enjoy, for in Ephesians 4:3 we read, *Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace!* Moffat's translation of Psalm 133:1 renders it as *How rare it is, how lovely, this fellowship of those who meet together.*

The anointing oil was strongly perfumed and must have given off a fragrant odor. It must have been very agreeable to all who came close to the High Priest which serves here as a metaphor to point out the excellence of brotherly love and fellowship. All our services are useless and unacceptable to God unless we have received of His anointing, of His indwelling love—for without love we are nothing.

This dwelling together in unity is as vital as the dew of Hermon that descended upon the mountain of Zion. Dew has the quality of refreshing the earth and cooling the air, as well as reinvigorating plant growth. Dew here symbolizes the Holy Spirit descending upon the Church. It is along this line that our togetherness is So refreshing, So invigorating, So very rare and precious.

It is for this reason that God has So arranged the unity of the divine family that only those who abide under the anointing and have fellowship with the Father and our Lord Jesus and each other may share with Christ in dispensing blessings upon the world of mankind.

Vs. 3 states [Moffat translation]: *For in this fellowship has the Eternal fixed the blessing of an endless life.*

This now brings us to our sealing by the Holy Spirit as we read in Ephesians 1:13,14: *In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the foretaste of our inheritance until the deliverance of the purchased possession unto the praise of his glory.*

This sealing closely corresponds to the writing of the Epistle of Christ in our hearts, not with ink, as the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:3 tells us, but with the spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart.

This sealing is one of the most advanced witnesses of the Spirit in the present life and is a down payment of the coming inheritance. If we have this seal or mark of sonship, we not only seek to do the will of the Father, but find it delightful and not grievous.

This work of sealing and the writing of the Epistle of Christ in our hearts also closely relates to the reaching of the mark of the prize which is perfect love. When we have reached the mark of perfect love, love even for our enemies, let us hold fast that position so that nothing may swerve us from this divine standard to which we have attained. The prize of the high calling will be ours if we can remain faithful and loyal to the Lord even unto death. If we lose this seal of perfect love, we may be sure we will have neither part nor lot in the first resurrection. Do we, dear brethren, comprehend the magnitude of this work of the Holy Spirit in our lives?

We are told that we are *partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.* If after being anointed, we begin to nurture doubts and fears, or cultivate the weeds of harsh criticism and discontent, this would be disastrous. The Lord is ever ready to bless, but He cannot interfere with our will or coerce us. We must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, trusting completely in His tender and loving care centered in Christ Jesus.

May we carefully cherish and cultivate that new life which we have received from God through Christ, lest at any time we incline to slackness or indifference and permit the fleshly tendencies to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, causing us to lose the anointing. As we near the gates of the heavenly city, let us press on with renewed diligence by adding to our faith, as the Apostle Peter says, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and finally, love. For if these things be in us we are assured of an abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and

Savior, Jesus Christ. We would be wise, therefore, in the light of the anointing, to examine ourselves along these lines because of So grand and glorious a prospect before us.

Our prayer is that your hearts may have been stirred up to a greater appreciation of the anointing that you have received of our Lord and that you may have constant evidence of it in your lives. Amen.

How to Study the Bible and Have It Make Sense-Bro. Allen Springer, USA

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN in the Lord. It is indeed a great pleasure to stand before you this day. My first privilege in addressing you is to convey the Christian love of your brethren in Piqua, Ohio, USA, my home ecclesia.

The title of this lesson may lead some to believe that it would be more suitable for the general public than for the brethren. Someone may say, *We are Bible Students, we all know how to study the Bible.* There is much truth to this statement, but there are questions that should come to mind as we reflect upon it. How did we become Bible Students? How did we learn to study the Bible? As we proceed together in considering our subject these questions need to be considered as well.

The first point that needs to be addressed and settled in our minds is that of authority. If we do not recognize the authority of the Bible as the Word of God we cannot seriously study it or endeavor to apply the results of that study to our lives. We are faced with an immediate problem, however, when we accept the Bible as the Word of God. For centuries the Bible has been a source of confusion to thinking men everywhere. There are countless theories based upon the teachings of the Bible, and each one of these theories contradicts the others in some important respect. One thing should be clear to everyone: understanding the Word of God is not an easy matter. We cannot expect to simply read the Great Book and come to a clear understanding of what it says. History proves this point all too well.

But why is God's Word So hard to understand? God must have intended it to be hard to understand or it would not be so. As we come to understand the Bible we find that this is indeed the case. God purposely *hid these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes.* [Mt 11:25] From this text, and many others, it is clear that God hides the truth from some and reveals it to others. The Bible contains The Truth, but that truth can

only be understood in the manner, and by the means, that God has chosen to reveal it. How has the truth of God's Word been revealed? What means has God employed to bring about this revelation? An examination of Ecclesiastical history uncovers a progression of events that can be clearly and easily traced.

We talk of *the faith once delivered unto the saints* [Jude 1:3] and of the *noble Bereans* who *were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.* [Ac 17:11] How often do we consider the manner in which the early Church received and studied the truth? They did not have ready access to the Word of God as we do. The printing press had not yet been invented, the New Testament had not yet been written, and the Old Testament writings were available only in manuscript form. They had something we do not have, however: they had personal contact with the apostles, and even, in some cases, with Jesus himself.

The Apostle Paul, for example, would suggest a line of reasoning to the brethren, pointing out the scripture texts which supported his presentation. They in turn endeavored to verify this against the *law and the prophets*. Such exchanges gradually developed the faith of the early Church. What was the method employed? It was the same as our Lord used on the road to Emmaus. It was Topical Bible Study. *And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.* [Lu 24:27] Jesus conducted a topical Bible study on the subject of Messiah. He was able to do this from memory, having a perfect mind. The apostles could also conduct topical Bible studies with the aid of the holy Spirit *bringing all things to their remembrance.* The *noble Bereans*, and brethren like them, used the Old Testament manuscripts as a *reference book* to verify the accuracy of what they were being taught by God's appointed teachers.

Bible and Concordance Availability

But this method of teaching and learning was not available for very long. The predicted *falling away* spoken of by the Apostles John and Paul began to take shape even under their watchful eyes. When the apostles *fell asleep* [Mt 13:25] this apostasy began to take over. At the height of its power this *Man of Sin* succeeded in keeping the Bible from the masses. This condition existed for centuries. During that time there was virtually NO Bible study. Then came the period known as the Reformation, and with it a chain of events that finally culminated in the French Revolution. Perhaps the most significant

result of the events of that period was the free flow of Bibles to the world. Once again Bible study was a possibility.

The opportunity of studying the Bible again was indeed a rich blessing. Being able to have topical Bible study, such as Jesus and the apostles conducted at the beginning of the age, was an even greater blessing. It was toward the end of the 19th century that such a method of study became available, actually for the first time, by means of the concordance. Never before had God's people had every word in the Old and New Testament writings at their fingertips. The first two steps toward understanding had been taken.

We have already considered the fact that God hides the truth from some and reveals it to others. Jesus followed this same procedure during his ministry. *All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.* [Mt 13:34] Paul speaks of *the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints* [Col 1:26] These texts and others suggest an additional method that God has employed to hide the truth: the use of symbolic language. Further steps toward understanding the Word of God must include an understanding of Bible symbolism.

Paul was concerned with a proper understanding of the Bible through diligent study. His final words to his beloved son Timothy included this familiar exhortation: *Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* [2Ti 2:15] Paul is here speaking of the necessity for *dividing* the truth into various categories and the diligent effort required to accomplish this. He speaks elsewhere of the *times and the seasons* [1Th 5:1] and of their importance to the student of prophecy. These and other texts, especially in the writings of the Apostle Peter [2 Peter 3], point out the importance of accurately dividing the Bible so as to place texts within their proper time periods.

The progression traced thus far is a logical one. We can see the wisdom of God in so directing the matter. The Bible had to come back into general usage first. The concordance was a logical next step. This tool opened up the way for finding all the scriptures on a particular topic. As this type of research developed, however, it became evident that something was still missing. That *something*

which was (and still is) missing is unanimity of thought. To simply have a tool does not qualify a person to use it. The additional steps of understanding, coupled with the operation of God's holy Spirit, made truly profitable and accurate Bible study possible. We have considered two of these additional steps thus far: distinguishing between literal and symbolic language, and applying texts in their proper time setting.

As with all blessings given into the hands of imperfect men, the privileges of the concordance have been misused by many. Many who study the Bible fail to properly distinguish between literal and symbolic language in the Scriptures. Many more fail to place texts in their proper time setting. Unless these principles of Bible study are recognized and employed the next step to understanding cannot be taken.

Context, Type and Antitype

What is the next step? The next step to understanding the Word of God is to study scripture texts in context. It is impossible to understand the context of a Scripture, however, unless the preceding steps have been taken. To simply look at a passage in connection with a few surrounding verses, or even with the entire chapter or book from which it is taken, is little different from reading the Bible as an ordinary book. It is only when concepts of truth have been formulated, employing the various methods previously described, that context becomes meaningful.

This point is emphatically illustrated, both in the incidents cited in the New Testament, as well as in our own personal experience. As already pointed out, the early Church was introduced to topical Bible study by Jesus and the apostles. As an additional example consider the account of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:27-35. He was reading the book of Isaiah. He was also examining the context, but he did not understand the passage. Philip asked him: *Do you understand what you are reading?* He answered: *How can I, except some man should guide me? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.* Philip, no doubt, shared what he had learned from those who had walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus. On that previous occasion Jesus had given just such a topical study on the subject of Messiah.

This incident brings emphasis to a point that is consistently presented in the Scriptures. The Lord has always used human instrumentalities to reveal the secrets of His written Word. When

Jesus was on the earth, God used Jesus to reveal those secrets. When the apostles were on the earth, God used the apostles to reveal those secrets. When Jesus and the apostles were gone, God used others as He saw fit.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we [henceforth] be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, [and] cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, [even] Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. —Eph 4:11-16

Paul was used of the Lord to elaborate yet another of the steps to understanding. Even the other apostles had difficulty comprehending some of Paul's deeper insights. [2Pe 3:16] It is not surprising, then, that the concept of type and antitype has been little understood even in our enlightened day. Yet, how much of the Old Testament writings would still be cloaked in darkness without Paul's explanations in the book of Hebrews and elsewhere?

We have considered six steps thus far:

- (1) Availability of the Bible itself;
- (2) the concordance (for topical study);
- (3) symbolism;
- (4) time-frame;
- (5) context;
- (6) type and antitype.

The Laodicean Messenger

There is still one further step. This step has been hinted at throughout this presentation. It is perhaps one of the most important, for it encompasses all the preceding six steps and provides a framework within which they can be effectively utilized. It is the manner in which the *spirit* has spoken unto the Churches.

Yes, God has always used human instrumentalities to convey the Truth to His people. After the apostles *fell asleep* the Church was not left in darkness. God raised up special Messengers for each period of the Gospel Age. The importance of these Messengers is stressed repeatedly, especially in the book of Revelation. *And in the midst of the seven candlesticks [I saw one] like unto the Son of man. . . . And he had in his right hand seven stars. [Re 1:13-16] The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand. . . . The seven stars are the angels (messengers) of the seven churches. [Re 1:20]* Each of the messages to the Churches (in chapters 2 and 3) ends with this significant phrase: *Hear what the spirit saith unto the Churches!* And how does the spirit speak to the Churches? It speaks through the messengers. And how do we hear what the messengers say?

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? —Ro 10:13-15

Where [is] the wise? where [is] the scribe? where [is] the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. —1Co 1:20,21

Charles T. Russell was without question the most renowned preacher of his day. His name was as well known then as Billy Graham's is today. History has not been kind to our beloved Pastor, however, for the Adversary has been permitted to mar and even partially eradicate his memory. It is not his broad influence that is most significant to us, though, it is the content of his message, for this message identifies him with absolute certainty as the seventh messenger to the Churches.

As one example let us review the seven steps toward understanding.

% 1.

The Bible is our authority. Bro. Russell recognized the importance of a *thus saith the Lord* for every point of truth. Like Paul, he admonished the brethren to *prove all things, and hold fast that which is sure*. [1Th 5:21] And he often said: *Do not take my word for it, prove it by the Word of God*. (Volume 1, page 348, is just one example.)

%2.

Topical Bible Study was a hallmark of Bro. Russell's ministry. He did much to promote the use of the concordance. The six volumes of Studies in the Scriptures are a marvelous example of the topical approach to Bible study.

%3.

The thoroughness and consistency of Bro. Russell's explanation of Bible symbols is without a rival to this day. How many expositors of Daniel and Revelation fail to maintain consistency even within the same book, let alone within the whole framework of the Bible?

%4.

The chronology found in the writings of that *Faithful and Wise Servant* is the most complete, the most time-tested, and the most accurate ever embraced by theological students. In addition, Bro. Russell *rightly divided the Word of Truth* in such a way as no one else has ever done. By placing all the Scriptures in their proper time setting, he was able to bring the Lord's people to a clear understanding of many basic truths. Such fundamental doctrines as Election and Free Grace, the Two Salvations, the Permission of Evil, the condition of the dead, and many others, are impossible to understand without the clear sound reasoning of our Pastor. Some, who were deceived after Bro. Russell's death, strayed from this shining pathway, and today, the organization that still carries the original name, has so far departed from the Truth that even the foundation doctrine of the Ransom has been altered, corrupted, and defiled.

%5.

How ironic it seems that some of the chief opponents to the Truth claim that Bro. Russell quotes Scripture out of context. How appropriate to the *Prince of Darkness* to employ such tactics, for he has always endeavored to make darkness appear as light. Those

who level such criticism are frequently the very ones who are guilty of quoting Scripture out of context themselves. Any serious and unbiased student of religion has to be impressed with the superiority of Bro. Russell's use of context when compared with other writings.

%6.

The oldest work of Bro. Russell, and perhaps one of the most important, is *Tabernacle Shadows of the Better Sacrifices*. When we reflect upon the almost miraculous opening up of his understanding that led to this little book, we cannot help but be struck by the timeliness of such a revelation. The concepts of type and antitype and the basic philosophy of the Atonement, as presented there, formed the foundation upon which more advanced truths were later built. This book has also stood the test of time and close scrutiny.

%7.

Can any other man be found? Has there ever been another human instrument of the Lord who was used to bring all of these steps to true Bible study to His people? You may find someone who used this tool, or that tool, but no one else has ever been used of the Lord to provide ALL of these tools to the household as *meat in due season*. Yes, the Lord appointed a *Faithful and Wise Servant* at his return, and he appointed him to have rulership over *ALL his goods*. Just as the Lord used faithful ones in the past, So He has used His appointed messenger at this end of the age to reveal the secrets of the mysteries of His will.

I would like you to consider another example. If you examine the message to the Church of Laodicea you will find, among others, these important components of that message:

%1.

Jesus is identified as the beginning of the creation of God.

%2.

A condition of lukewarmness is associated with this stage of the church.

%3.

A rejection of the lukewarm is predicted.

%4.

The promise of the divine nature is given to the faithful (and repeated).

%5.

The importance of justification through Christ is stressed.

%6.

The presence of the returned Lord is announced.

%7.

The Church's share in the work of the kingdom is mentioned.

These truths provide another of several examples found in the Scriptures that identify Bro. Russell most definitely as the seventh messenger. He is the only religious teacher who has ever included ALL of these truths as a part of his public message. This fact should give us confidence that he was appointed by the Lord. Because of this we have confidence in his ministry and in the accuracy of his teachings.

With these thoughts in mind may each one of us reflect carefully upon the questions posed at the beginning of this lesson: How did we become Bible Students? How did we learn to study the Bible? Was it out of the abundance of our own wisdom? No! Each person in this room learned the Truth of the Bible, either directly, or indirectly, through the ministry of that *Faithful and Wise Servant*. Let each of us then, additionally, ask ourselves this question: Am *I a good Bible Student?* There is only one proper way to answer this question, and that is with a *Thus saith the Lord*. [Re 3:22] *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

May God bless you as you listen attentively to His appointed messenger!

Symposium

Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto

you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. —Php 3:15,16

Bro. Mieczyslaw Jakubowski, Poland

The Apostle Paul gave similar advice in 1 Corinthians 1:10, *Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.* The Apostle Peter admonished the brethren in 1 Peter 3:8, *Be ye all of one mind.*

These scriptures prove that for all to be of one mind is very desirable and brings many blessings in fellowship with the brethren.

The first words of our title scripture—*As many as be perfect, be thus minded*—shows that being of one thought is the fruit of the development and perfection of Christian character. The last part of the scripture—*If in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this to you*—shows that in the early church there were differences in understanding the scriptures and that these differences were tolerated in the hope that with God's grace they would diminish in time.

The tendency toward arguments and divisions in the ecclesias in matters not crucial show immaturity and the fleshliness of the members as indicated by the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:1-4.

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat . . . for ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying . . . are ye not carnal . . . for while one saith I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

What does it mean to be of one mind? According to the Greek it means harmony and oneness in a diversity of thoughts, not uniformity in thought. God does not expect complete uniformity from the Church. He does not forget individual characteristics and differences, but accepts a diversity in harmony. The beauty of the rainbow, for example, comes from the harmony of seven colors. Similarly in music and song, the beauty of a piece depends on the blending of a diversity of notes in harmony with one another.

The apostles give a similar thought to God's people. Those in that group have different temperaments and talents, and God does not

try to destroy those separate identities. Instead he encourages the diversity of qualities and their growth and development in spiritual things to create a harmonious whole.

In the scriptures there are fundamental teachings without which no one can be accepted by God and develop the right character. There are also some less important teachings which also help us to a better understanding of God and to make our characters more pious. To be accepted by God you don't have to have great knowledge. The keeper of the prison asked: *What must I do to be saved?* (Acts 16:30) The Apostle Paul answered, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*

Fundamental Doctrines

To develop the right Christian character and be faithful to God in various experiences, we need to understand and accept all the fundamental teachings. These teachings can be described in various ways and pictures can be made from them, but we cannot diminish their significance, change them, or doubt them. They are not a matter of conscience but of faith and obedience. Fundamental teachings are straight forward, clear, and repeated many times. They are mandatory to be accepted by God and to receive everlasting life. They were preached from the time of the outpouring of the holy spirit to our day. Without them throughout the ages there would be no Church on the earth.

What are those teachings in which we should be unified? How many are there? The scriptures are compared to a musical instrument and its teachings to a musical composition or song.

In Revelation 14:1,3 we read: *And I looked, lo a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him a hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And they sung as it were a new song before the throne.* We are convinced that this refers to the members of the Church who understand and preach the beautiful Plan of God.

In Psalm 33:2,3 we read about a harp, an instrument of ten strings, and about a new song. Similar words are found in Psalm 92:3. The ten strings could represent ten basic teachings. This could also be shown in the Old Testament. Abraham sent Eleazar with ten camels to find a wife for Isaac. Eleazar represents the holy spirit and the ten camels represent ten basic teachings being used by the holy spirit to choose the Church, an antitype of Rebekah.

In a proverb of our Lord a woman had ten pieces of silver and lost one. (Luke 15:8) After diligently searching for it she found it. These pieces of silver could represent ten basic teachings. The one lost piece of silver could be the teaching about restitution which was lost in previous ages and was recently found by the Church at this end of the age. What might these ten teachings be?

1) Faith in God. As Paul shows in He 11:6, *Without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is.* This applies especially to the Gentile brethren.

2) The belief that our first parents, Adam and Eve, were created by God as perfect beings and were not perfected by evolution. So *God created man in his own image . . . And God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good.* (Genesis 1:27,31)

3) Through their disobedience they became sinners and they brought upon themselves and their offspring suffering and death. *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners . . . Therefore by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation . . . Death reigned by one.* (Romans 5:17-19)

4) The Lord Jesus became a ransom, a corresponding price, for the first man. *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus who gave himself a ransom for all.* (1 Timothy 2:5,6) *Even as the Son of man came . . . to give his life a ransom for all.* (Matthew 20:28)

5) Through faith in Him and by consecration demonstrated by baptism we can be justified and become children of God. *For all have sinned . . . Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.* (Romans 3:23-25) *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.* (Mark 16:16)

6) At the present time (the Gospel Age) we have a hope of a heavenly calling and can be a part of the Church. *Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling.* (Hebrews 3:1) *One Lord, one faith, one baptism . . . even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.* (Ephesians 4:5,4)

7) Love is a law for all who consecrate now. *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength . . . and thy neighbor as thyself.* (Mark 12:30,31) *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another as I have loved you. . . . By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* (John 13:34,35)

8) The believers of this age should expect a personal second coming of our Lord. *And if I go . . . I will come again.* (John 14:3) *For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.* (Philippians 3:20)

9) The reward of the Church will be during the second presence of Jesus Christ. *I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.* (John 14:3) *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven . . . and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive.* (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17)

10) After the Church is taken, God's kingdom will be established on earth. *Because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained . . . in that he hath raised him from the dead.* (Acts 17:31) *Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection . . . but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.* (Revelation 20:6) *And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them . . . And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death.* (Revelation 21:3,4)

Apart from these basic teachings, we have many other subjects such as chronology, the proverbs of Jesus which were not explained, prophecies, etc. We have the freedom to explain those, but not dogmatically or by forcing our views on others, and also without prejudice against those who have a different understanding. Opinions are not the foundation of our brotherhood.

We should be convinced that because we are imperfect, we can not perfectly understand all of the teachings contained in God's word. Brother Russell wrote in Reprints 4187:

May we not say that it is entirely probable that we shall be hampered by some errors, some confusion to the very end of our journey, and that not until our change shall come shall we know as we are known.

The Blind Men and the Elephant

Sometimes some matters can be looked at from different perspectives. We can draw a lesson from the following incident. Four blind men sat by the side of a road as a caravan with elephants approached. After they heard the animals, they wanted to touch them to learn what they looked like. One man touched the elephant's trunk, the second his side, the third his leg, and the fourth man touched the elephant's tail. Afterward they began a discussion and argued about what the elephant appeared to be. The one who touched the elephant's trunk decided it was similar to a tube; the one who touched the leg thought it looked like a column; the one who touched his side thought it looked like a wall; and the last one who touched his tail decided it looked like a broom.

In the same way we can hold to our point of view when it would be better to take into consideration other views because all may be partially right. The opinions that we have on teachings that are not basic should agree with:

1. God's character, with His four attributes.
2. The ten basic teachings.
3. They should be backed by God's Word, with an *It is written*.
4. They should have a positive affect on our love for God and our brethren.

It is very important that we *speak the truth in love*. This means having a humble spirit with gentleness when convincing someone of an opposite viewpoint, rather than displaying an attitude of superiority in pointing out their error. We should not use mean, offensive words or laugh at their opinion.

Victory in a discussion does not mean having our opinion accepted, but to have our hearts and minds in balance, to be free from prejudice, pride, and hatred, and to not stimulate those characteristics in others.

Psalm 133 encourages us to harmony and love. *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment.* May this pleasant fragrance flow from our hearts and our ecclesias.

Bro. Raymond J. Krupa, USA

Everybody has their own rules to live by. Rules are prescribed guides for conduct or action. Over the centuries the customs and practices of communities became laws and were enforced by controlling authorities.

The rule book of the Christian is the Bible, the Word of God. The consecrated child of God spends a great deal of time studying God's Rule Book, So in due time it changes the entire course of that individual's life. This includes his conduct toward our Heavenly Father as well as his treatment of his fellow man.

During the Gospel Age as the people of God met together in the study of the Rule Book and in fellowship, they endeavored to *walk by the same rule*, as mentioned in our theme text. Which *rule* are the scriptures speaking of? Is there only one rule, or are there many?

In Galatians 6:16 we read: *And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.* Here the apostle assures us that the peace of God, his mercy, and his pardon rest upon those who walk according to a rule.

The Old Testament offered directions for securing and maintaining peace with God. Through the Law a code of daily conduct was presented. The Apostle Paul knew all those laws from memory. In his day-to-day life, he found that even though he tried very hard, he could not keep perfectly all the laws of God. Paul knew that the weaknesses of the flesh, the fallen human nature, blocked the path to eternal life. It was by accepting Jesus Christ as his Saviour that he found eternal life.

Is accepting Jesus Christ as our Redeemer the rule by which we walk? In part it is, but it is only a part, as we shall see.

When the apostle speaks of *rule*, according to the Greek concordances he means a standard, a principle, or a canon. We will briefly show how each of these three definitions explain what the apostle meant when he encouraged us to *walk by the same rule*.

Standard

The first definition is *standard*. Those who have made a consecration into Christ's death and have been accepted into the narrow way, have become *new creatures in Christ Jesus*. (2 Corinthians 5:17) That means they are striving to put away the old man, the carnal nature, and are endeavoring to become more Christlike. The effect of this is that their standard in life has changed. Instead of yielding to the works of the fallen flesh, because of the rule of God's Holy Spirit working in the new mind, they will be developing the fruits of the spirit.

Note the similarity that exists between *standard* and *rule*. The root idea in the Greek for *rule* is ruler or straightedge. Most of us occasionally use a ruler in life's activities. A ruler sets a standard. Consider a carpenter's ruler. In the United States it is usually six feet long. It can be folded so it can be carried easily in the pocket of an apron. It is marked in inches: twelve inches make one foot. The architect, the superintendent, and the carpenter all can use this kind of a ruler and be confident that all who are involved in the construction project will have the same standard.

The standard in our Christian walk is our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. He is our perfect example. He is the Ruler. *Let us walk by the same rule*, as our theme text encourages us to do.

It will not be possible for us to perfectly live up to the example of our Lord. However, we are urged in He 12:13 to *Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the Way*.

One lesson here is that we know because of Father Adam's disobedience, each of us was born more or less with earthly blemishes, and that we are somewhat lame. As new creatures we are urged to determine what our weaknesses are—physical and mental—and strive with our whole being to overcome the difficulties of the way and the besetments of the adversary. We make straight paths by choosing such a course as will not unnecessarily aggravate and excite our weaknesses, and thus make us more lame.

Those of us who follow the Lord in the straight and narrow way have not only vowed once, laying our all on the altar of sacrifice, but daily we pray asking the Lord to guide our will, to help us be more determined to be faithful. Daily we must vow to keep our

eyes on the Ruler of our life making *straight paths for our feet*. The standard is high. *Let us all walk by the same rule*.

Principle

The second definition of rule is *principle*. There are a number of definitions of principle in the dictionary. We prefer to emphasize this one: *a fundamental truth; a primary or basic law, doctrine, or the like*.

Doctrine is the important aspect of this definition for us. The Apostle Paul in the many years of his faithful ministry declared every essential feature of the Divine Plan. No vital truth, no counsel, was omitted. For that reason he could testify, as recorded in Acts 20:27, *I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God*.

The most basic, the most fundamental *principle* in all the Word of God, and the one with which all other teachings must be in complete harmony, is the fact concerning the Ransom—Jesus Christ and him crucified. (1 Timothy 2:5,6)

Our most intimate relationship to the *principle* is our privilege of being crucified with Christ. Paul expressed it in Romans 6:5 as being *planted together in the likeness of his death*. This does not mean that we share in the ransom price in any sense of the word. All the legal requirements of God's justice in connection with the redemption of the human race were provided by Jesus. However, we have been invited to present our *bodies a living sacrifice* as mentioned in Romans 12:1. As we faithfully do that, we are *planted together in the likeness of our Master's death*. The Church's part in the sin-offering is a fundamental *principle* which Paul declared in both precept and example.

Another doctrine that serves as a *principle* as we *walk by the same rule*, is that of the covenants. Time permits us only to leave this thought with you: the Law Covenant, typified by Hagar, represents the Jewish Age; the Grace Covenant, typified by Sarah, represents the Gospel Age; and the New Covenant, typified by Keturah, represents the work of the Millennial Age after the Church is complete.

Along with the great doctrine of the Ransom is the fundamental teaching of the Resurrection, So beautifully discussed in 1 Corinthians 15:13-18.

Another *principle* as we *walk by the same rule* is mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 concerning the second coming of Christ and the work with the Church that begins at that time. By God's grace the signs of the times enable us to recognize the presence of the Lord which helps us realize that the earthly course of the Little Flock will soon be over.

Is that all there is to the *whole counsel of God*? No, there is still more. Part of the *principle* enabling us to *walk by the same rule* is that the affairs of God's people must be conducted in an orderly fashion and that the Church is built up by *apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers*. (Ephesians 4:11) The ecclesia-appointed elders have a responsibility in this matter (1 Timothy 3:1-11), but there is also that *which every joint supplies*. (Ephesians 4:16)

Is there still more? Yes there is. In the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul gives us a masterful lesson on love, which is still another important *principle*. Another is the lesson of Galatians 5:19-24 where we are counseled to put off *the works of the flesh*. Galatians 5:22,23 gives us a list of the fruits of the Spirit which the new creature must put on.

The Apostle Paul continues the whole counsel of God in 2 Timothy 2:15, *Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*. Additionally, another *principle* that helps us *walk by the same rule* is prayer. Still another is that found in 1 Corinthians 15:58, *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord*. We must be ambassadors for Christ spreading the Glad Tidings wherever we can.

So it is that the apostle admonished us to *walk by the same rule*, and we noticed that the word *principle* enlarges the depth of the meaning of the word *rule* to the extent that to serve our Heavenly Father better, we are urged to obey the teachings of the Word of God, develop a Christian character, and witness to others.

Canon

The third definition of rule is *canon*. In music a canon is a composition in which a given melody or theme is the model for the formation of all the parts of the composition. In a canon the melody or theme is repeated many, many times with variations.

Although there are many variations, one principle melody can always be heard.

For Paul the *canon* was THE MIND OF CHRIST in a new creature. The mind of Christ means that we have new and different aims, hopes, and ambitions. It means that our natural mind must be transformed. Deliberate efforts must be made to develop a *life style* similar to the standard set by our Lord and Master. Our Heavenly Father has provided helps for us. The greatest of these is Jesus Christ. We have also been given the apostles, our consecrated parents, and the brethren. These all become our guides.

In one of our American hymn books there is a phrase that says: *My life flows on in endless song*. This is the *canon* that is part of the *same rule* we are to walk in. There is a melody that is ever present in our mind—the mind of Christ. This melody, this *canon*, this *rule*, is what we think about when we awake in the morning. *My earliest thought I desire shall be, What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me*. As we spend our time on various activities throughout each day, this *melody* keeps running through our mind. We ask ourselves, *Am I doing this as unto the Lord?* As we use our energy hour after hour, this *melody* in the new mind, the mind of Christ, reminds us to save some of that strength for the service of the Lord. As we shop from one market to another using our material means, that *melody* helps us control the desires of the flesh.

Yes, my dear brethren, this part of the *rule*, the *canon*, the *melody*, is very important. It will help us make our calling and election sure. Let this part of the *rule* continue to change our life style.

So, *Let us walk by the same rule*. It is a rule with three aspects. The *standard* is set for us by our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. The *principle* takes in the *whole counsel of God*. The *canon* enables us to strive daily to do the will of God.

If this is our objective, the *melody* within us will be reflected in every act of life, drawing us closer to our Heavenly Father, and, at the end of our journey, to a place in our Father's *house of many mansions*.

Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. —Phillippians 3:15,16

Bro. Jerome Gruhn, France

Dearly beloved in the Lord: the subject of this study is found in Philippians 3:15,16. The Apostle Paul humbly confesses that the Christian life is a walk and a battle for him. Such it will be until the end of his life, until he reaches the perfection of spiritual maturity required for a good comprehension of the truth.

He exhorts us to direct our walk according to these principles, to watch over unity in order to be of the same mind. If our thoughts differ on some point, we must wait upon God to give us the light which will make things clear and conduct us into all truth.

However, let us be steadfast regarding the truths which we do share at present. Let the truths we've acquired guide our walk. Let us walk forward together, in the same direction, according to all the lessons we have already learned.

Paul's words are given to us So we don't stay infants. We must not remain at the infant level, nor at the level of judgment, nor at a purely intellectual level. As far as thought is concerned, we must reach toward an energetic maturity. Such is the exhortation, *For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.* (1Corinthians 4:20)

We are told to have the same thought, the same sentiment, to know each other, and to recognize with humility the distance that separates us from complete sanctification of heart and life, toward which we must strive without ceasing.

We must be entirely Christ's, but we must understand also how much within us still misses the mark. To walk in such a manner, with such a spirit of humility, is to be under God's certain direction and under His discipline.

Our work is to grow without ceasing unto the measure of a perfect man and be children only as far as evil is concerned. This principle, as true as it is profound, will find everywhere and always its application. Determining the will of God is our motto. We can differ, of course, but we do So only in love. We must by prayer, careful study, and serious consequent effort, attempt to purify our heart of every disposition that tries to make us unworthy of the truth.

The Characteristics of Our Walk

What is the basis and the characteristics of this walk? We will enumerate a few characteristics based on the holy scriptures.

1. *We walk by faith, not by sight.* (2 Corinthians 5:7) It is better to walk by faith with God than to go alone by sight.

The veil of flesh obscures our sight, it disturbs our communion with God, and leaves the Christian with only faith to see the invisible and to triumph in the struggle. We are filled with confidence even when we walk alone by faith. Faith is a light that penetrates to the ends of the world and of time. It provides a clear proof of the realities we do not see. It is a way to possess in advance the attainment of that for which we hope, based on the word of God and the assurance of sure promises.

The Christian way is not a road smoothly paved. It follows a difficult itinerary across the unknown of the desert as typified by the Israelites. All our resources are committed. This convoy must follow a guide whose enlightened conduct leads to life. Our Saviour Jesus Christ is the new way. All who conform their conduct to the shepherd who leads them follow the way of salvation, follow the instruction of a new orientation that implies a new life style, a new conduct on the roads of the world. (See He 10:20.)

2. *Walk in newness of life.* (Romans 6:4) The Apostle Paul uses this expression to identify what is new in this reconstituted life.

The resurrection of Christ and our walk in newness of life are intimately connected by reason of the union we have with our Master. Faith grafts us so well into Christ that his death and his life become our death and our life. This is achieved by renunciations, often painful, and by the gradual death of the old man. The Christian by faith appropriates the resurrected and living Saviour to himself and identifies with him. In this way faith becomes the air that the Christian breathes and the spring of his new existence.

The power of the resurrection is the well-spring of our life. What then is more natural than to consecrate this new life to Christ, to consecrate one's entire being to the Lord? To live is to serve the Lord; to die is to be with the Lord. (Romans 14:7,8)

Belonging to the Lord implies a relationship founded on the work which Christ accomplished for us and by which he has acquired us

as his property. It is a living reality. This new life delivers us from inner bondage So that step by step the old man within us dies. To die to the world, to utterly destroy self, is to enter communion with God, the fountain of all life, holiness, and righteousness. Such is the glorious end of this way that Christ also travelled by reason of his suffering and death.

3. *This I say then*, declares the Apostle Paul, *walk in the spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.* (Galatians 5:16) Your egotistical and sinful desires will not achieve their objective.

Let the Spirit lead you, obey its instructions, and don't surrender to the appetites of your natural instincts. As long as a Christian wants to organize his life on his own, he cannot detach himself from himself. All his desires, interests, and plans gravitate around his own being. This is because his instincts are natural and even selfish; he is of the earth earthy. But those who follow the leadings of the spirit busy themselves with what God desires and focus their activities on spiritual matters. It is a categorical opposition, a battle to the death between the flesh and the spirit.

Man in his fallen condition, separated from God, is enslaved by the works of the flesh which he can overcome only by the spirit of God. The Apostle Paul did not say, *Walk according to the spirit and ye shall NOT FEEL the desires of the flesh.* Rather he said, *(You shall feel them) but ye shall NOT DO according to them.*

Not to feel them any more is not to struggle any more; it is the reward of battle. The *flesh* means the fallen human nature, corruptible, subjected to sin, and incapable by itself to save itself. Our intellect enables us to submit to the workings of the spirit of God; it is the channel that places our mind in communion with God.

If we cultivate the weaknesses of the flesh without making a serious effort to defeat them, if we try to justify them as we pursue them, we are in a very serious situation: it means death. But the works of the spirit which contribute to the new life are rooted in the spirit of God and are made manifest in the fruits which dictate an exemplary conduct. These lead to life.

We must continue this struggle until the end, under pain of losing the great prize for which we are fighting.

It is, in fact, vital for us to remain Christians because all our expectations of eternal life are at risk. We must fear lest we lose eternal life. This will certainly happen if we are not overcomers.

4. In Ephesians 4:1 the apostle exhorts us to walk according to the Christian vocation and preserve the unity of the spirit.

The foundation of this unity is identified by faith which is the same for all of us and is an indispensable necessity. The teaching accepted by the heart must produce all the fruits in the experience of life. This is a natural consequence, resulting from principle, in the same way that the fruit comes from the tree that bears it. The Truth develops holiness only through continual battles and never-ending temptations.

The Apostle Paul wants to drive home to us how difficult are the struggles of life, how they require willing sacrifices, courage to bear them, and all the renuncements a life in Christ entails. He wants to inspire within us this worthy vocation of conducting ourselves in a manner worthy of the call which has holiness as its goal. He says he's concerned:

Ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory. —
1Thessalonians 2:11,12

God watches over us. By his power, He brings us to maturity in our life of faith and perfects us by every activity that is inspired by faith.

5. *Walk in the light.* (1 John 1:7) Every revelation of God through Christ has been a manifestation of light shining in the midst of the darkness of the world. Jesus is the light of the world in his holiness and in his resplendent love.

Every Christian who remains in living communion with God is step-by-step more penetrated by this light until the darkness is vanquished and dissipates itself. Professing such communion while walking in darkness means to knowingly flee from light because of a hidden preference for sin and error. If, on the other hand, we live in the light even as our Lord is in the light, we are truly in communion one with another, and the blood shed on our behalf purifies us from sin in all its forms.

To the degree that we walk in the light, to the degree where the truth, holiness, and love—which are the very essence of God—are reflected in our lives, we are in communion with each other. The sacrifice of Christ provides our pardon, reconciliation, and purification. Each of our sins must be recognized and confessed in humble repentance.

We must make our consciences more sensitive to the slightest transgression of the divine law. If this light dwells within us, if this truth lives within us, both our hearts and our thoughts will be pure.

6. *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.*
(Ephesians 5:15)

The walk of the true Christian is such a narrow way, So obstructed with trials, snares, and tricks devised by the Adversary, that to walk along this narrow way demands that we pay close attention to our surroundings and to each of our steps. But this requires that we be prudent and faithful to the Lord and his word. In order to do this we must have general principles that can be applied at all times. We must recall and practice them daily in view of the activity manifested by the Adversary.

This is the time of harvest when each of us must show his faithfulness to God. To the extent to which we show zeal and faithfulness, we encounter opposition coming from the Adversary. The Adversary tries to misrepresent, twist, and tarnish our words and our actions. We must hold on with zeal to the commandments of the holy scriptures while endeavoring to apply them and to better understand them, and make them ours.

Let us be sure our walk is according to our degree of enlightenment, is in humility, in order not to entertain evil thoughts. Let us watch that our defense of the truth not be motivated by a desire to shine, but let our defense be activated by a love for the Lord and the truth. If it is love and the spirit that animates us and directs our conduct, then they will be manifested in our affectionate, gentle, patient, and humble efforts.

Various erroneous teachings may try to undermine our faith in the great and precious divine promises, and our hope to obtain the supreme, heavenly reward. Our work now is to encourage those who are weak in this narrow way, by stirring up their zeal, brotherly love, kindness, and mercy, and denial of self. By So doing, and by watching vigilantly, the entrance into the joys of the Lord is fully extended to us. (2 Peter 1:11)

7. *Walk, we are told, in love [in purity] as Christ also hath loved us and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. (Ephesians 5:2)*

This great sacrifice our Lord accomplished by his offering to God the sacrifice of his own will, his obedience, and his life and by bearing on the cross the weight of our sins. Jesus has shown us the way in which we must follow. God will consider as pleasing the sacrifices that we offer to Him in the same spirit of love that was in Christ. For he who abides in love, abides in this communion which reaches in us its maturity So that love casts out every trace of fear, plus all thoughts of guilt and of punishment. Love must do a perfect work within us, which is to say:

Love God, and also love the brethren. To walk with God means also to walk with the brethren.

An Invitation-Bro. Eugeniusz Szarkowicz, Poland

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN IN Christ the Lord. I welcome and greet you with the words which our Lord used to greet and calm his disciples: *Peace be unto you.*

The subject of our discourse is *An Invitation*. In the gospel of Matthew 11:28 we have these words spoken by Jesus Christ, the Son of God: *Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.* The words of this text are not to be taken as a commandment but rather as an invitation. Only those who are zealous can take advantage of this invitation. We are assured that God loves those who are zealous. It is not necessary to force things which are pleasant and useful on anyone.

When our Lord Jesus Christ came with his wonderful gospel of salvation, he came with a great invitation from heaven. But the invitation of our Lord did not meet with a general acceptance from those who heard it. Only a small number of individuals who heard it valued and accepted this dear invitation. Thanks to God's saving grace, we have been given the opportunity to understand and accept this great invitation of our Lord. We have examples in God's word where we can see that an invitation was not always accepted with a proper appreciation.

An Invitation Refused

There is a valuable example in Esther 1:3,4 where we read:

In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honor of his excellent majesty many days, even an hundred and fourscore days.

This is an historical event in the time of King Ahasuerus. The king had a beautiful wife, Vashti, whom he wanted to present to his princes. Queen Vashti didn't accept the royal invitation. In verses 10 to 12 we read:

On the seventh day when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded . . . seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king to bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to show the people and princes her beauty, for she was fair to look on. But the queen refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlains. Therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him.

Queen Vashti despised the invitation to the royal feast. This was a despising slap in the face for the king of Medo-Persia. King Ahasuerus was very angry. What was he to do? We read in verses 19-21:

If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes that it be not altered. That Vashti did not want to come before King Ahasuerus and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she. And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire (for it is great), all the wives shall give to their husbands honor, both to great and small. And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan.

The princes admitted that if this matter would be left untreated, all their wives would despise their husbands. They advised the king to dethrone Vashti and select another queen in her place. The decision was made to chose a new queen. We read in Esther 2:2-4,

Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king, and let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of women, unto the custody of Hege, the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given

them: and let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so.

The suggestion was to hold a *Miss Beauty* pageant. There were many candidates for the queen's position, but the winner was Esther, a Jewess raised by her uncle Mordecai.

The name Ahasuerus means *Great-powerful king*. The great, powerful king of the heavens first gave an invitation to the Jews. In the prophecy of Jeremiah 3:12-14 we read:

Go and proclaim these words toward the north and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord, thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice saith the Lord. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion.

God gave the Jews a wonderful Law. He also planned to honor them with the heavenly high calling. However, when their time of visitation came, they acted as Queen Vashti. The dethronement of Queen Vashti signifies the fall from grace of the nation of Israel. The name Esther signifies *a hidden star*. God's chosen have the assurance that they will receive the glory of the stars. In the book of Daniel 12:2,3 we read:

And many of them that slept in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that teach others shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

The Apostle Paul, teaching about the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:41, says:

There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.

The glory of Christ's bride is clandestine. In Psalms 45:13 we read: *The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold.*

How many virgins were gathered [to King Ahasuerus]? We don't know. There were 127 provinces in his kingdom. If just one from each province came to the competition, there would be a large number of candidates. But only one was chosen.

In this picture we are shown that which we were told by our Lord and head: *Many be called but few chosen*. This picture shows us that we can't disdain the king's invitation.

The Wedding Invitation

In the gospel of Matthew 22:1-10 an invitation to a wedding is presented.

And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers and burned up their city. The saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathering together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

Beloved in Christ, do we not see a clear similarity between these two invitations? The only difference is that the first was an historical event and the second was a parable given to us by the Lord Jesus. In our Lord's parable he shows us that as in the picture of Esther, the wedding was ready but those invited were not worthy. Those invited despised the invitation to the wedding. Once there was a feast, but the invited Vashti did not want to be a part of it. Ahasuerus, as we know, was angry just as the king of the parable was angry. When the invited guests refused to come to the wedding, the king commanded that other guests be called from the highways. We also belong to those guests invited from different highways because we are from different Gentile nations.

The Apostle Paul explains in the letter to the Romans that the fall of the Jews and their refusal of the divine invitation became the reason for the spiritual enrichment of the Gentile nations. Through the whole Gospel Age the heavenly King is choosing a wife for His Son from among the different nations of the earth.

We have one more parable of our Lord which also contains an invitation. This is the parable of the Prodigal Son written in the Gospel of Luke 15:11-32. We will only read verses 25-28.

Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.

We understand that the elder son whom the father invited represents the scribes in scripture, the Pharisees. The younger son represents the publicans and open sinners. Another parable of Jesus in Matthew 21:28-32 shows this:

But what think ye? A certain man had two sons and he came to the first and said, Son go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented and went. And he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness and you believed him not, but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

In this parable the Lord clearly explains who this first son represents.

The parable about the wedding of the royal son leads us to understand that we, too, can be used to invite others even though we ourselves have been invited. The Lord in the parable showed that the king alone didn't invite the guests. He used his servants to do it. This shows that we are given the privilege to pass on this glorious heavenly invitation to others who have ears to hear.

In the Gospel of John 1:45-50 we find a description of how Philip invited his friend Nathanael to Jesus. We will read verses 45 and 46:

Philip findeth Nathanael and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

Nathanael was sincere but succumbed to general public opinion. There is an example in this for us: when witnessing of the glad tidings of God's kingdom, we should be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. It isn't necessary to tell interested ones everything that would discourage them from the truth.

The Lord Jesus wasn't discouraged by Nathanael's doubt because he knew the sincerity in his heart. Nathanael took advantage of the invitation which Philip offered him and we can imagine that later he was very grateful to Philip for leading him to Jesus.

In Numbers 10:29-32 we read of Moses' invitation to Hobab.

And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel, the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel. And he said unto him, I will not go; but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred. And he said, Leave us not I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes. And it shall be if thou go with us, yea, it shall be that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee.

Hobab was Moses' father-in-law. How did Moses encourage Hobab to accept the invitation? He quoted the great promises of God given to Israel and by this, he touched Hobab's heart.

This provides a valuable example for us. When we have the privilege of speaking the unfathomable richness of Christ to those interested in the truth, we should also show them the wonderful promises of God taken from His word, how they are great and dear. If we were only to tell them of how difficult the way is to follow Jesus and not remind them about God's wonderful promises, we would only discourage them.

Inviting the Lord

The Holy Bible teaches us that we should also invite the Lord. In Genesis chapter 18 there is a description of how Abraham invited some travellers to his tent not knowing how noble these guests really were. They were angels. His hospitality was amply rewarded by the Lord. In the 19th chapter we read that Lot invited the same guests into his home. If Lot had not invited them, they by themselves would not have come. His hospitality was also rewarded.

The disciples invited the Saviour on the way to Emmaus. The Gospel of Luke 24:28,29 reads,

And they drew nigh unto the village whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone farther. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

If they had not invited him, he would have gone on and they might not have found out with whom they were walking. Later, how they must have been glad that they had invited him.

We should also invite the Lord to be with us. We often turn to the Lord in our prayers: *Lord! Stay with us! Abide with us because night is coming on as a net over the inhabitants of the earth.*

The Lord doesn't force himself on anyone. In Revelation 3:20 we read,

Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me.

It is a very saddening thing when someone despises an invitation. If, when we are invited to serve brethren, an important obstacle doesn't stand in the way, let us not spurn the invitation. Otherwise we could not only incur the brethren's displeasure but the great heavenly king's displeasure as well.

The high calling which we accepted is a great invitation to joint-heirship with Christ in his kingdom. If anyone doesn't appreciate this great invitation as a wonderful privilege of God's grace, he could be deprived of this grace. Mankind in the present time hasn't been honored yet by the great heavenly king's invitation. However,

the promise of God's word shows us clearly that mankind will also receive a marvellous invitation. In Revelation 22:17 we read:

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

This won't be an invitation to joint-heirship with Christ in his glory because that invitation is for the Gospel Age exclusively. Mankind will receive the invitation to the attainment of eternal life on the principle of the resurrection and the restitution of all things.

The text quoted from Revelation shows us that Christ's Church will have an important role in passing on this invitation. God's prophets, as princes for Christ in his kingdom, will also have an important part in that work. God's prophet Zechariah in 8:20-22 very beautifully introduces this time:

Thus saith the Lord of hosts, It shall come to pass that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem and to pray before the Lord.

This will be the glorious and ubiquitous voice of invitation to the acceptance of salvation which brings health and happiness for all the nations of the earth. This is shown in Esther 1:5 where it is written that the great king Ahasuerus prepared a feast for all the people. This is a picture of the wonderful feast which God provides for all the nations of the earth. We read of this in the prophecy of Isaiah 25:6,

And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

This will be a feast of the great blessings of restitution which will become the desire of all nations. This will be a time of great rejoicing which will be for all people as the angels announced to the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem at Christ's birth.

God doesn't just prepare a wonderful feast for all the nations of the earth, but He will tenderly and in a fatherly way invite mankind in such a way that they will take advantage of it. However, God's word informs us that not all the people will want to profit from this

saving feast. There will be some who despise the invitation. These will be cut off from the people by second death.

Beloved brethren in Christ, let us be thankful to God for this glorious grace, that He accepted us as His own children, that He let us hear and accept the invitation to joint-heirship with Christ. Let us treasure this grace and not take it for granted. If we are faithful until the end of our life, God will invite us to glory and happiness in heaven.

Amen.

Jesus, Walking on the Water-Bro. Casimir Tomiak, France

BELOVED IN THE LORD. The subject to which I would call your attention is *Jesus, Walking on the Water*. (Matthew 14:22-36 and Ezekiel chapter 47) Verses 22 and 23 of Matthew's gospel tell us that:

Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. . . . Then he went up into a mountain apart to pray.

We will only discuss the part concerning the disciples entering the ship and going to the other side. Jesus went up into a mountain to pray. In the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto his disciples. The wind was boisterous. When he entered the ship, the wind ceased. Verse 34: *And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret*. There Jesus began a great work of healing. All these details have a meaning.

We have to emphasize that the proper names—the names of the sites, cities, rivers, seas, hills, and mountains—in the word of God have an important meaning. That helps us to understand what they represent. It was the will of God to give His people a clear understanding of His plan of salvation. In Romans 15:4 we read:

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

We will examine thoroughly the events that took place in these sites. An interesting thing worth examining is that this sea or lake of fresh water is named Gennesaret in the New Testament and Cinnereth in the Old Testament. We will see why the lake of

Gennesaret gets its fresh and crystal clear water from the Jordan River. This miraculous river comes from a source in Mount Hermon, the highest mountain in this region. In the word of God, mountains are symbols of kingdoms. *Hermon* means high mountain, or holy mountain. It represents the dwelling place or throne of the Most High—the kingdom of God in heaven. Mount Hermon is dressed with a magnificent white coat of perpetual snow, symbolizing the whiteness, purity, clearness, and holiness of the Creator.

The source of the Jordan is in the north. The *north* is also the location of the throne of the Creator, where ambitious Lucifer wanted to be. In Isaiah 14:13,14 we read:

For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the most High.

Satan didn't know that before the foundation of the world God set aside this favored place for his only begotten son and his bride, the Church. Ephesians 1:4 reads:

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

The Bible tells us that there is a blessing that comes down from Mount Hermon when there is drought and torrid heat from the sun in the valley. Oh how desired and accepted is the dew which slowly comes down from Mount Hermon and vitalizes the dry and thirsty valley. This is why the psalmist writes the magnificent verses of Psalm 133:

Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments. As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

We have here the statement that Mount Hermon is higher than Mount Zion which obtains the blessing descending from Mount Hermon. *As the dew of Hermon that descended upon the mountains of Zion.*

Let's read Psalm 48:2,3:

Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great king. God is known in her palaces for a refuge.

The promised reward to the class represented by Mount Zion is the divine nature. We read in 2 Peter 1:4, *Precious promises that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.* In Isaiah 2:3 we read:

And many people shall go and say, Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob: and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Zion means sunny mountain because the class that Zion represents (The Church, head and body) is brightened by the light of the gospel and will be highly elevated to the divine nature. Some theologians say that it was at Mount Hermon that the transfiguration took place. Others say it was at Mount Tabor. Mark 9:2 says it was in *a high mountain* (the same phrase as Matthew 17:1).

Her means high, *mon* means mountain. The Polish concordance says: *Hermon: high mountain.* On this subject we read in Psalm 89:11,12:

The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them. The north and the south thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name.

Here the glory of the Lord appeared in vision. In 2Peter 1:16 we read: *But we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.*

It is written in Revelation 22:1, *and he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the lamb.* The importance of our study is in the fact that this crystal-clear river represents Christ, head and glorified body. When the Church is glorified, this life-giving water will refresh all the race of Adam, all mankind, by giving them the possibility to obtain the perfection which was lost in Adam.

In Revelation 7:17 we read:

For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

When God created the first couple, they were perfect. Everything that God had made was good according to Genesis 1:31. It is the same way with the waters of the Jordan at its source. From the source on Mount Hermon gushes crystal-clear, drinkable, and life-giving waters. There is no other single river we could compare to this miraculous river in the holy land.

Let's consider other interesting lessons shown in the Jordan. *Jordan* means to descend. The two words *Jor* and *dan* mean judged or condemned. Both meanings describe the condition of mankind. From its source, representing perfect creation, until the fall of the man who was judged and condemned, man is descending more and more because of sin, all the way down to the Dead Sea which represents death. This is in complete contradiction to the erroneous theory of evolution. This is why the Jordan, by its continuing downward course through meandering gorges, is under sea level. First the Jordan goes into Lake Meron (or Hulesh) where it is already under the level of the Mediterranean Sea.

For God So loved the world that he gave His only begotten son. Our Lord was also judged and condemned even though he was perfect. He 7:26 says: *For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.* There on the cross he took the place of the condemned, the sinner, as required by the attribute of God's justice.

The prophet Isaiah tells us in Isaiah 53:4, *He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.* In verse 10: *It pleased the Lord to bruise him; He hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed* —which begins with his bride, the Church, and then all mankind.

The Lord through his baptism, his death in sacrifice, and his resurrection obtained a tremendous victory over evil, sin, and the degradation of man. In due time, he will return man to the perfection lost in Adam, in the kingdom on the earth during his Millennial reign.

This first victory was shown near Lake Meron. We read in the beginning of Joshua 11 that many kings and their armies became allies to multiply their strength. Verse 4: *And were much people, even as the sand that is upon the sea shore.* God gave a victory to

Joshua and his army. Those kings and their armies were defeated and delivered into the hand of Israel. Verse 8: *And they smote them until they left them none remaining.* Here the enemies of Israel picture the evil and sin which had to be completely up-rooted and destroyed by Joshua (or Christ and his army, the Church).

Verse 23: *And the land rested from war.* The scriptures say that there shall be no more war, neither crying, nor pain. In Isaiah 2:4 we read:

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Then from Lake Meron the Jordan flows into Lake Gennesaret. Here a magnificent lesson is shown to us. It was on this lake that Jesus walked. We read in Matthew 14:22,

And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. . . . and he went up into a mountain apart to pray.

This multitude of natural Israel is compared to the chaff who didn't accept Jesus, even those who said *Hosanna [meaning save us] to the son of David, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.* Shortly afterward this same multitude was crying, *Crucify him; his blood be on us and on our children.* When the Lord was crucified, the multitude calmed down and went away.

So Jesus sent the multitude away. The Lord after his resurrection went to the *mountain* (heaven) in the kingdom of his father to pray on behalf of his Church as he had already done on earth. We remember the words, it's not for them that I pray, not for the world . . . I will not leave you orphans. In John 14:3 we read: *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.* What a great promise: *Where I am, there ye may be also.*

The Events of Matthew 14

Let's read further in Matthew 14. Verses 23,24: *And when evening was come . . . the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves.* On this side of the veil the Church is enduring different kinds of trials and difficulties among the elements that have been set aflame in the world. The Church has to drink first of the bitter

cup before participating in the cup of joy. We read in Luke 21:25,26:

And upon the earth there shall be distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring. Men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.

Then Matthew 14:25,

In the fourth watch of the night [between 4:00 and 6:00 o'clock, almost the dawn of a new day] Jesus went to them [representing the second advent of the Lord]. (verse 32) He came into the ship and the wind ceased.

This means the end of the trial for the glorified Church. The wind ceased and the Church took part of the cup of joy. Since the second advent of our Lord, do we not see on the horizon the dawn of a new day for the world? Let's read Psalm 46:5,

God is in the midst of her [the bride of Christ], she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.

Yet during this time, as it is written in verse 6, *the heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved*. It's the dawn of the morning which is mentioned in Isaiah 21:12, *The morning cometh, and also the night* corresponds to *God shall help her and that right early, when the heathen raged and the kingdoms were moved*, when the great tribulation is on the earth. (Psalm 46:6)

Verse 33 shows that the ones who were in the ship [under the holy protection of the Lord] came and worshipped him. They recognized him in his glory. They went over the sea and came into the land of Gennesaret, which means *revival of the garden*, that is *genesis of Eden* or garden of the prince.

That corresponds very well because the first blessings will go to the princes of the earth, the holy prophets of the Old Testament from Abel to John the Baptist. They will be princes of the terrestrial phase of the kingdom of God. In Psalm 45:16 we read: *Thou mayest make princes in all the earth*. Verses 35 and 36 of Matthew 14 describe a great work of the establishment of all things, the return to the perfection lost in Adam:

And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about and brought unto him all that were diseased.

That will occur at the beginning of the Millennial *Garden of Eden* in the kingdom of Christ.

Let's return to an interesting point of this subject. Numbers 34:11 talks about the sea of Chinnereth. Why a different name? We must remember that in Old Testament times the ransom was not yet paid and God's justice was not satisfied. So it did not describe the genesis, rebirth, or reestablishment of the Garden of Eden.

Chinnereth means harp, a musical instrument. The harp with its tuned ten strings pictures the plan of God, the plan of salvation for all mankind. This plan has to be accomplished in sequence before the genesis or rebirth of the Garden of Eden can begin, before mankind who are in pain can feel the benefits of the kingdom of Christ. In Psalm 33:2,3 we read:

Praise the Lord with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto him a new song.

This is not the typical song but the antitypical one.

The ten strings picture ten basic doctrines:

% 1.

Creation.

% 2.

Justice.

% 3.

The Abrahamic promise.

% 4.

The birth of Jesus.

% 5.

The ransom.

%6.

The resurrection of Jesus.

%7.

The mystery revealed to the saints.

%8.

Christ's return.

%9.

The glorified Church.

%10.

The restoration of all things (*genesis*).

We can think that the work that Jesus began on the other side of the lake represents the work of restoration. The shore of this lake is exceptional for its wealth of vegetation. It is the only place in the world where wheat and bananas grow together.

The Antitypical Jordan River

The first ones who returned to the promised land near Lake Meron could not distinguish the actual bed of the Jordan because it was so obstructed by the mud of wet lands where mosquitoes and wild reeds multiplied. To restore the flow of the Jordan in its normal bed required the excavation of more than four million cubic meters of mud so that the surrounding area by the river could be cultivated. It's an extremely fertile spot with incomparably rich soil.

Is it not a magnificent illustration of the actual condition of mankind in sin? As Psalm 40:1-3 says:

I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay . . . and hath put a new song in my mouth.

Let's see the historical elements shown in the Jordan for carnal Israel and a manifestation of its power. It was in the Jordan that

Naaman, an officer of the king of Syria, was purified from his leprosy. Leprosy is a symbol of sin. Naaman was healed by conforming exactly to the prescription of the prophet Elisha who told him that if he wanted to be healed, he would have to be immersed seven times in the Jordan.

The number seven means complete, entirely. Naaman was not a Jew, So in due time all mankind will receive the possibility of total immersion in the antitypical Jordan to be purified from the leprosy of sin.

It was also in the Jordan that John baptized with the baptism of repentance, a baptism that took place at the end of the Jewish Age in a time of harvest. This means all repentant sinners will be able to obtain life which was lost in Adam. We read in Matthew 3:1,2:

In those days came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

This is also according to the words in John 10:16,

And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

The Lord himself was baptized or immersed in the Jordan and became the source of life for all the race of Adam. Today in the promised land the Jordan is also a source of life. So is the lake of Gennesaret which fertilizes the Negev desert with its life-giving water and transforms it into a magnificent *garden of Eden*.

But a struggle will be necessary. Someone once said that the struggle in the Millennial Age will be similar to the efforts a swimmer makes when he swims against the current. As fish swim against a current and always find food, So will a swimmer go nearer and nearer the source, toward clearer and more drinkable water. On the other hand, to swim with a current requires no effort. But where does the current of the Jordan take us? It takes us to the Dead Sea, a symbol of death. Only dead fish are carried with the current into the Dead Sea where there is no life for them or for plants.

The Dead Sea receives its water from the Jordan which becomes impure. This water stays in the sea and goes nowhere. The level of the Dead Sea is 1250 feet below the level of the Mediterranean

Sea. Nothing can better illustrate death than this salty, poisonous sea.

The prophecy of Ezekiel is very interesting on this subject. Chapter 47, verses 1 to 12, talk about a torrent. It is not talking about the Jordan, a river that always existed even in the time of Ezekiel. Moreover the Jordan flowing into the Dead Sea never gave it healthy and pure waters. As the prophet says (in verses 9-12):

And there shall be a very great multitude of fish because these waters shall . . . be healed . . . And it shall come to pass that the fishers shall stand upon it . . . to spread forth nets [they never did that before nor today]: . . . and by the river upon the bank thereof . . . shall grow all trees . . . and it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months.

Everything that happens in these areas is not by accident. A December 1979 article from the French newspaper *Leviticus Monde* talked about a big project that Brother Russell talked about in a 1905 Watchtower article. It concerns the connecting of the Mediterranean Sea with the Dead Sea.

This article says that the Dead Sea gives the impression that a very old civilization lived in the area. Sodom and Gomorrah were in this region and with erosion enormous roots appeared. However, the world doesn't know the prophecy of Ezekiel 47.

Ec 1:9 tells us: *The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be.* Let us ask the question: What already existed on the earth? The kingdom of God, of course, before sin manifested itself in the Garden of Eden. So when Adam's posterity will be brought to perfection, the kingdom of God will be inaugurated again on the earth and life will return. So the words in Ecclesiastes will be accomplished: *The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be.*

The Dead Sea represents death, which did not exist before there was sin. We see that a torrent flowing into the Dead Sea will give back healthy waters so that life will be possible for fish of all kinds as in the great sea.

The Dead Sea has sea water, very salty water. A fish from fresh water cannot live in sea water. But the prophet talks about fish from the great sea. How can we imagine the accomplishment of that prophecy? It's certainly possible that God foresaw the position of the Dead Sea 1250 feet under the Mediterranean Sea. The newspaper article tells us that a tremendous project is being studied

in Israel. The project would be to connect the Dead Sea with the Mediterranean Sea. The movement of water over a distance of more than 100 miles would turn many turbines. The study has advanced and already the first works are being realized. The production of excess energy will be sold by Israel, of course. The project will permit the stabilization of the water within the Dead Sea to give, as the prophet said, life to all kinds of fish as in the great sea.

In addition to that, Israel is making plans for big factories to remove the salt of the sea water to provide for the needs of the Negev desert. This water will be used to make fruit trees grow on both sides of the torrent. Ezekiel 47:12 reads, *And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat.* The fruits will be ripe every month, says the prophet.

Could we still doubt? Revelation 21:1 says, *And there was no more sea.* Which sea? The Dead Sea! It will cease to be a dead sea after the accomplishment of the prophecy of Ezekiel 47. Isaiah 35:6,7 tells us:

For in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of jackals, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

I wanted to see why the prophet specifically mentioned the jackal. According to a French encyclopedia, the jackal is a strange animal. The Arabic people call it a howler because it gives long, mournful, gruesome howls which are interrupted by groanings. To protect itself from real dangers, it becomes a craven and a betrayer. It steals food that the other animals get, So it becomes a usurper. It eats meat, even rotten meat. When it is satisfied, it stamps the remainder with its feet. The signification of this requires no comment.

Many miracles have been accomplished and will still be accomplished in the holy land. Revelation 21:1,

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth [new order], for the first heaven [ancient spiritual order] and the first earth [civil order] were passed away; and there was no more sea. (verse 4) God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying neither shall there be any more

*pain: for the former things are passed away. (Revelation 20:13)
And the sea gave up the dead which were in it.*

Amen.

Choices-Bro. Elmer Weeks, USA

AS SURE AS I LIVE, I know I possess a will. If I *will* to do something or will NOT to do something, that is my choice . . . and mine alone.

Choose always the way that seems best, however rough it may be. Time will render it easy and agreeable.

Choice, not chance, determines our destiny.

God always gives His best to those who leave the choice with Him. But even here, we must CHOOSE to do so.

You are what you think you are. And you will be what you choose to be. No endeavor can ever be attained unless a choice was first made to do it. Our accomplishments will be but the sum of the results of the positive choices that we have made and carried out.

These are some of the thoughts we shall discuss today. We hope they will help each of us to have a greater appreciation of the privilege and powerful results of choices.

Our First Choice

At the beginning of our walk with the Lord we made a choice that is described in the words found in Deuteronomy 26:17.

Thou hast avouched the Lord this day, to be thy God and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice.

We are reminded of the beautiful and determined words of Joshua in chapter 24, verse 15: *Choose ye this day whom ye shall serve . . . as for me and my house we will serve the Lord.*

Choosing or making decisions is a very important facet in the building of our character. This is what Brother Russell says on Reprint page 2950 concerning the text from Joshua:

We should settle the matter at once, and for all time, that we will be the Lord's. The very fact of coming to a positive decision is a great blessing, a great help in the formation of character.

There is no coercion. The choice could just as well have been to choose to NOT serve Him, or to choose to not serve Him AT THAT TIME. In making our choice to serve Him, we made a personal commitment, a promise, a vow. We spoke, in essence, the words of Psalm 119:30 (*I have chosen the way of truth, thy judgments have I laid before me*) and also Psalm 140:6 (*I said unto the Lord, thou art my God, hear the voice of my supplications*). It was with these positive steps that we started to serve the Lord.

Choice from this point forward will have a very decisive influence in our fight of faith and its final outcome. In He 11:25 the Apostle Paul tells of the choice made by Moses, *choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season*. Moses had everything. He didn't have a single need or worry since he was a member of the royal household of the king of Egypt. Yet he freely chose to align himself with God's chosen people. He paid dearly, as far as earth's treasures are concerned, because of that choice. He chose good over evil even though he knew it would mean leaving absolutely everything behind. This included his reputation as well as his earthly possessions. We read of Stephen's appraisal of Moses in Acts 7:22. *Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was mighty in words and deeds*.

Sometimes it seems easier to give up THINGS than it does to give up our reputation, or what others think of us, or what they might say about us. The initial choice made by Moses set the course which eventually made him a great leader of God's people. We too set a course with our initial choice to serve the Lord. Let us determine our position by using the noble example of Moses as well as the word of God to see that we are still going in the right direction.

God gave all mankind the ability to freely choose among alternatives. In His wisdom He knew that was best for his creation. Even though this was and is so, He did not leave man without guidance or direction. He created something marvelous, called a conscience. Conscience is defined as knowledge or a feeling of right and wrong with a compulsion to do right. To regulate this conscience, God gave man rules and commandments that, if followed, would be best for him. Yet each one is free to choose his own way through life without any force by God.

Isa 66:3 speaks of the course many choose. It says, *Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their souls delighted in their abominations.* Israel of old provides many lessons in what NOT to do as far as choice is concerned. Judges 5:8 says that *they chose new Gods.* When this led them into serious trouble, they came back crying to the Lord for help. One instance of this is recorded in Judges 10:13-16. They are oppressed by their enemies and the Lord speaks to them:

Ye have forsaken me, and served other Gods; wherefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the Gods which ye have chosen, let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation. And the children of Israel said unto the Lord, we have sinned; do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee, deliver us only, we pray thee this day. And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the Lord; and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.

May we learn from accounts such as this that when we choose to follow our own way, the results eventually will be unpleasant. This was the case with Abram when he chose to detour through Egypt to avoid the famine that was before him in the land through which he must pass. He got himself into such trouble in that land that the king expelled him from his country.

Improper Choices

Choosing what may seem best for the flesh is a serious mistake. On the other hand, choosing what seems best for the new creature, even though the choice may at first seem difficult, will eventually become easier and even agreeable.

Choice must be accompanied with determination. Choice alone will not bring victory. But when choice and determination walk hand in hand, victory is probable. Determination will enlist perseverance and together these will be difficult to defeat.

This one thing I do was the way that the Apostle Paul put it. The English Good News Bible translates Philippians 3:12-14 this way:

I do not claim that I have already succeeded or have already become perfect. I keep striving to win the prize for which Jesus Christ has already won me to himself. Of course, my brothers, I really do not think that I have already won it; the one thing I do, however, is to forget what is behind me and do my best to reach

what is ahead, So I run straight toward the goal in order to win the prize, which is God's call through Christ Jesus to the life above.

Let us consider our choices carefully. And after we have made a choice, let us exercise determination and perseverance to their full capacity to attain the fruition of that choice.

There are areas in our walk where we will be uncertain as to what choice to make. This often occurs in the matter of our earthly affairs. Should we sell our home and look for another that is more peaceful or provides a better environment for our growing children? Should we buy a new car that would make us more feel more confident to travel long distances to a convention? Should we look for another job, one that would make fewer demands on us?

In all these areas we want to do what would be pleasing to the Lord and what would be best for us as his sons. Whenever we are unsure, we should remember this good advice:

God always gives His best to those who leave the choice to Him.

There will be many times that we will have to choose to leave all in the Lord's care and to look to Him for some indication as to what He would have us do. Sometimes NOT doing something must be a conscious choice on our part that requires us to wait on Him. When we do this, it is not indecisiveness. On the contrary, it is wise decision making.

Choice Not Chance

You are what you think you are, and you will be what you choose to be. Choice, not chance, determines our destiny.

Let us consider these statements to see how much truth is in them. It is a fact that we live out what we expect of ourselves. Why should two people who are born in the same conditions of poverty and who go to the same, perhaps inadequate, schools become such different people? There are instances when one becomes a successful contributor to society and the other continues to live, as his parents did, in unproductive poverty. Generally this happens because the successful person came to a point in his life where he was faced with a decision: Did he want to improve his condition or did he accept his present condition as his situation for life? The successful person chooses to improve his condition and, after making that choice, becomes determined to work to attain success no matter what the cost.

If we set a low goal, we shall have low achievement. If we set medium goals, we shall be medium achievers. And if we set high goals for ourselves, then we shall be high achievers because we endeavored to reach higher. In 1 John 3:2,3 we read,

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

The Apostle John had set this hope for himself because he made the choice that he would, to the best of his ability, keep himself pure from all contamination so that he might be found worthy to be with the Lord in the spirit realm. This is the highest goal or choice to which any human can aspire. That is why it is called a *high calling*, a heavenly calling. If we wish to attain this goal, we too must choose to give its pursuit our best effort, keeping our eyes always on the example of the Lord himself. If we are content with less than this, we will most likely put in less effort and probably achieve a lower goal.

The Apostle Paul gives us the right advice in 1 Corinthians 9:24 where he writes: *Know ye not that they which run in a race, run all; but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye might obtain.* We must have a positive attitude as we run this race. We must believe that we can win. And we must persevere no matter how hard the race may seem at times, until we cross the finish line.

Let us strive for first place. Let this always be our choice. And let us back it with our full determination to succeed.

No endeavor can ever be obtained unless a choice was first made to do it. Fear often sets itself up as a barrier that keeps us from making the choice we know we should make. If we fear opportunity because there is too much we do not know, we are taking hold of the *handle* of fear and will find that it will not open the door. If, on the other hand, we choose to take advantage of an opportunity, we will be willing to face the unknown areas we may encounter. Thus we choose in faith.

Abram was quick to take hold of the handle of faith in such situations. Consider when the Lord asked him to pack his belongings, leave his home, and go to a strange place about which he knew nothing, not even its location.

The Apostle Paul likewise chose to step forward in faith when in a vision he was directed to go to Macedonia, a place where the Word had never been preached. Note the quick decision he made in Acts 16:10, *And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assured that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel unto them.*

If Paul hadn't made the decision to go there, we would not have the inspiring epistles to the Philippians and Thessalonians, nor would we have heard of the noble Bereans who searched out the things they had heard to prove it for themselves. If Paul hadn't chosen to go, he would never have been able to tell us of faithful Lydia, of the conversion of the jailer with his whole family, nor would we have heard the words of the rulers of a city—Paul's enemies—that Paul and those with him *have turned the world upside down* with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

May our choices also be prompted by faith and trust in the Lord.

Barriers to Success

Sometimes we fear to make a choice because we have adopted a negative attitude. Our outlook may be something like *yesterday was awful, today is terrible, and tomorrow will be even worse.* If this is really what a person expects, it is not surprising that he is overtaken with a paralysis of mind that does not choose to face life in a realistic way.

When Jesus chose to go to Jerusalem knowing that his hour had come, he certainly knew the many things that awaited him could become the basis for negative thinking. He was able to remain positive in his experience of pain and suffering because he had chosen to carry out his Father's will no matter what the personal cost to him might be. The motivating force behind Jesus' positive attitude was love. He had chosen to show his love for his Father and for all mankind by being willing to sacrifice himself that he might redeem us from sin and its condemnation. He chose to love his enemies even though they despised him and treated him with terrible cruelty.

We are told that *God is love.* Jesus said, *If you have seen me, ye have seen the Father.* Jesus, who was perfect, holy, harmless, and undefiled, was therefore the love of God manifested through him. So that we might see it and better understand it.

We who are fallen must acquire love. Deep within us is the capability to love, but we must fill up this potential by heeding the words of Colossians 3:12-14:

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, So also do ye. And above all these things, put on love, which is the bond of perfectness.

%1.

One cannot give what he does not possess. To give love you must possess love.

%2.

One cannot teach what he does not understand. To teach love you must comprehend love.

%3.

One cannot know what he does not study. To study love you must live in love.

%4.

One cannot appreciate what he does not recognize. To recognize love you must be receptive to love.

%5.

One cannot have doubt about that which he wishes to trust. To trust love you must be convinced of love.

%6.

One cannot admit what he does not yield to. To yield to love you must be vulnerable to love.

%7.

One cannot live what he does not dedicate himself to. To dedicate yourself to love you must be forever growing in love.

To want to love is then a choice that each of us can make. It will require much cultivation and much work, but it is attainable, with the Lord's help.

Love

Love is a choice that can be consciously made time after time. Of course in a particular situation, instead of choosing love we can also choose to resent, even to hate. It is obvious that to love will have a more peaceful effect on an individual, while resentment and hate will cause an acid effect that will eat away within the being of the one who chooses to react that way. Love will let the matter rest. Resentment and hate will continue to worry over it, seeking some form of retribution if possible.

When Paul and Silas were in prison singing hymns at midnight with their backs bleeding, it was because they had chosen not to hate their oppressor. Rather they considered it a privilege to suffer for Christ's sake.

When Jesus was on the cross, he could have been filled with hate toward his enemies. But that was not on his mind at all. In John 19:26,27 we read that his concern was for the welfare of his mother as he assigned her care to the Apostle John:

When Jesus therefore saw his mother and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy Son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

To choose love will take an individual outside of himself, as we see here in the case of Jesus. While still undergoing excruciating pain, his concern was not for himself or his situation, but for his mother, whom he loved.

The Apostle Paul, in that beautiful thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians, tells us that love goes beyond mere knowledge and understanding of the deep things of God. Love is a special phenomenon that surpasses all things that can be attained in this life. Love will maintain a positive response to any negative action that might challenge it. When its endurance is tested, love continues to exercise loving patience. When treated severely, love will exercise loving kindness.

When others are prospering, love will rejoice with them. When experiencing success, love will continue to remain in the

background. Love will always choose to be polite and considerate even when confronted with rudeness. Even when opportunity for self-gain presents itself, love will never take advantage of others. When confronted with explosive situations, love will defuse the potential wrath with a soft answer.

Love does not let wrongs accumulate, but quickly forgives each one. Love can never condone evil even if it were to gain from it. Love always rejoices in truth even if it might have to lose because of it. Love will cover, protect, polish, ignore, or hide the faults of others. Love will continue to believe in others even when others have stopped doing so.

Love would rather err in believing well of someone than err in believing evil of them. Love will continue to hope for the best when everybody has stopped hoping. Love can never fail because it is the nearest thing to our emulating God's character. Therefore it is the greatest accomplishment that anyone can reach on this earth. It will continue throughout eternity.

Let us choose to love in every aspect of our trials. Then we shall be living Godly in Christ Jesus to the praise and glory of our heavenly Father. In 1 Timothy 6:6 we read, *Godliness with contentment is great gain*. Of all the things that can be ours, contentment is one. It is always before us just waiting to be chosen. Contentment comes not from great acquisitions but from few wants. Yes, he who lives content with little, possesses much. The Apostle Paul found contentment in whatsoever state he was in because he rested in the providences of God whom he knew was overruling all things on his behalf. This was a conscious choice that he made rather than choosing to be discontented with his lot.

One who wants much will always find himself in need. Jesus had no place to lay his head the scriptures tell us. His sole possession was his seamless robe which was taken from him by the soldiers who crucified him. Yet we never found that Jesus had the slightest inclination to be discontent with things. We see rather that he was totally oblivious to *wants*. He was always too busy doing his Father's will, doing good, healing the sick, and comforting others. His needs were provided by his heavenly Father through various believers that loved him for what he was.

Let us also choose to be content with such things as we have. Let us also do good where we can at every opportunity. If we are to be concerned with *wants*, let us want for more opportunity to be of service to the Lord and to the brethren.

Summary

We see that choice is a God-given privilege that we each possess. We have total freedom to choose as we wish. We should realize that our choices lead us through life. By our choices we choose to serve God, mammon, or self. Our choices play a crucial role in the progress of our character development.

Promptness in decision making by choosing the things pertaining to righteousness helps us resist temptation and strengthens our character.

Choosing to wait on the Lord and letting Him show the way is not being indecisive; it is being wise.

Contentment is simply a matter of choosing to be content. We must sometimes choose to step out into the unknown, trusting him, if we are to follow the Lord's leadings.

Our choice towards the positive will greatly increase our potential towards productive service. The touchstone of our choices should be *God's will*.

To overcome hate and anger and resentment with love is a choice that we can make. In fact, choices are so important that they will either be the means by which we get into the kingdom or what will keep us out. For example, if we choose not to forgive someone who has wronged us, this by itself will keep us out of the kingdom because we told in Matthew 6:15, *If we forgive men not their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses*. Let us look often into our hearts and see if there is any leaven of bad feeling towards someone. If there is, let us quickly purge it from our being.

If we are to successfully reach the goal we have chosen, we must believe that we will; we must not set our sight on something less.

Yes, dearly beloved, let us not halt between two opinions. Let our every choice be to want to do His will, and to be able to say at the end of our walk the words of Jesus: *I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do*.

Amen.

Lord, It Is Good For Us to be Here-Bro. Daniel Wozniak, France

LORD, IT IS GOOD for us to be here. If you wish, take our hearts as your lodging and dwell among us. This is our greatest desire! So pleasant is it to be in your presence and in the presence of our brethren; it is So pleasant to be here that we would love to stay here forever.

This desire, this expression, this prayer, do they not bring to mind the words of an apostle marvelling at the vision before his eyes? Recall the words written in Matthew 17:4,

Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

What an exclamation! What a cry of the heart! What rapture for the apostles! The brotherly communion that we experience during our week here may be a little preview of the great blessing and honor that touched those apostles who saw the Lord in his glory, talking with the prophets.

Let us go back some centuries ago, to the time and place the apostles lived. Jesus travels with them through the province of Cesarea and performs a certain number of miracles everywhere he goes. The crowd, more and more numerous, marvels. They acclaim Jesus whose popularity does not cease to grow; nevertheless...

The gospel writers tell us that at this time Jesus tells things to his disciples that do not please them. He tells them he must die on the cross and also of the difficult conditions to be fulfilled by whoever would be his disciples.

The language of Jesus becomes unpleasant to the apostles' ears. Is it possible that what Jesus predicted might be true? For one or two years they had found happiness, they were contented; they had found their Master—and what a Master! He was the Messiah whom all Israel had awaited since the promise was given to Abraham as written in Genesis 22:18, *All the nations of the earth shall be blessed in thy seed, because thou hast obeyed my voice.*

No! That the Savior must suffer? This they could not allow! They could not believe it, nor did they wish even to hear such a thing spoken. One of the apostles, Peter, was So shocked by these words

that he even dared to reproach the Lord. Let us read in Matthew 16, verses 21 and 22:

From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples how that he must go into Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.

Jesus' words had been unbearable to Peter. Surely he said within himself, *As long as I am here, nothing will happen to thee; I shall defend thee—I am ready to give my life So that nothing evil will befall thee.* That came out of a good sentiment, but such was not the mission of our Lord. Jesus was come to redeem mankind and to give his life a ransom for Adam and all his posterity. This the apostles did not comprehend. They did not yet possess the holy Spirit and did not yet know the plan of God. I believe that Peter must have been very surprised by Jesus' response [verse 23]:

Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

In spite of all this, the Apostle Peter still wanted to defend Jesus. We recall that in the Garden of Gethsemane, when the soldiers came to take hold of Jesus, Peter took out his sword and cut off the ear of Malchus in defense of his Master. And we, are we ready to defend Jesus? Have we this zeal and this ardor? But how can we defend our Master? Jesus himself answers in Matthew 25:40, *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.* We have, then, the privilege of serving the Master every time we serve our brother or sister.

The Transfiguration Scene

Six days later, Jesus came to the foot of a HIGH mountain. We are not told which mountain. According to a second century tradition it would be Mount Tabor. This is a LOW mountain in Israel. The ruins of a fortified city dating to Jesus' time have been found at an elevation of 1845 feet. The transfiguration, however, cannot have taken place on that mountain. Even Jerusalem's altitude is higher at 2590 feet.

It is possible the high mountain was Mount Hermon which reaches a height of 9232 feet (or some other *high* mountain in that mountain range where the Jordan has its source). Mount Hermon is the highest summit in Palestine through which our Lord traveled. If

we follow the itinerary of Jesus mentioned in the previous verses of Matthew, we find that in chapter 15 he is in the territory of Tyre and Sidon, then at the sea of Galilee. In chapter 16 he is in the territory of Cesarea Philippi. Six days later in chapter 17 he leads the apostles with him to the high mountain. Mount Hermon happens to dominate the territory of Cesarea Philippi. We think therefore that it is more likely to be the *high mountain*.

Our Lord Jesus comes then to the foot of a high mountain and, as so often previously, he felt a deep need to commune with his Father. He chose to isolate himself so he could experience more intensely these precious moments apart from the crowd of those whom he had healed. So he leaves this crowd taking Peter, James, and John with him. Why these three apostles? Did he love them more than he loved the others? Perhaps he appreciated among them a warmer attachment or a greater nobility of spirit.

And we, dear brethren, do we not have this strong desire for communion with our Father, for separating ourselves, if only for a moment, from the things that surround us and for again bringing before ourselves the thoughts and words of the Creator? Have we not done this somewhat by coming here? Haven't we aspired for a long time to find ourselves once again in a Christian environment, separated for a time from our daily cares, from our work, and from our home?

The Lord, in order to find a suitable backdrop for what was going to follow, scaled the height of a high mountain. Let us read again Matthew 17:1,

After six days, Jesus took with him Peter, James and John, his brother, and brought them apart unto a high mountain.

It seems that the three disciples did not have the least idea of what was going to take place. To be sure some days before the Lord had prepared them for some miraculous, marvellous, and extraordinary event by telling them: *There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.* (Matthew 16:28)

Naturally they all hoped that the Lord would establish his kingdom on the earth, that he would be on his throne, as governor, and that he would have his glory! Was it a question of this earthly glory? If the Lord should reign in glory, why had he told them of his suffering and of his death?

On the one hand glory, and on the other hand, suffering and death. What a dilemma! This troubled them; nevertheless, what characterized them was the truly profound faith they had in the Savior.

Jesus So often used riddles and parables which his disciples did not understand immediately. There is little chance they comprehended that Jesus would cause them to experience So exceptional a moment. The Lord wanted to prepare them, to prepare their mind, to understand that his death would not destroy the promise of the kingdom and the glory. The accomplishment of their hopes would be effected on a higher level, on a high mountain, far from the world, far from earthly problems, where only those may come who put forth effort as mountain climbers.

Jesus told them about his death, but he did not leave them in despair. He told them of his resurrection. He told them of his sufferings, of the sorrows, of the bruising that awaited him, but also of his glory: *The Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels.* (Matthew 16:27)

It is certain that the disciples were overwhelmed by fatigue when they reached the summit of the mountain. The Lord went apart to pray, while the disciples remained alone, accustomed to watching or, quite simply, to wait for their Master, anxious not to disturb his intimacy with the Father.

The Evangelist Luke tells us, *But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep.* (Luke 9:32) Does this not remind us of an identical though much more dramatic scene when the same three disciples of Jesus were asked to watch? Yes, this night on the mountain with its strange surroundings resembles Gethsemane. But here the disciples would keep a grand and unforgettable memory of the scene they were going to experience.

And we, do we appreciate all the opportunities that are offered to us to meet with each other on these high mountains, at these spiritual feasts? Do we not keep a grand memory of our previous meetings, particularly at Kufstein, Obsteig, Willingen, and DeBron? The fact that we are all here again proves that we love this brotherly and spiritual communion.

Returning to our story, Peter and his companions were heavy with sleep. But keeping themselves awake, they were able to marvel at a marvellous vision—such a vision! Let us read Luke 9:29-31:

And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering. And behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elijah: who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

Half asleep, they were awakened by a blinding flash of light. Probably dazed, they saw before them a scene most extraordinary. They had to assure themselves that they were, all three of them, fully awake and were not dreaming. The Lord was there before them with two others, but he was as they had never seen him, in a vesture of dazzling light, an image of the glory of God which is impossible to represent to our imperfect imagination.

They had never seen anything like it before, even though, since they were habitually at his side, he had accustomed them to many surprises by his astounding miracles. Had he not just come from multiplying, for the second time, a few loaves a few days before? Had he not healed sick ones, demoniacs, and paralytics?

But what they saw in this vision surely troubled and amazed them even more. The state of glory in which they found the Lord caused them to understand many things. Up until that moment, they were waiting for Jesus to set up his kingdom directly upon earth. They expected he would be the king of this world like Herod was in their country, that all the neighboring people would suddenly have to submit to his authority, and that they themselves would be ministers on this earth.

This transfiguration showed them something far superior: a nature that no human had ever seen before nor could not imagine. Words which had been incomprehensible until then became clear. Their eyes were opened to see in advance a much better future, not only on the earthly level, but on a spiritual level as well.

The apostles were the first people who saw such glory. Of course all the prophets spoke with God by means of their thoughts, their spirit, their dreams, certain visions, and angels who materialized. Some were even able to hear the voice of God, such as Moses at the burning bush. But no one had seen a glory like that being seen by the three apostles.

Without the holy Spirit it is impossible to understand this vision. So as they descended this mountain, the Lord commanded them with the words of Matthew 17:9, *As they came down from the*

mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen from the dead.

To open the access to this glory it was necessary that Jesus first redeem all mankind from the sentence of death that weighed upon them since the fall of our first parents. What a marvelous vision!

Another man was also able to see this extraordinary light, So intense that he lost his sight from it. We speak of Paul on the road to Damascus. Let us read the words written in 2 Corinthians 12:1-4:

It is not expedient for me to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago . . . How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Paul was speaking of himself, of this great privilege he had had. What strange and yet marvelous a vision these witnesses were able to see and transmit to us! The apostles wanted to prolong these moments, to remain in those conditions of happiness. Peter, seeing that the two great men were leaving Jesus, put forth the words of Matthew 17:4,

Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

Let us try to put ourselves in the place of the apostles. What would we have said? Would we have intervened, or would we have kept away? Peter was high-spirited. He wanted to participate, to prolong this experience by proposing to construct three tents, one for the Lord, one for Elijah, and one for Moses. During this vision, they learned many things concerning the future, and it is certain they would have hoped to learn still more about it. This intervention of Peter was interrupted. Indeed, in verses 5-8 we read:

While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. But Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

Could they entertain doubts or leave him after this moment? No, for Jesus was truly the Son of God. He was truly the Master So

long awaited. John the Baptist had heard these words as well at the moment of Jesus' baptism: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* (Matthew 3:17)

Can we doubt? Do we lack witnesses? Have we certainty? Of a truth, this is So extraordinary that Peter testifies anew, in his second epistle:

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. —2Peter 1:16-18

And we, have we not before our eyes, in our hearts, this image of the reign of Christ? There injustice, sin, evil, and all that proceeds from the Adversary will be destroyed. There will reign this profound peace, this blessing, this joy, this enthusiasm of which we have a glimpse and can appreciate, being gathered here together in this place to glorify the Eternal God! Can we ourselves exclaim, *Lord, it is good for us to be here!* We long for this calm, we long for this quietness, because truly, Lord, we appreciate thy presence and thy companionship in this place!

Moses and Elijah as Symbols

This vision clarified the thoughts of the apostles. But what lesson can we draw from it? It was a glimpse of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah in glory—a foretaste of the Kingdom of Christ. But who can Moses and Elijah represent?

Concerning Moses, it is written in He 3:5, *And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after.* So Moses represented the house of God's servants, Israel according to the flesh. They were not sons, but servants of the living God. They were faithful to God before the advent of our Lord. They will participate in the setting up of the kingdom of God upon the earth during the thousand years.

Elijah represents the House of Sons, the body of Christ, which is being developed during the Gospel Age. All those faithful to the Lord, consecrated and begotten of the holy spirit during this age, are represented by Elijah. We can draw a parallel between his life

and that of the Church during the Gospel Age. Elijah was persecuted during his life because of his fidelity to the Lord God and his righteousness. Such is also the case with the Church during this age. She is persecuted because of her faithfulness. The principle persecutor of Elijah was Jezebel, the wicked queen of Israel, the same one mentioned in Revelation 2:20,

Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols.

For the Church, the principle persecutor has been the nominal church, which has presumed to reign as queen over spiritual Israel. Revelation 18:7 details for us what this will be like:

How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, So much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.

Another parallel: the persecuting power of Jezebel was exercised through her husband King Ahab. In the same way, the persecuting power of the nominal church was exercised through the Roman empire with whom she was allied. Elijah fled from Jezebel and Ahab into the desert, to a place prepared by God, where he was miraculously fed for 3 1/2 years. He was in the desert at the time when the country experienced a profound famine.

In the same way, the Church during the long period of the Middle Ages was in solitude and isolation [the desert] while a great spiritual famine prevailed in the earth. After 3 1/2 years Elijah returned from the desert and the errors of the priests of Jezebel were manifested. The true God was honored and there was rain.

During the Gospel Age we have had the time of the reformers who revealed the errors of the nominal church. The power of the truth and its testimony was manifested. Since then the truth has been spread abroad in the form of millions of Bibles which annually refresh the world and bring forth fruit.

In another similar picture the king and people rejoiced; Elijah and his God were honored. But the spirit of Jezebel did not change. She again sought to take the life of Elijah who again fled to the desert.

The Bible has brought such blessings that earthly governments recognize the hand of God in it. But the teachings of Jezebel are

rediscovered in the new sects established at the moment of reform and the saints must flee anew into the condition of isolation. Finally, the career of Elijah ends by his elevation. And we know that the saints will be changed from the earthly condition to the heavenly condition.

What a magnificent privilege the apostles had to see with their own eyes the majesty of the Lord! It is not surprising that they would have loved to dwell in that place forever! It is not surprising that Peter should have wished to prolong this meeting together by intervening, seeing that the two men were separating themselves from Jesus!

And how do we feel dear brethren? Are we weary? Have we had enough, or do we love this brotherly fellowship? Do we love to meet together? In that case, let us ask the Lord, as did Peter:

Master, it is good for us to be here; let us prepare here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

Amen!

Healed by the Lord-Bro. Jean Wozniak, France

DEAR BRETHREN, dear friends of the Truth, gathered in this place from the four corners of the earth: *Peace be with you all.*

Dearly beloved, it is very often said that life may be represented by a journey, a fight, a pilgrimage, or a race.

If it is a journey, it must come to an end.

If it is a fight, it must be waged until death.

If it is a pilgrimage, it must have a conclusion.

If it is a race, it must be won.

Dearly beloved in the Lord, our meditation will have for its foundation the words of the prophet Jeremiah in chapter 17, verse 14. We read: *Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise.* The title of our discourse will be: *Healed by the Lord.*

Mankind's Need for Help

Let us turn our attention to the words of the Psalmist found in Psalm 40, verses 1 and 2:

I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.

God created the human being as a free moral agent. Transgression of the divine law has accompanied the curse throughout history. Man, separated from God, has searched in vain for some meaning to human life, some purpose for his existence.

On the basis of the holy scriptures we affirm that every person who rejects the Lord's help develops within himself vain thoughts, which consequently obscure his intelligence. This renders him a stranger to the life in God from which he is separated and ignorant of his love and grace which he is rejecting. Such a person hardens his heart which becomes insensitive to his Creator's calls. If he persists in this condition, he opens the way to the seducer and surrenders himself to sin, claiming his right or freedom to do evil. The boundary lines are erased and God's moral requirements are ignored.

Satan and his cohorts act on man in a subtle, shrewd, double-dealing, and wily manner, giving to what is evil an appearance of good. Satan himself is disguised as an angel of light, as the Apostle Paul tells us. Life is filled with incitements, seducings, and appeals to refuse ourselves nothing.

Something in a human being loves to defy God, to disobey rules, to go beyond the law with impunity. But temptation in whatever its form is a lie, promising more than it can deliver. The world generally let itself fall into the snare of the Adversary; So it became a world very far from divine favor, rendered orphans, and servants of the god of this world.

These sad consequences are described by the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:3,4:

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

For a time Satan, the god of this evil world, holds all mankind in illusion, in sin and in death, by deceit, by error, and by prejudice.

Poor mankind; poor human beings! Nevertheless, since ancient times, some exceptions—some men and women whose accounts are brought to our knowledge—defied this scenario.

The Ancient Worthies

Let us recall all these heroes of faith which the Apostle Paul enumerates for us in Hebrews chapter 11. These heroes were animated by a strong faith in God. The world was not worthy of them. These heroes knew how to avoid the clutches of the Adversary. The testimony was in their favor. And what a testimony! Nevertheless, none of these personalities obtained that promised to them—notice, not even the promise made to Abraham himself. Let us read Genesis 12:2, *I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.*

The Apostle Paul in He 11:39 declares, *These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise.* Would the Lord have failed to keep his word? Had he deceived mankind by promises he could not keep? Such might be human reasoning. But the Apostle Paul comes to our assistance when he declares in verse 40: *God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.*

These words were written after the period covering the Old Testament, and they thereby suppose something notable: *That they without us should not be made perfect.* Without us.

Dear brethren, we are concerned by this declaration. Could there be some beneficial perspective with reference to these heroes of faith of a different age encompassing the entire period of the Old Testament? If the Ancient Worthies had had the privilege of profiting from divine favor by faith in the accomplishment of a plan which was not fully revealed to them and which had not yet even begun to be executed, it seems impossible that divine justice would go farther for them until the propitiation for their sin had been effectively accomplished by the sacrifice of Christ.

It is obvious, therefore, that the Son of God (Jesus) holds a predominant and vital role in the execution or the accomplishment of the great plan which God has undertaken for the blessing of all mankind. God in his infinite goodness has provided a ransom for all mankind lost in Adam. We have it written for us in 1 Corinthians 15:22, *For as in Adam all die, even So in Christ shall all be made alive.* It is by Christ (Head and Body) that all the

blessings will flow to all mankind in due time. And such blessings!
From the resurrection of the dead to the restitution of all things.
Let us complete, then, the scripture previously quoted [in He
11:40]:

*God having provided some better thing for us [his children
carefully selected and tested during the Gospel age], that they [the
Ancient Worthies, the pioneers of faith], without us should not be
made perfect.*

It becomes clear, then, that the reward pertaining to the heroes of
faith named by the Apostle Paul in Hebrews cannot come before
another class—the Church—has been glorified. This class, called
also the Bride of Christ, must meet her bridegroom, receive the
heavenly inheritance, the divine nature, and become with him the
spring dispensing all future blessings. On this point let us cite the
words found in 1 Corinthians 15:23, *But every man in his own
order: Christ the firstfruits.*

When Christ will be complete and glorified, the words of Daniel
will have their full meaning. Let us read chapter 12, verse 3:

*And they that be wise [the Church class] shall shine as the
brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to
righteousness [the Ancient Worthies] as the stars for ever and
ever.*

The Word of God reveals to us with certainty that an exceptional
favor is linked to the Gospel Age. The divine favor put us in this
age which is coming to its end. Let us take a closer look, therefore,
into this class unique in its kind. What are its privileges? Is it
possible, and under what conditions, to approach God, the
Supreme Being, the Creator of the universe? Is it possible to renew
any contact with Him?

Our Help Comes Through Christ

Dearly beloved in the Lord, not only may we have access to divine
favor, but even more, we have the possibility of participating in the
glory of his Son, if we manifest a total submission, unlimited
loyalty, and obedience. That is extraordinary. It seems to go
beyond our hope and our comprehension. How sublime and
impenetrable is divine grace!

How can we acquire this grace and favor? Before us is an open
book, unique in kind, and remarkable for the extent of its diffusion

throughout the entire world. And that book is most precious to those who make it their own. Nothing else one can imitate, equal, or replace it. It is there, in this book, that we find the Word of God. In this Word are the answers to all the questions that can be asked by every intelligent human being. This book speaks about our amnesty.

This amnesty is sealed by the precious blood of our Lord and signed by the Great Sovereign of the universe. This book, more than any other, moves us. Our astonished eyes discover the words found in John 3:16. We read: *For God So loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

Awe-struck, we ask, *Lord, does this concern me? Have I some chance?* And the book answers us, *My son, if you are from this world, if you are one of those condemned in Adam, if you are ready to receive your Savior, then it belongs to you. Yes, it concerns you.*

It is then that our curiosity brings us to the words found in Ephesians 2:4,5: *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved).*

Do we hear the contents of this book? Do we understand its importance? If we do, all our attention will be concentrated on the words of David found in Psalm 45:10,11:

Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.

Could there be a proposal more refined, more marvelous? How could we not seize such an offer! How can we not question all our carnal ambitions, all our desires, our thoughts and our actions! How can we not turn ourselves away from these muddy and tumultuous waters of sin and death, which are the lot of all mankind!

Does not the healing of the infirmed man at the pool of Bethesda echo in our hearts? But let us take ourselves back to this event related in John 5:5,6:

One who was there had been an invalid for 38 years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, Do you want to get well? (NIV)

Dearly beloved in the Lord, do we feel the necessity of being healed? Do we really wish it? Are not the words of the rich young man ours: *Master, what must I do to have eternal life?* What should we do? Again let us consult the book, and read in James 1:16,17:

Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Then we inquire: Lord, I have so much need of thy forgiveness and thy grace. And the Lord answers: My son, turn to Jesus thy Redeemer. For it is written in John 14:6, *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.* May I, then, come to thee, Lord Jesus? May I become thy disciple and follow thee? And Jesus answers us with words found in John 6:44, *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.* It is then that we understand the need of divine acceptance and of the assistance of Jesus—this Jesus who gave his life for us, he who by his merit made possible our reconciliation with the Eternal Father.

Then again we inquire: Lord, what must I do to be in communion with thee? And the Lord answers, *Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.* (John 9:31)

Five Steps to Divine Favor

Inspired again by a great zeal, we again consult our precious book. It is then that we take note of certain conditions; we discover that in order to benefit from divine favor, it is necessary to fulfill the following steps:

1. **REPENT.** In order to receive God's forgiveness, we must repent of all the sins that we have committed. We must believe in the mercy of God.

But what is meant by repenting? Repentance is a change of spirit and of attitude. It is a complete turning away from our former sinful actions. To repent means to have enough of what we did, to

such a point that we are determined never to do it again. That is true repentance.

2. IT IS NECESSARY THEN TO MAKE A DECISION. We all make decisions during every day—sometimes quickly, sometimes with more difficulty. We make some good decisions and some that are not so good. By one single decision, we can provoke inestimable evil. But by one single decision, we can build a blessing which may reach into eternity. Let us therefore make the decision of Joshua: *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.* (Joshua 24:15)

3. CONVERSION. Conversion is expressed in a change in our attitude, in our mind, and in our behavior, but also in getting rid of the carnal way that is natural to man, and in adopting a spiritual way of thinking and acting.

It begins at our baptism. After receiving the holy Spirit, this conversion goes on throughout our life with our spiritual growth. It attains its point of culmination at the resurrection when we are born into the Kingdom of God. Then we will be complete new creatures, possessors of the divine nature. This conversion is not only a change of appearance, but a complete inward change as well.

The one who is converted must change and grow spiritually. The fruits of the spirit must become evident, and even more as one gets closer to the victory. It is in this that the process of conversion consists. Let the words of our Lord found in the Gospel of Matthew 18:3 enter into us deeply: *Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

4. UNDERGO TRIALS. We must endure chiseling and much polishing. It is necessary for us, under the direction of the great Master Builder, to submit ourselves to many transformations. It is necessary for us to become fully conformed to his requirements. So the Master's ideal is reflected in us.

If we wish to acquire gold tried by fire, this cannot take place except at the price of a faithful and constant submission to divine testings—to the hard trials which are meant to purify us from our blemishes and all our faults, to polish and chisel us. There is no other way. Every testing, every difficulty, no matter how small it may be, and every affliction work together to develop our

character and permit us to progress to the point of becoming new creatures. Let us always remember the words of 1 Peter 4:12,13:

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

5. SINGLENES OF VISION: *JESUS*. The presence of Jesus crucified must be permanent, powerful, and personal. When our life is filled with this view, it produces a real upheaval of ourselves; it conditions all our thoughts, all our actions. It is at this moment that we become conscious of what the world is, and we realize that we live in a foreign and enemy land.

The Apostle Peter in his first epistle, chapter 2 verse 11, uses this language: *Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims.*

Here too we are sure of God's faithfulness, of his power, and of his sovereign grace, which assure us of protection against the will of the Adversary. How sweet and calming is the promise made of old by the Lord to the people of Israel through Moses. Let us read in Deuteronomy 31:6, *The Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.* This promise is reserved to the followers of Jesus Christ, to the children of God during the Gospel age.

Dearly beloved in the Lord, do we desire this assistance? Do we wish this divine protection, without which we would not know how to face the Adversary? If our pilgrimage is compared to a journey, it is quite often set with traps and ambushes. Untimely delays of illness, accidents, and reversals trouble us.

There are annoyances and vexations which have the tendency to lay us flat. Sometimes they take away our peace, they prevent our sleep, they haunt us to such an extent that for a while we are discouraged. Sometimes the valley where the shadow of death is profiled appears to be even darker to us than it really is. But God himself states through the mouth of the psalmist: even in the deepest depths of this valley, or the darkest shadow of its obscurity, we have nothing to fear. Nothing! Because he is with us. The Lord has sufficient comfort in reserve for his children which he accords them as the circumstances require.

If we admit that five to 20 years are necessary for the training and instruction of children to prepare them for the responsibilities of a life of some decades' length, how much instruction would be necessary to be prepared for eternal life? And more, how much instruction and preparation is necessary for Kings and Priests who must become instructors and judges of all mankind, to become prepared for eternal life? We are amazed and astonished when we think that somebody could develop his character to such a level in So short a time.

Dearly beloved, how valuable then is each moment, each minute, each hour, each day. We should exploit these to develop our character as the Lord would wish to see in us, that we might learn the necessary lessons for our happiness, our zeal in his service, and for all the future blessings which are Amen in Christ Jesus.

A sick person consulted his doctor because he didn't feel well. At the time of the consultation, the diagnosis suggested that a general fatigue due to some excesses of various kinds had been troubling the patient. The doctor prescribed medication appropriate for this diagnosis. The patient hurried to the pharmacy and bought the medication. Upon returning home, he arranged it carefully in his medicine cabinet, which was almost full. He said to himself, *After all, it should go away by itself.* Day after day his state became progressively worse and he had a difficult time walking.

What lesson can we take from this example? We are all sick, worn out, and laden with sin. The Supreme Physician, through his beloved Son, has prescribed for us appropriate medications. The pharmacy—his Word—delivers it to us. It contains all the appropriate medication to fight all our weaknesses and imperfections. What are we doing with these medications? Do we carefully arrange them in one of our closets or on some shelf, perhaps in the bookcase? Can the simple possession of these medications have a beneficial effect on our spiritual health?

If we want to be healed, we must follow the prescriptions of our doctor. We must imperatively use the medications of our creator. He alone knows what we lack to recover the health of our soul. These cures must be assimilated progressively, at the rate of several doses every day, by our prayers, our meditations, and our studies.

May the words of the prophet Jeremiah, therefore, which was quoted as the basis of our study, be our greatest desire, as well as

our greatest mutual wish: *Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed;
save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise.*

Amen.