Articles by T. G. Wilkie

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The Shepherd's Flock (Jan 1955)

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“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” (Luke 12:32) What comforting words! Words spoken by the Good Shepherd of the sheep. They contain gracious consolation for all who are members of His flock, purchased by His blood. The context, in which this promise appears contains a warning against covetousness. The parable of the rich fool was related by the Lord to teach that riches are not the important thing in life, but that to be rich towards God is true wisdom. To be rich in grace, rich in faith, rich in good works, is the mark of a truly wealthy man.

In this passage, the Lord Jesus also points out to the believer the importance of seeking first the Kingdom of God, and follows this with the promise added, that those who do so, need not be anxious about the common necessities of life. “Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.” This assurance should allay all anxiety in the believer’s life. This “Fear not” of promise, is the climax to all that has gone before. Let us notice three things in this verse:

The Simile Of Christ:

His people are a flock, a little flock. His own have always been few in number when contrasted with the vast number of professors. We need not be surprised at this, for our Messed Lord reminds us in Matt. 7:14, that few are on the narrow way. Throughout the Scriptures, believers,are likened to sheep. It is true of them, “All we like sheep have gone astray.” (Isa. 53:6) We read also in

1 Pet. 2:25, “For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.” Christ is the Good Shepherd Who gave His life for the sheep, and, through faith in Him, we become members of that flock which He purchased with His own blood. In the language of the hymn we can say:

“I was lost, but Jesus found me, Found the sheep that went astray; Threw His loving arms around me Drew me back into His way.”

In the Gospel according to John, chapter 10, our blessed Lord reminds us, that we are “His own sheep,” and assures us we are secure in Him; we, therefore, are members of that one flock.

The Exhortation Of Christ:

“Fear not,” said He, for the Lord Jesus knew the hearts of His own. He knew how they would be filled with fears of every description, fears because they were few in numbers, fears because of their enemies, fears because of the many difficulties in the way. He answered these many fears by giving to them words of comfort, cheer, and promise. The reason why we should never fear, is the Great Shepherd of the sheep tends with sweet unwearied care the flock for which He died.

(a) We need not fear poverty: Isaiah the prophet pictures Him as feeding His flock like a Shepherd. Our Passage reminds us that God even cares for the fowls of the air, “God feedeth them.” (v. 24) We are surely, in Christ, much better than the fowl. “I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down.” the Lord declares through Ezekiel. (34:15) The Christian certainly need not fear poverty.

(b) We need not fear danger: Christ as the Shepherd in Ezekiel 34: 25, says, “I will cause the evil beasts to cease …; and they (My sheep) shall dwell safely … and sleep in the woods.” Again, He says, “They shall dwell safely and none shall make them afraid.” (v. 28) Since every member of the little flock can say, “The Lord is my Shepherd,” they can also say in their daily experiences, “I will fear no evil.” Like the Master Himself, we may be despised and rejected, mocked at, and ridiculed, but since God is our God, and Christ is our Shepherd, they that are for us are greater than all they who are against us. The world, the flesh, and the devil, are mighty enemies; but with Christ as our Shepherd we have nothing to fear. The Master’s “Fear not” should allay our anxieties.

(c) We need not fear death: Christ, as the Shepherd of the sheep, has come forth from the grave. “He passed through death and gloriously confounded our every foe” to the end “That through death, He might destroy him who had the power of death that is the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” (Heb. 2:14) “The sting of death is sin,” but Christ suffered for sin; He thereby, removed the sting for every one of His children. Through faith in Him, we can say in triumph, “Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.” (Psa 23:4)

The Assurance Of Christ:

God is our Father, and it is His will to give us the kingdom. We have the assurance now, that by virtue of the new birth, we belong to the kingdom. We, therefore, are awaiting the day, when in all the fulness of blessed

reality, we shall inherit the kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world.

Twenty thousand sheep were sent by the King of Spain as a gift to his brother, George III, of England. They were all gathered in St. James' Park, London, under the charge of shepherds who, while watching them sat under the large chestnut trees there. The scattered flocks were mingled together here and there in different parts of the park. At a given signal the shepherds shouted aloud. The sheep perked up their ears at the sound, and then, each one bounded forward, dashing forward, to the spot where stood its own shepherd. They had no difficulty in recognizing his voice and in answering his call. Even so it is with the members of our Lord's little flock. They are scattered in different parts of the world, mixed together, and feeding in many different pasture fields, but they know His voice. As the true sheep of His pasture, they are listening for the last call, the shout of the Chief Shepherd; when, however far separated the one from the other, they, the young and old alike, will be gathered to Him out of all lands. The lambs as well as the sheep will be then eternally safe. The Divine Shepherd's prayer must eventually be fulfilled, "That they all may be one," and "There shall be one flock and one Shepherd." (John 10:16) The waste howling wilderness with its dangers and distresses will be forever past and forgotten in the enjoyment of the eternal glory. In the meanwhile, may the Master's "Fear not" quieten our fearful hearts with the assurance of the fact that it is better on before.

"Gracious Saviour, Holy Shepherd!

Little ones are dear to Thee;

Gathered with Thine arms defended;
In Thy bosom may they be
Sweetly, fondly, safely, tended;
From all want and danger free.
Tender Shepherd, never leave them
From Thy fold to go astray;
Let no sin nor sorrow grieve them;
May they walk the narrow way;
Thus direct them, thus protect them;
Lest they fall as easy prey.”

The Cause And Cure Of Fretting (Feb 1955)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 1 No. 2, Feb 1955.

The true message of this Psalm is to warn us against the temptation to fret at the success of the ungodly. The wicked are pictured as spreading themselves as a green bay tree, exhibiting great power, and lording it over the less fortunate. The righteous man is perplexed thereby, and is in danger of fretting and of becoming envious at their prosperity. The reading of the entire Psalm, will give the assurance that the Lord knows the days of the upright and is pledged to deliver them from the wicked.

The Cause Of Fretting:

The basic cause of this vexation is the observing of the prosperity of the wicked.

The sharp and definite command, “Fret not thyself,” is a fitting, introduction to the whole Psalm, for the wicked seem to prosper, and thereby the righteous are perplexed; nevertheless, God is seen as governing, and that in the interest of His people. Those who trust in Him, delight in Him, commit their way unto Him, and rest in Him, are always vindicated. To simplify its meaning, I and delivered. As the righteous man views the wicked prospering as a green bay tree, living in luxury and oppressing the less fortunate, he seems to forget that the triumphing of the wicked is short, (Job 20:5) and their success is transitory; consequently, he is in danger of fretting.

In looking up the word, fret, in the original, the following definitions are given; To boil up, to be angry, to blaze up with anger waxed hot, to be violently agi- would say, “Do not get into a perilous heat about things.” It has been said that fret, is closely akin to the idea of friction, and is indicative of the absence of the oil of love and grace. Fretting is heat in the wrong place. One time when travelling by train, we were held up for two hours; upon enquiring the reason for the delay, I was informed that a hot box had developed on one of the cars. The heat was in the wrong place, and the progress of the train was held up. The axle became heated because of unnecessary friction; dry surfaces grinding together can only be kept smooth by a cushion of oil. Fretting is heat in the wrong place, and results from little bits of grit getting into our bearings; as for example, some irritation, some unnecessary insult.

The Consequence Of Fretting:

Friction causes heat, and with heat the most dangerous conditions are produced. “Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.” It would appear from this exhortation that fretting leads to anger, and according to Ephesians 4:26, to be angry is giving place to the devil. The result of fretting therefore will be disastrous to the peace of the believer. According to the first verse of this Psalm, fretting leads to envy, and this is listed in Galatians 5:21, under the works of the flesh. Envy and jealousy are often yoke-fellows, and a poor team they are! They so frequently hinder Christian fellowship and service. The end result of anger, is envy, which leads to evil doing. How important then that we heed the exhortation, “Fret not thyself.”

The Cure For Fretting:

In this precious poem several different attitudes toward the Lord are prescribed as divine balm to be applied to the fretting soul. Let us look at these:

(a). “Trust in the Lord.” (vs.3.) The meaning of the word, “trust,” is to be confident. Confidence in the God who hath promised, and who is able also to perform, will banish care. In some places in the Old Testament the word is rendered, “Be careless.” The thought is illustrated by the carelessness of the child, who, because of its confidence in the love and ability of its father to provide, ignores anxiety. In spite of the apparent prosperity of the wicked, we do well to trust in our Heavenly Father who knows, and loves, and cares. This will cure the tendency to fret.

(b). “Delight thyself also in the Lord.” (vs. 4.) The meaning of this word “delight” would suggest, the satisfaction with the abundance of the blessings that are ours in Christ. If we are finding joy and satisfaction in Christ, and realize that we are enriched with His unsearchable wealth, the fleeting prosperity of the wicked will not affect us.

(c). “Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass.” (vs. 5.) It is delightful to know, the original meaning of the word, “commit,” is roll. This clause could, therefore, read, “Roll thy way upon the Lord.” This means, that in all our ways right to the end of life’s journey, He is able to undertake if we simply rely upon Him. His way is always best no matter what it may be, even although at times it may seem rough. He will never leave us nor forsake us. It is better

to walk in the dark with Christ, than to walk alone in the light without Him.

(d). “Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him.” (vs. 7.) If we are really trusting in he Lord, delighting in Him, and committing our way unto the Lord, then there is nothing to do but to rest and to wait, for all will be well. It is worthy of note, that the Psalm begins with, “Fret not thyself,” and ends with, “Trust in Him.” The Psalm therefore closes with a note that is the death knell of the unhallowed disquietude with which it begins. The literal meaning of the word, “Rest,” is “Be silent.” From the heart that is resting in the Lord all unbelief will vanish. Through the committing of all its griefs and fears to Him, with the knowledge that what He chooses for us is the safest and the best, the heart will enjoy the calm of perfect peace. Rest in the will of God, of which Christ said, “Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me.” Rest in the Word of God, for whatever He wills is for thy good; rest in the love of God with its never failing promises.

Burden Bearers (Mar 1955)

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“Bear ye one another’s burdens,” (Gal. 6:2).

Here is a pithy remark I read recently, “Human sympathy is a universal language, and kindness is intelligible even to dumb animals.” There is need for sympathy all around us, because upon human shoulders lie many an oppressive burden. The father shoulders the burden of providing for the family; the mother feels the weighty burden of home cares; the business man is often weary with the burden of exacting appointments; and, those who minister the Word of God carry the burden of perishing souls. Many burdens like these are obvious, but perhaps the most poignant are those that are borne secretly and silently, for as the Spanish proverb says, “No home is there anywhere that does not sooner or later have its hush.”

It is always a safe rule to notice the words of Scripture in their own setting. In Galatians 6, Paul sets before us some of the practical things of the Christian life. It will be noticed that he begins and closes with the title “brethren”, for in this term are included all Jews and Gentiles that are in Christ Jesus, (vs. 15). Paul therefore reminds us that all our dealings with one another must be ruled by the fundamental fact of our mutual relationship in the Lord. He says, “Bear ye one another’s burdens,” (vs. 2), and in verse 5, he further states, “Every man shall bear his own burden.” There is no contradiction in these two statements when we notice that two different words are used for “burden”. In verse 2 the Greek word is “baros”, and suggests a weight that

presses upon one physically. In verse 5 the word is “phortion” suggesting something to be borne, whether the load be light or heavy, (Galatians, C. F. Hogg). The word used in the first instance indicates the possibility of sharing the burdens of the saints as we serve the Lord Christ, while the word used in the second instance intimates the fact that every man must live his own life, and must perform his own labour, for he must answer at the Judgment Seat of Christ as to how he has discharged his obligations as a Christian.

There are:

Burdens We Should Share:

“Bear ye one another’s burdens,” (vs. 2): The verse that precedes this exhortation deserves our earnest consideration. “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” The sharing of the burden apparently is related to the brother who has fallen, and whose fault has been detected. Paul speaks of his guilt with grace and tenderness. Our attitude should not be to criticize. but to pray for the erring one: not to reproach him. but to help him In speaking of the restoration of the brother. Paul uses a technical term. The word he uses suggests the setting of a bone. This word picture shows that the fallen one suffers pain, a d is temporarily handicapped. but that the spiritual saint may by the. imparting of his strength to the erring brother. help him on the road to recovery. When the possibility that we too may be tempted and may fall is considered, it will give us a real desire to bear the burdens of the brother overtaken in a fault.

This precious Scripture, “Bear ye one another’s burden.” could have, of course, a broader meaning. There are opportunities of sharing the burdens of those who sorrow. If you know of any home where the dark shadows of distress prevail, go and share their grief, and remind them of the promises of God’s Word which shine out as stars in the night, and commend them to the Man of Sorrows, for in every pang that rends the heart, He shares a part. He sympathizes with His own in any trouble, and to each sufferer He sends relief. When we learn of the affliction of the bereaved, and of their loss in the passing of one dear to the family circle, let us help to lighten the weight of their sorrow by “weeping with those who weep.”

“Did you give him a lift? He’s a brother man,

And bearing about all the burden he can.

Did you give him a smile? He was downcast and blue,

And the smile could have helped him to battle it through.

Did you give him your hand? He was slipping down hill

And the world, so I fancied, was using him ill.

Did you give him a Word? Did you Show him the road?

Or did you just let him go on carrying his load?

May the Great Burden Bearer who staggered under the load Of the cross, who in sustaining its weight shared all our burdens. teach us to bear the burdens of others, and so to fulfil the “law of Christ.” that law which embodied the love that prompted all His tenderness and forgiveness toward the erring, and embodies the helping Of the overburdened and the fainting one in the way.

The fulfilment of this law by us, is the evidence that we are followers of the sympathizing Jesus.

Burdens We Should Bear:

"Let every man bear his own burden," (vs. 5). This definitely refers to the shouldering of our individual responsibility in service and in life. This is a burden that we cannot transfer to another. Many Scriptures remind us that during the absence of our Lord, we have been given our own work to do, "To every man his work," (Mk. 13:34). We all have been assigned some task, and no one else can accomplish this work. It will be noticed that the discharge of our duty is likened in this chapter, to the sowing of seed with the assurance of a harvest, for verse 9 states, "Let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Some one has likened the "well-doing" of the Christian to "Burdens that blossom into blessings." If the youth in his folly sows his wild oats, and if after years he reaps a harvest of misery and disappointed hopes which mock him, shall not the acts of kindness summed up in this scriptural expression, bring a harvest of blessing? We must give an account to God of our life and service; only that which has been done for Christ will last.

The Great Burden Bearer:

In Psalm 55 David exhorts, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee," (vs. 22). Because of the pressure of circumstances brought about by the rebellion of Absalom, David longs for the wings of a dove that he might fly away, and be at rest. Instead he is taught to cast his burden upon the Lord, and he is given the promise, "He shall sustain thee." He now passes on

to the people of God, this lesson and its precious promise. Remember, dear burdened Christian, God is able to carry both you and your burden, and this He will do “Until the day break and the shadows flee away.” In the bright home to which we are going, there are no burdens, no sorrows, no temptations, for the Lamb is all the light there.

An artist was retouching the picture of the mother that the boy had lost so recently. He was removing the lines and the wrinkles from her lovely face, when the son cried, “Stop! … Please don’t do that! … Don’t take out the lines, leave them every one!” Those lines represented the burdens the saintly mother had borne, and the sorrows which she had endured patiently in her life. She had raised children; she had lost children; she had toiled, cared, and sacrificed, and those wrinkles told out the story of her self-abnegation. How sweet the rest of heaven must be for such an one; life with its trials and affliction all over, and nothing but the calm and joy of the divine presence.

May we learn to cast our burdens upon the Lord and to prove His sustaining grace and strength. The blessed One who bore our sins, can certainly carry our sorrows.

“Oh for faith to cast our load E’en while we pray upon our God, Then rise with lightened cheer.”

God Is Faithful (May 1955)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 1 No. 5, May 1955.

When the trials and distresses that attend the pilgrim pathway tend to cast us down, how cheering it is to dwell upon the precious truth, “God is faithful,” (1 Cor. 10:13). In this scene where material things are so unstable, and change and fickleness are so prevalent, a knowledge of the faithfulness of God is an anchor to the soul. Because God is, and ever will be faithful, we can afford to leave the control of our lives to Him. The Psalmist constantly affirms his belief m the faithfulness of the Lord. He praises and magnifies the name of the Lord for His lovingkindness and mercy.

Read Psalm 89 and you will receive a blessing as you discover the qualities of God’s faithfulness. In verse 2, it is established in the heavens, and, therefore, is as stable as His eternal throne. In verse 8, His faithfulness is incomparable. There is no one in all creation as faithful as He. In verses 5 and 8, His supremacy in power and might over all His creatures is celebrated. All His creatures may fail because of limited power, but Jehovah, because of His unrivalled might, is equal to all emergencies in life, and will surely keep His promises. This is confirmed to us in verse 33, “Nevertheless My lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail.” This would suggest His Unfailing Faithfulness. In Lamentations 3:23, we read, “Great is Thy faithfulness.” The constancy with which His compassions are vouchsafed to us, magnifies His mercy in preserving us from His consuming anger. The faithfulness of God is manifested in many ways:

In Calling Us:

“God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the fellowship of His Son,” (1 Cor. 1:9).

The “fellowship of His Son” is the heritage of all saints. This glorious position into which we are brought, the moment we receive Christ by virtue of the atoning work, belongs to “All that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours,” (1 Cor. 1:2). To narrow this fellowship down to the privilege of a few is a reflection on the faithfulness of God. The New Covenant of which Christ is the Mediator is established by His own blood, and secures the everlasting blessedness of all who believe. That such unworthy objects as sinful men are brought into heavenly relationship with our blessed Lord, because of the faithfulness of God, is in keeping with His covenant confirmed by Christ, (Gal. 3:17).

In Delivering From Temptation:

“God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able to bear, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape,” (1 Cor. 10:13). In the context of this passage, the Apostle cites the failures of the children of Israel. In spite of all their privileges they fell into grievous sin. They proved unfaithful, so it is written, “With many of them God was not well pleased,” (1 Cor. 10:5). Their failures are recorded as “examples” to us, lest we take their course and go their way. After warning us to “take heed lest we fall,” (vs. 12) the Apostle closes the paragraph with his message of encouragement and cheer.

Temptations continually assail us, but we need not fall. “God will either keep His saints from temptation by His preserving mercy, or in temptation by His supporting mercy, or find a way for their escape by His delivering mercy,” (Mason). Every trial is an opportunity to trust the faithfulness of God.

In Forgiveness:

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,” (1 John 1:9).

It is well for Christians to remember that while the penalty of their sins was borne at Calvary, they will never pass beyond the need of cleansing in this life. To say that we are absolutely sinless, and need not the constant application of the cleansing blood of Christ, is only self-deception. Sinning should not be habitual with the believer, but if he does sin, the joy of fellowship with the Father is lost. In order to have that joy restored, we need “to confess our sins.” God will be faithful to His Word, and just to His Son who died to take away sin. He will forgive the believer freely and fully because of the efficacy of the blood of His Son, and restore to the believer full fellowship to Himself.

In Answering Prayer:

“In Thy faithfulness answer me,” (Psa. 143:1). Here the Psalmist pleads the faithfulness of God as he claims an answer to his cries. The language of this Psalm pictures the trying experience of the writer. He speaks of persecution by the enemy, dwelling in darkness; his spirit being overwhelmed, and his heart being desolate, (vs. 3-4). In the midst of all this distress he can say, “In

Thee do I trust," and can call upon the Lord to hear him speedily.

"Call upon Me in the day of trouble," is an exhortation to pray. "I will deliver thee," is a definite promise that God will answer. Christ is the "Yea" and "Amen" to all the promises of God. Let us not forget, "He is faithful that promised," (Heb. 10:23). May we rest in His faithfulness that hears and answers our prayers. Lord Shaftesbury one time promised a poor child financial help. He was very busy, and thought he would send someone else, but he suppressed the notion; to him, his word was as good as his bond, even to a poor beggar child. God is absolutely faithful to keep every single promise that He has made to His saints.

He Is Faithful In Perfecting His Saints:

"Faithful is He that calleth you, Who also will do it," (1 Thess. 5:24).

God desires for His people their full sanctification, (Vs. 23). He looks upon them as His inheritance, and His desire is, although they are not faultless, they be blameless. The love-letter of a little boy to his father is anything but faultless; however, the father does not count it deserving of blame; he carries it near his heart. We are not faultless, as judged by God's perfect standards, but He, Who has called us, will effectually accomplish our perfection when we are presented before the presence of His glory. "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me," (Psalm 138:8). The Psalmist rested on the faithfulness of God to fulfil His purpose. It is the Lord who has begun the good work in us; it is He Who has carried it on; and if He does not finish it, it will never be completed, but such is our confidence, we

know that He Who began the work will perfect it. In Eternity, we shall rejoice, not in “works of righteousness which we have done,” but entirely in what the Lord has done. We will praise Him for His unfailing faithfulness.

The Master's Mind (Dec 1955)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 1 No. 12, Dec 1955.

The title of this meditation is suggested in the second chapter of Philippians. A careful perusal of the whole epistle discloses the sad lack of unity among the saints. It is true that while no outbreak of dissension was evident, perfect harmony did not exist. There appears to have been a difference between two sisters in the assembly (Ch. 4:2). This estrangement threatened to engender strife, and to mar the unity of the church. The apostle Paul without mentioning the discord makes a stirring appeal for unity (2:2-3). He exhorts the saints to esteem others better than themselves, and to exercise that lowliness of mind which expresses itself in true consideration of fellow Christians.

The manner of Paul’s appeal is a true indication that he possessed the lowly mind of the Master. Instead of exerting his apostolic authority to command, he entreats them to fulfil his joy by walking in humility.

The Pattern Of Lowliness

He then proceeds to present Christ, in verses five to eleven, as the pattern of lowliness.

This is one of the most magnificent passages of the New Testament; it is a comprehensive statement relative to the person of Christ. Here the humiliation of the Son of God is taught the saints as an incentive to their being truly humble. Believers are exhorted, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (2:5).

Christ in order to seek and save the lost veiled His divine glory in perfect humanity. The infinite stoop of our Lord in taking “not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham” (Heb. 2:16), incites adoring wonder, and with the apostle, in reverence, we exclaim, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God” (Rom. 11:33).

The Revised Version translates the sentence, “He made Himself of no reputation” (V. 7), thus, “He emptied Himself.” This does not mean that He divested Himself of His Divine Essence or attributes, for it is true of Him, “I am Jehovah, I change not”. This passage teaches that the Eternal Word (John 1:1) emptied Himself of only the outward and visible manifestations of Godhead (Scofield).

“He took upon Himself a bondman’s form” (V. 7. J.N.D.), for Christ was willing to renounce His outward glory in the form of God to reveal Himself to man in the form of a slave, and to rescue humanity from the bondage of sin. Moreover, He became in the likeness of men. In the stoop of humiliation, without ceasing to be what He always had been, He became what He never had been before. The Word, the Eternal Son, was made flesh. He Who created all things was seen in Judea in the guise of a peasant. He was meek and lowly in heart, Jehovah’s perfect servant. His life was marked by poverty, weariness, human dependence, and subjection.

“Veiled in flesh the Godhead see

Hail the Incarnate Deity.”

Oh, that we could be more like Him! “He having been found in figure as a man, humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the

cross" (V. 8. J.N.D.). The greatest marvel is, that Christ came from the bosom of the Father, from the surpassing glories of the Godhead, from the Heaven of Heavens where legions of angelic beings were His constant attendants, to submissive and sacrificial life among men. In His voluntary humiliation He was wholly subject to His Father's will. Obedience to that will led Him to Calvary where He died in ignomy and shame. He descended from the highest height to the deepest depth. The "death of the cross" marked the climax of His self-emptying; He stooped to the lowest step in gracious condescension. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (2:5). In recognition of this, "God hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow" (2:10). How true His words: "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 14:11). His glorious exaltation resulted from His humiliation and suffering. Even now devoted hearts bow in worship in His presence, and all creation yet will fall before Him in homage. Another has thus expressed it, "The eternal God bowed down to bless mankind in and by His Son, and received Him back possessed of the addition of a human nature to increased glory and exaltation because of His obedience."

In view of the profound truth we have been considering, what manner of persons ought we to be in all lowliness of mind!

The Practice Of Lowliness

Doctrine should result in duty, hence we read words of practical counsel for the Christian life in this second

chapter. Meditation upon the lowliness of Christ should produce that brotherly love and self-denial which foster unity. To have the mind of Christ in us will preserve us from discord (V. 2), vainglory (V. 3), and selfishness (V. 4). “In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (V. 3). This Christian ideal is only attained as we practise the humility of our blessed Lord. When lowliness of mind characterizes an assembly of God spiritual concord will be realized. Let us finally consider

The Place For Lowliness

As already suggested, this Christian grace is necessary for the unity of believers in the assembly. This unity will be seen by steadfastness in our service for the Lord (1:27). It will also be marked by fearlessness before the enemies of the gospel (1:28), and will result in an active effort to make known the “faith of the gospel” (2:27). The mind of the Master will make us alert to the working out of our own salvation with fear and trembling (2:12-13). Salvation is a large and inclusive term, embracing the entire experience of the believer from the time of his conversion until he is “conformed to the image of Christ.” It includes deliverance from the penalty of sin, deliverance from the power of sin, and deliverance from the presence of sin. Apparently, the second meaning is that which is used here. Through the “mind of Christ” in us, we shine in this dark world for Him, and by our likeness to Christ, souls are turned from darkness unto light. Oh, for grace to let the Master’s mind rule, so that His lowliness be reproduced in our lives! Then our activities will be fruitful in service for God (Vv. 12-13), productive in fellowship with the

saints (V. 4), and characterized by the blamelessness and harmlessness that should mark the sons of God (V. 15).

May the Lord enable us to be occupied with Christ Who humbled Himself and became obedient to His Father's Will, in order that we may manifest His lowliness and meekness of heart.

"Oh, to be but emptier, lowlier,

Mean, unnoticed and unknown,

And to God a vessel holier,

Filled with Christ and Christ alone;

Naught of earth to cloud the glory,

Naught of self the light to dim,

Telling forth the wondrous story

Emptied—to be filled with Him."

* * *

Spurgeon, when writing to his son and sending him a wedding gift, said, "I am sorry it is not more, but you know I have always been more keen on the saving of souls than the saving of sovereigns."

The Christian's Walk (Jan 1956)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 2 No. 1, Jan 1956.

Thomas Wilkie

The walk of the believer is a prominent theme throughout the New Testament, this is especially true of the Epistle to the Ephesians where the Spirit by Paul teaches the wonderful standing in Christ of all saints. In the opening doctrinal chapters of the epistle the believer is seen quickened from the dead, raised beyond corruption, and seated in the heavenlies with Christ. In the closing practical chapters he is exhorted, “Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us” (Chap. 5:2). It is obvious, therefore, that the conduct of the Christian should be consistent with the exalted position to which he has been brought by the grace of God. Consequently we are instructed to “Walk as children of light” (Eph. 5:8), and to “Walk circumspectly” (Eph. 5:15), as well as to “Walk in love.” One feels the need among us of a revival and a manifestation of this particular grace in our characters.

Most of us err in regard to the object upon which we set our affections. There is danger of self becoming the object of our hearts, “For men shall be lovers of their own selves” (2 Tim. 3:2). Moreover, it is possible to be, “Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:4). The Scriptures have little to say about the believer’s talk, except that it be used sparingly. The child of God is to be slow to speak (Jas. 1:19). Inasmuch as the believer’s walk is an evidence of his character, he should seek grace to heed the exhortation, “Walk in love”. There are three persons which it is our duty to

love, God our Father, Christ our Saviour, and the Christian, our brother.

Love To God

A consistent manifestation of love to God is a proof that we have the Holy Spirit dwelling within, for “The fruit of the Spirit is love” (Gal. 5:22}. This objective love is not the product of natural affection, for “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 5:5). The pre-eminent place this virtue has in the fruit of the Spirit suggests that if our love to God is supreme all other graces will be properly proportioned in our lives.

The love of God is perfected in those who obey His commandments (1 John 2:5), and one of His most important commandments is emphasized by the apostle John, “Love one another” (1 John 3:3; 4:12}.

According to verse 10 of Psalm ninety-seven, our love to God results in hating evil; therefore, love has a separating influence on our walk. Love to God will not tolerate sin in man. Spiritual separation is a byproduct of our devotion to the Lord.

True love to God will preserve us from despair when we are confronted by the many common trials of the Christian pilgrimage. “Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38-39).

Love To Christ

Expressive love to Christ is an indication of our deep appreciation of His love to us, “We love Him because He first loved us.” The expression of genuine love is seen in obedience, an obedience eager to serve, or to sacrifice for Christ. Paul displays this love when he says, “I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13).

The cross of Christ is the great incentive to love, but besides this the Lord promises a crown of life to them that love Him. May the Lord restore to us our first love, for the pressing need among us today is

Love Of The Brethren

In this is found the unmistakeable proof of discipleship. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). The amount of truth that we know is not of primary importance, but the amount of love we show is. What a convincing witness love is to the world, when it is mutually manifested with fervency! It is recorded that in the early days of the Church’s testimony, the ungodly were heard to exclaim, “Behold, now these Christians love one another!”

“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1 John 3:14).

Our love to fellow believers is to us an inward evidence of divine life, and an outward evidence to the world that we are the Lord’s.

THE POWER OF LOVE: According to 1 Corinthians chapter thirteen, love is the principle element in our service. No gift however great, no benevolence however kind, no sacrifice however startling, can substitute for

love. The motive of our service is more important then the magnitude of it. All service marked by love to Christ, and to others, will be blessed now and rewarded in the future.

THE PATTERN OF LOVE: “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” (John 3:16). This perfect sacrifice is the visible token of God’s love for us. The readiness with which we assume responsibility in the care of our brethren, likewise, will prove our love to them. “We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” is strong language, but it is exactly what the Lord did for us. This may not actually involve dying for them, but it does involve living for them in sacrificial service. “My little children let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (l John 3:18). Our love to one another should be characterized by action rather than by sentiment. It consists chiefly in prompt obedience to God, and demands that we put others before ourselves. Selfishness is the badge of carnality, but selflessness in the interest of others is a mark of divine life. “Everyone that loveth is born of God” (1 John 4:7). Our love to one another is the severe test as to whether or not we know God. “He that loveth not, knoweth not God.” (1 John 4:8). The more we know God, the more we love Him and all who belong to Him.

Beloved, let us apply the test of the apostle of love, John. If we hate our brethren we are in darkness, according to verse 9 of chapter 2; whereas, if we love our brethren we dwell in the light. It is intensely solemn that those who love the world, and those who hate their brethren belong to the same class. Notice verse 10 of chapter 3,

“Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.” If “He that loveth not his brother is not of God” then he must be one of the children of the devil. May the Lord give us grace to dwell in love, and to prove it by helping our needy brother. Let us love in action, not merely in assertion. Let us heed the command of our blessed Lord, “A new commandment, I give unto you, that Ye love one another.” (John 13:34).

“We will love with tender care,

Knowing love to Christ,

Brethren who His image bear,

For the ‘Love of Christ’.

Jesus only shall we know,

And our love to all shall flow,

In His blood - bought Church below,

For the ‘Love of Christ’.”

* * *

Christ is the Giver of all liberty. He is only free who wears the yoke of Christ.

“He opens wide the prison doors,

And breaks the chains that bind us

And bids us onward press and leave

The world and sin behind us.”

The Beauty of Christian Living (June 1956)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 2 No. 6, June 1956.

Thomas Wilkie

The title of Psalm 92, “A Song for the Sabbath Day,” suggests an example of praise perfectly suitable to a day of rest. When the Lord is given His place of supremacy, there praise to Him is perfected. The basis of praise intimated by the Psalmist is, the Majesty of the Lord as displayed in His works and in His power over the workers of iniquity. The Name, lovingkindness, and faithfulness of the Lord all excite in the heart the attitude of thanksgiving and adoration. What a contrast is seen between the grasslike springing up of the wicked, and the planting and flourishing of the righteous! “Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God” (Psa. 92:13).

Let us notice some of the figures of speech that are used in this Psalm.

The Similes Used:

The Palm Trees:

Many other similes are likewise used in God’s Word to picture His saints. Christ said of them, “Ye are the salt of the earth,” indicating that their presence in the world was preservative. He also said, “Ye are the light of the world,” denoting that their life and testimony were radiant in the midst of darkness (Matt. 5:13-14).

In this Psalm they are likened to the palm trees and to the cedar of Lebanon. From the Bible Dictionary we learn that the palm is one of the most interesting and useful trees in Palestine. It grows from 30 to 80 feet high, and bears in large clusters rich dates which hang down from the top. One tree often yields as much as two hundred pounds, and will bear for 70 to 100 years. They are mostly found near wells from which they draw their moisture.

What a lovely symbol of the Christian life! Tall and stately its head seems to reach the heavens. What an illustration of the believer seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Col. 3:1-2; Eph. 2:6)! The ungodly are symbolized by the thorns and briers that grow near the earth. There is no fruit to God in their lives, but the palm bears its rich fruit ministering to both God and man. The Christian has been chosen by Christ to bear fruit (John 15:16), and the Spirit of God indwells him for that very purpose (Gal. 5:22-26). Praise, which has a large place in this Psalm, is, “The fruit of our lips giving thanks in His Name” (Heb. 13:14). We read in the first Psalm of the Christian in his likeness to Christ, “He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of waters, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” The believer’s prosperity and fruitfulness depend upon his drawing refreshment from the “Wells of Salvation.”

The Cedar Tree:

The righteous are also likened to the lofty cedar growing on the mountains of Lebanon. Let us consider the illustrative suggestion of the Christian in this picture.

His Positional Height: “He shall dwell on high” (Isa. 33:16). They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever” (Psa. 125:1). By the grace of God, we have been lifted up and set among princes even with the princes of His people.

His Perennial Freshness: The cedar of Lebanon is an evergreen, its leaves remaining for two years. What a picture of the saint’s spiritual beauty manifested in joy and grace as he walks in uprightness before the Lord! The cedar is noted for its aromatic perfume, and so the believer should be as a sweet savour of Christ unto God. As he sits in worship at the Lord’s supper, the praise and the thanksgiving which ascend from his heart to God are as the fragrance of spikenard (S of S. 1:12). We read that when Jesus sat at the table in Bethany (John 12) the odour of the ointment with which Mary anointed His feet filled the house; in like manner, the expressions of gratitude to Christ for His love and grace in giving Himself for us ascend, like Noah’s sacrifice (Gen. 8:20-21) of which we read, “The Lord smelled a sweet savour.” The sacrifice of giving to the Lord of our substance is also spoken of as “an odour of a sweet smell” (Phil. 4:18). The believer in his worship, service, and sacrifice, ever should be a sweet fragrance before the Lord.

The cedar is spoken of as if it were incorruptible, for it resists all insects that cause decay. The Christian, enjoying fellowship with Christ by the power of the Spirit, is able to resist the temptations to which if he yielded, would cause decline in his spiritual vitality.

The Site Intimated:

“Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.” Once we were in the wilderness of sin, far away from the courts of the Lord, but God by His saving power, through His Word and Holy Spirit, has planted us in His courts, so that now we are called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord for His own glory (Isa. 61:3).

The “courts of the Lord” suggest separation from the world. In order to be useful and fruitful in the Lord, the child of God must live in separation from every form of evil. Abraham was called from Ur of the Chaldees where idolatry was rife, to a life of separation, and the Lord blessed him so that his life was fragrant and fruitful. The command to His people today is, “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing” (2 Cor. 6:17-18).

His courts as well afford protection, for His presence is there. Throughout the Psalms the presence of the Lord resulted in salvation from the enemies around. Moreover, “In His presence is fulness of joy” (Psa. 16:11). Happy is that people, whose God is the Lord” (Psa. 144:15).

The Statement Uttered

“Those that be planted… shall flourish in the courts of our God.” The expression reads in the margin, “They shall be fat or full of sap.” This would suggest spiritual health. Dwelling in habitual fellowship with God will result in full growth, in spiritual maturity. “They shall bring forth fruit in old age (V. 14). This promise assures us that there need be no diminishing of fruitfulness in the Christian life because of advancing years; accordingly, it hints at the beauty of maturity in

Christian experience. There is nothing lovelier than elderly saints of God, growing in heavenly mindedness, in conformity to the Divine image, and in grace, as they ripen for their eternal home.

The purpose for which we have been planted in the courts of the Lord is to enjoy the riches of Divine grace, and manifest the beauty of the life of Christ in our mortal bodies. This will be well pleasing to the Lord, and God will be glorified thereby.

“God, Who touchest earth with beauty,

Make me lovely too;

Keep me ever by Thy Spirit,

Pure, and strong, and true.”

* * *

No Christian is safe when his soul is slothful, and his God is far from him. Every Christian is always safe as to the great matter of his standing in Christ, but he is not safe as regards his experience in holiness, and communion with Jesus in this life. Satan does not often attack a Christian who is living near God. It is when the Christian departs from his God, becomes spiritually starved, and endeavours to feed on vanities, that the devil discovers his vantage hour. Oh for grace to walk humbly with our God!

—C. H. Spurgeon

The Ascension of Christ (Aug 1956)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 2 No. 8, Aug 1956.

Thomas Wilkie

The ascension of our Risen Lord to the Father's presence is narrated by Luke in both the Gospel that bears his name, and in The Acts of the Apostles (Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-11). In all the Gospels, Christ is presented in the wonder of His incarnation, the holiness of His life, the suffering of His atoning death, and in the triumph of His resurrection. In the two passages referred to above, our Divine Redeemer, having completed the work of redemption, ascends to His heavenly throne.

The Mount of Olives, the chosen place for His departure, was fraught with many a tender and hallowed association. From its slopes the incense of His prayers had ascended to His Father, and upon its grass His tears had fallen as He thought of the impending doom of the city of Jerusalem. Bethany, the home of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, the home in which, with delight, our Saviour often visited, was near the place of His ascent. How befitting that He should choose, as the point of His departure, the place made sacred during His pilgrimage by His frequent visits!

As the Saviour walked up the mountain with the eleven disciples, He assured them of the coming of the Holy Spirit to empower them in their witnessing for Him during His absence. When the moment came in which He was to leave the world and the little group of His disciples, "He lifted up His hands and blessed them." He

parted from them in the act of pronouncing a benediction; thus giving an earnest of what He would continue to do for them as He assumed His High-priestly office. It was also an indication of the blessings He will bring when He returns to earth. The great fact of the ascension which most deeply impresses us, is that Christ ascended as a Man. The “same Jesus” Who had walked with them, talked with them, eaten with them, the “Man Christ Jesus,” ascended bodily into Heaven. He was “carried up into Heaven” (Luke 24:51), and “He went up” (Acts 1:9-10). We gather from this that He was passive as well as active in His departure. The Father took His Son to glory; the Son went to the Father, as He had so often asserted in His ministry, “I go to the Father.” This is beautifully expressed in the words of Charles Wesley:

“Hail the day that sees Him rise,

Glorious to His native skies!

Christ, awhile to mortals given,

Enters now the gates of Heaven.”

The effect of the ascension of Christ upon the disciples is expressed in the words of Luke 24:52, “They worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.” One would have thought that, being bereft of their Master, they would have returned with great sadness.

The ascension of Christ teaches:

God’s Satisfaction With His Sacrifice

The resurrection of Christ gives full proof that the penalty of guilt has been removed, and that the demands of a broken law have been met. The entrance of our

blessed Lord into glory as the representative of His people gives evidence that the way into the Kingdom of God is now open. His resurrection is the pledge of the believer's justification (Rom. 4:25) and the promise that, "Whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Rom. 8:30). The receiving up into glory (1 Tim. 3:16) from the Mount of Olives, is the crowning detail of a finished work.

The Descent Of The Holy Spirit

The chief reason the Lord Jesus gave for leaving His disciples was, "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you" (John 16:7). Again we read, "The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39). He would no longer be with them in human form, but through the Holy Spirit's presence He would be with them in just as real a sense as when He walked with them. The result of the Spirit's indwelling them would be that power would be imparted to them to witness for Him and to reproduce many of the great works which He had performed.

These early disciples waited in Jerusalem with eager expectation for "the promise of the Father," and their patient waiting was rewarded by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon them. They then went forth to preach Christ with boldness and assurance, manifesting the transforming power of the Spirit's indwelling.

The Proof Of His Lordship

Let us think of the heavenly welcome accorded Him as He rises in space, and passes through the "Everlasting doors." Hark! The voices of the angelic hosts cry, "Lift

up your heads, O ye gates: and be lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in" (Psalm 24). The question is asked, "Who is this King of Glory?" The answer is echoed by the heavenly chorus, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." "The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory." Thus we see the victorious Saviour, returning to Heaven, acclaimed by "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" in approbation of His great work. Hear them as they say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. 5:12). His ascension truly proclaims Him "Lord of all."

The Prediction Of His Return

Our blessed Lord had said, "A little while and ye shall not see Me: again a little while, and ye shall see Me." He also had said, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself (John 14:3). Listen to the last word of the heavenly messengers, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven," (Acts 1:11). His ascension is the pledge of His return, and who can tell how soon the "Everlasting doors" may open again, and the Lord come for His own. The hour of His return is drawing near, and, "To them that look for Him, shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28). As Israel waited anxiously to see their high priest come forth with uplifted hands, and to hear his benediction, "The Lord bless thee and keep thee" (Num. 6:24); even so, we wait to see our High Priest and King returning with hands uplifted in blessing. His presence at the right hand of

God makes us eternally safe (Rom. 8:34), and also makes us certain of a place with Him in His glory. He will come just as He went, personally and visibly. This glorious promise cheered the disciples and made it easier for them to return to Jerusalem where they continued with one accord in fellowship and in prayers. While we wait His return, may we likewise enjoy fellowship with His people and give ourselves continually to prayer. “Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching” (Luke 12:37).

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In John 9, the first object that the eyes of the blind man ever saw was the face of Jesus, but alas, he did not know Him: When we get to Heaven we shall both see and know.

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Self-denials and sacrifices made for the truth are not real losses.

Jesus Prays (Nov 1956)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 2 No. 11, Nov 1956.

“I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine.” — John 17:9

In John’s Gospel chapter 17, we have what is in a true sense the Lord’s prayer. We stand on holy ground as we listen while the Lord Jesus speaks to His Father. In this prayer our blessed Lord is having communion with His Father over truths relating to His own disciples.

The Master, in the upper room, has revealed to His disciples many wonderful things, and He is about to leave for the Garden of Gethsemane to be betrayed, arrested, and finally tried and crucified. Before He goes to the cross, we listen to the sublimest utterance ever spoken by His sacred lips. We are privileged to enter the Holiest of all, and to hear our Great High Priest making intercession for His own. His manner of addressing the Father provides us with an example of the reverence with which we should approach the Throne of Grace. Melancthon said of this passage, “There is no voice which has ever been heard, either in Heaven or earth, more exalted, more holy, more fruitful, more sublime, than this prayer offered up by the Son of God Himself.

The lustre of His Deity shines forth in all its brilliance in His reference to His pre-existence in unity with the Eternal God. However, we are not occupied in this message with the doctrine of the person of Christ; but, rather, with certain petitions offered by the Lord Jesus for His own which promise blessing during their pilgrimage below.

The Lord refers to His own in the descriptive clause which occurs several times in this prayer, “The men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world” (Vv. 2, 6, 9, 11, 12, 24). This includes His first disciples, whom He had called, and who had followed Him in the days of His humiliation, but according to verse 20 every Christian has a place in this prayer. Every believer, therefore, should be intensely interested in that for which our Lord prays. How blessed the thought that God loved the world and that He gave His Son for it. How comforting to know that in love to His Son, the Father has given us to Him to be His own peculiar possession! Some of the precious things He mentions relating to those whom the Father gave Him are:

SALVATION: Christ has given them life.

When the Lord Jesus says, “The hour is come” (V. 1), He refers to His approaching death by which the glory of the Father would be upheld. He had already glorified the Father in His perfect life, and now, in accomplishing the work for which He had been sent, through crucifixion and resurrection He would further glorify the Father.

On the basis of His atoning work, He has authority to give eternal life to those whom the Father has given Him. This life eternal is not only unending existence, but is a life of acquaintance with God in Christ. It is a spiritual life which includes an eternal relationship with the living God. It is the life of God Himself in the soul. It has its beginning on earth when we believe in Him, and it will blossom into its fulness when we are manifested in glory with Christ.

REVELATION: “I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world.”

I suggest the Lord is here referring to the Name "Father" which introduces His own into the new relationship into which the Lord Jesus by His finished work brings them. Think of the words spoken to Mary on that resurrection morning, "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God." He does not say, "Our Father," for this He could not say because God is His Father in a sense in which He never could be ours. Father! What a grand word! It is full of meaning. All the love and care of the Father's heart for His own is contained in the expression, "our Father." It is all of grace that we unworthy sinners, dwelling in a state of death, should be quickened into life with Christ, and be brought into this tender relationship revealed in the manifestation of the Name of God as Father.

PRESERVATION: "Holy Father keep through Thine own Name, those whom Thou hast given Me" (V. 11). Here we have the language of the Shepherd of the sheep. He is about to leave them, to die for them, so He commits them to the care and protection of His Father. He does not pray that they might be kept from pain, sorrow, and trial, but that they should be kept from the evil one.

He knows that the world will hate them, and persecute them even unto death. As sheep before a wolf, the devil will seek to devour them. He commits them to the protection of His Father, Who has ever been the refuge of His people. "The Name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." He says, "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy Name." He had safely kept them all (Judas was the exception, but he actually never was one of Christ's own). He prays that after His departure the Father

would keep them from the evil in the world, and from the evil one himself. To be kept in the knowledge of God is a great preservative. The assurance of our Great High Priest's intercession for us, will give us strength to face the storm and fight the battle through to success and victory.

SANCTIFICATION: "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth."

We have been looking at the negative side of His request, "Keep them from the evil," now we have the positive request for their sanctification. To sanctify means to make holy. Sanctification is one of the great truths of the Bible. It is both instantaneous and progressive. Whilst positionally, every believer is sanctified in Christ the moment he trusts the Saviour, the Lord here prays that they may be set apart for service. The Divine instrument by which this is effected in the experience of the believer is, "the truth." As we read and study the Word of God, the Holy Spirit will show us the Lord Jesus, and as we see Him in the mirror of the Scriptures, we will become like Him. He prays that Christian character may be manifest in His own.

Finally He prays for their: GLORIFICATION: This prayer reaches its climax when Jesus prays, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory."

Whatever dangers, difficulties and disappointments we may encounter during our pilgrimage here below, we are cheered by the thought that the glory shines before us. When Christ Who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory."

He expresses His longing desire to have us in the glory with Himself, where we shall see Him and be like Him as He is. “Just one glimpse of Him in glory will the toil of life repay.” These wonderful blessings are what Jesus has prayed the Father to give to all who trust and love Him.

“Raised unto glory then, at His return,

Joyous our song shall be, at His return;

Gathered around to Him,

All learn the Heavenly hymn,

Jesus our joyful theme, at His return.”

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The preacher has to learn that liberty is not power. The temptation is to rest satisfied in speaking with ease and freedom. Whenever this is the case it is Satan’s opportunity, and thus we ought to be on our guard.

At His Feet (Dec 1956)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 2 No. 12, Dec 1956.

Thomas Wilkie

This little phrase occurs some five times in the Gospel according to Luke. Around each mention there is clustered much helpful and practical truth.

According to chapter 7:37-50, the Lord is reclining at meat in a Pharisee's house. Presently there enters a woman, "Burdened with sin and full of fear, yet drawn by love to venture near." She stands at His feet behind Him weeping, and her tears, as they rain down on the feet of Him "Whose goings forth have been of old," they tell so clearly that her heart is truly repentant. As the word of pardon falls from the lips of the One Who has power on earth to forgive sins, there is borne into the contrite heart of this erstwhile sinner a peace that the friends of this world could not know.

We, too, can well remember the time when our need introduced us to the Saviour, and when at His feet "The burden of our sins rolled away."

In the case of some many years have passed since that memorable day, yet we all look back with increasing gratitude to the moment when we were freely and fully forgiven. No matter how we may advance in spiritual knowledge, we must never allow ourselves to forget the blessed and basic fact that He, Who has atoned for our sins, also has acquitted us from the guilt of them, and has ushered us into the peace that He alone can give.

May the wonder of His pardoning grace ever captivate our souls, so that spontaneous daily praise may ascend to Him, for He is the One to Whom we shall be eternally grateful.

The case of a man, out of whom the demons were departed, is recorded in chapter 8:35. He is seen sitting at the feet of Christ. His restless days of movements are over. He can now sit quietly and contentedly in the Saviour's presence appreciating the grace of Christ and looking into the face of this One Who so singularly has blessed him.

What a testimony to the emancipating power of the Lord this man was to those who came out to see what had happened.

All around we hear the surge of a restless world, but Christ has made it blessedly possible for us to sit in restful contemplation in His presence, for we too, like David (2 Sam. 7:18), can go in and "sit before the Lord."

This privilege carries with it untold blessing. The second letter to the Corinthians shows that the Spirit gives liberty of access into the very presence of Christ (3:17-18), where we may gaze upon the unveiled glory in His face. As we thus look upon Him, we become correspondingly like Him through the transforming power of the Lord the Spirit.

Our lamented unlikeness to Him is patent testimony to the fact that we are neglecting this blood-bought privilege of sitting in His presence and taking on His moral likeness.

A man low at the Saviour's feet in great distress is seen in chapter 8:41-42. He is driven there by an acute sense

of need, and by the consciousness that the One, before Whom he presents his earnest petition, is well able to master the situation. His heart is burdened, his prayer is brief, and his request is pointed. He implores the Lord to help.

Life for us, too, has its seasons when “Trouble like a gloomy cloud gathers thick and thunders loud.” At such times we are forced into His presence to experience His sympathy and power. He is always accessible to us, and as we bow in humility at His feet, we are assured that “He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask” or think.” Most of us have pressing needs or perplexing problems which He alone can meet and solve, and He often allows us to be brought into circumstances in which we are made to feel our own absolute helplessness and our complete dependence upon Himself.

The Epistle to the Hebrews reminds us of His threefold ability to succour, to sympathize, and to save. This should encourage us to bring everything to Him in prayer, for it is in the same Epistle that we are exhorted, on at least seven different occasions, “to draw near.”

A woman is depicted in the attitude of a disciple sitting at the Lord’s feet in chapter 10:37-44. Finally, let us consider her case. Mundane things clamoured for recognition, but she made choice of what, to her, was a needful part. Time thus spent was most profitable, for it made her intelligent concerning the Lord’s mission on earth, as John’s Gospel chapter 12 discloses.

In the person of the Holy Spirit we have the greatest of teachers. It is both His delight and prerogative to take of the things which belong to Christ and to show them unto

us. To be independent of human resources and entirely cast upon the Lord for instruction is to put ourselves in the condition of being taught knowledge, understanding, and doctrine (Isa. 28:9). Wherever there is a teachable spirit and a sincere desire to grasp the spiritual significance of Divine truth, “Line upon line, and precept upon precept,” gradually we shall come to know in measure the mind of God as revealed in His Word. We can never afford to neglect this inestimable privilege of sitting at His feet, if we are to apprehend in any measure the will of the Lord.

The cleansed Samaritan leper in chapter 17:15-18 is on his face at the feet of Christ in heartfelt gratitude. His action distinguishes him from the other nine, and from many blessed of the Lord, who are glad enough to accept the blessing, but not grateful enough to thank the Giver.

The unclean condition, which necessitated his taking the “far off” place (v. 12), was now happily changed and with confidence born of an acute sense of healing, he drew near to pour out at his gracious Benefactor’s feet his unstinted thanks. If in Luke 10 we have the good Samaritan, then here we are introduced to the grateful Samaritan.

This story seems to emphasize that it was the man with less knowledge of God than the other cleansed lepers (presumably Jews) who turned back to express his gratitude.

From this we may deduce that it is not always the most spiritually enlightened that feel and express the greatest appreciation. The Lord is still asking, “Where are the nine?” We who claim, as members of the assemblies of

God’s people, to know the mind of the Lord should be warned by this incident, lest the spirit of un-thankfulness, a trait of the world in the last days (2 Tim. 3:2), descend upon us. How the Lord appreciates the praise of a grateful heart! If we feel the Lord has been good, then “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so” (Psa. 107:2). Up yonder we shall express our gratitude in adoring worship for “We shall fall at His feet and the story repeat, and the Lover of sinners adore.” Meanwhile may we feel so overwhelmed with a sense of our deep indebtedness that we shall often be found at His feet giving glory to God in rendering to Him our thanks.

The Sympathizing Saviour (Apr 1957)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 3 No. 4, Apr 1957.

Thomas Wilkie

Although each place associated with our blessed Saviour during His sojourn among men possesses interest for us; there is one that especially does, the resort in which, during His earthly pilgrimage, Jesus so often found rest and refreshment, the home of Martha and Mary at Bethany. The family that once dwelt there has long since moved to the eternal home, but that sacred spot is still fragrant with the memory of the Lord's presence. In that home at Bethany Jesus found a safe retreat from the misunderstanding, malice, and hatred encountered on the way to the cross; there He enjoyed the love of His true friends, the love that helped to soften the harshness of His last days. His love for the humble household and the sympathy He extended to them in their hour of sorrow frequently have served to cheer and encourage many a faltering pilgrim on his way to the Heavenly mansions.

In the scene recorded in this passage, the tender sympathy of the Son of God is manifest. He enters the home in the attitude of a real perfect human friend; nevertheless, He reveals Himself in all that is implied in His glorious title "Emmanuel," which means, "God with us," for He displayed His essential Deity by His power over death.

"As Man He wept in heart-felt grief

Beside a loved one's grave;

As God He burst the bands of death,

Almighty still to save."

The Lord grant that all may glean from the details of this lovely incident, the Christian solace and comfort which His own people, at one time or another, need. These have been, in times past, as the balm of Gilead to many bleeding and broken hearts. Our prayer is that the sympathy of the Lord Jesus, so beautifully expressed at the home in Bethany, may be the portion of those who are passing through some furnace of affliction. The three valuable lessons that are to be learned from this chapter may be thus stated:

The Love Of The Lord Jesus

The tenderest keynote in the entire chapter is found in verse 5, "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." His love beams forth from the expressions: "Behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick," and "Behold how He loved him!" This love was mutual for they in turn loved Him. Their love was expressed in the willing service and hospitality that they extended to Christ, although the work and the attitude of each were diverse in character. Martha was to Christ, as to others, very practical in her ministry of comfort. Mary understood the Master because of her contemplative spiritual insight. Modest and retiring Lazarus always made the Lord welcome. We do not wonder, therefore, that Jesus loved them. He loves all of His own in spite of their diversity of individualism; therefore, we can rejoice in His infinite love for us.

The happiness of the home at Bethany was darkened by sickness and death; the joyous dwelling was turned into

a house of mourning. Frequently, the brightest sunshine precedes the darkest cloud, but such shadows only serve to prove the sun is shining. Let us remember that, when the Lord allows the shadows of pain and suffering to cross our path, His love is unchangeably the same, for, “Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth” (Heb. 12:6). The friends at Bethany might have doubted His love for them when, after hearing of the sickness of their brother, “He abode two days still in the same place where He was.” It was not that He did not love them, but that His first concern was for the glory of God.

Occasionally, the Lord lingers in sending relief to us in distress in order that we may learn to obey His words, “Cast thy burden upon the Lord.” Martha and Mary later understood when they saw the glory of God in Christ as “The Resurrection and the Life,” that “Love’s delays are not denials.” Divine love permits sorrow to come into our lives that we might cleave unto the One Who is a true friend in every time of need. Let us remember that our first concern in every experience should ever be the glory of the Lord.

The Sympathy Of The Lord Jesus

Martha and Mary had the heart-breaking experience of seeing their brother gradually grow worse. Still Jesus lingered, and eventually Lazarus died. Moreover, not until after he had been buried four days did the Lord Jesus enter the village. When He did Martha went to meet Him and blurted out, “Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” Quickly, He assured her that Lazarus would rise again, and followed her to the sepulchre to weep there; for we read that along with the sisters, “Jesus wept.” How profound this statement in

the Word of God! Let us turn aside and see this great sight, the Creator of the world, the Mighty God, the Man Christ Jesus, expressing in tears His tender sympathy and deep grief with those that wept. He knew that He would soon change their sorrow to joy, He knew that He would soon wipe away their tears; nevertheless, He wept in sympathy with them. Moreover, the Lord knew that the scene in which He then was taking such an active part was but an example of many others at which, although invisible, He would be present. His tears at the grave of Lazarus are a proof of His loving fellowship with His own in bereavement and distress. They have Him ever as an High Priest Who is touched with the feeling of their infirmities (Heb. 4:15). When God's beloved people are in sorrow, to recall that "Jesus wept" either dries away their tears or gives them warrant to flow. The Master knew all about the trouble in the household at Bethany and how they longed for Him to come. Certainly in this they were not disappointed. We need have no fear, for the One Who loved us unto death still loves us, and will not forget us in our trials.

"In every pang that rends the heart

The Man of Sorrows has a part;

He sympathizes in our grief,

And to the sufferer sends relief."

When passing through sorrow, dear believer, in those tears of the Saviour take comfort. He knows every anxious moment during your loved one's sickness, the nights of weary watching, the closing scene, and the sadness of the parting. He, Who comforted the aching hearts of the sisters in Bethany, is "the same yesterday,

and today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8), and, as the God of all comfort, comforts in every tribulation (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

When our blessed Lord witnessed the desolation and sorrow caused by death; the havoc wrought by sin, and its attending evils; in spite of the fact He was soon to manifest His glory in the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead, His soul was deeply stirred, and "He groaned in spirit." This story is recorded to prove the power of Jesus over the last enemy, death. The careful reading of such a moving incident carries with it the conviction that Jesus is the Son of God.

As the words of the Lord, "Lazarus come forth," pealed through the vault of death, the stilled heart of Lazarus began to beat, and the silent form moved. Lazarus lived!

"Death is vanquished! tell it with joy, ye faithful,

Where is now thy victory, boasting grave?

Jesus lives! no longer thy portals are cheerless;

Jesus lives! the mighty and strong to save!"

Christ, for His own, robs death of its sting, and the grave of its victory. Should we die before His return, we shall live again; should we remain until that event, we shall be changed in a moment, and transformed into His likeness. Dr. Andrew Bonar once quaintly said of this incident, "So mighty was the voice of the Resurrection and the Life that when He cried, "Come forth," had He not specified Lazarus by name, all the dead in and about Jerusalem, yea in the whole world, would have sprung from their graves. When we are called upon to stand by the graves of our loved ones, our sorrow may be assuaged by the remembrance that He Who is the Resurrection and the Life has given us the hope that our

loved ones in Christ shall come forth from the grave to meet their Lord in the air. Even now let us remember that Christ delivers from the sting of death by His blood (1 Cor. 15:55); the fear of death by His grace (Heb. 2:14); the hopelessness of death by His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20); and the loneliness of death by His presence (Psa. 23:4). “Thanks be to God, Who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Toiling in Rowing (July 1957)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 3 No. 7, July 1957.

Thomas Wilkie

Scripture reading Mark 6: 45-51

Among the valuable lessons that we may learn from the many incidents in the life of our Lord recorded by the writers of the four Gospels, none are more valuable than those we gather from “The Night of Tempest” on the sea of Galilee. The Lord Jesus had fed the five thousand with the loaves and the fishes, typical of Himself as the Bread of God come down from heaven to give life unto the world. When the multitude had gone, “straightway He constrained His disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida.” Perhaps, the disciples faced that journey in separation from their Lord with reluctance, but His command and will were paramount, so in obedience, they embarked upon their journey. No harm will befall the believer where ever he may go if he obeys the command of His Master.

After the disciples had gone, then the Lord departed into a mountain to pray, for as the shadows of the night were falling, our blessed Lord longed for fellowship with His Father. There, in the quietness and solitude of some secluded spot among the hills, He enjoyed a sweet and close communion which gave strength and comfort to His heart.

The disciples, in obedience to their Master, embarked upon what proved to be a dangerous journey, for He had sent them into a storm. The expression “toiling in rowing” literally may be rendered “tormented in

rowing.” The severity of the storm might have tempted them to turn back, but he had told them to go to the other side. The pathway of obedience is not without dangers; nevertheless, the assurance that we have One interceding for us while we brave the contrary winds on the sea of life, imparts a courage and a strength which are not natural. In this narrative we have a lovely picture of Christ’s ascension to heaven and of His High-priestly intercession on behalf of His own during the difficulties and the trials of their way.

Christ is Praying for Us

It was twilight (six o’clock) when the disciples left the shore, but owing to a strong headwind, they had toiled at the oars for nine hours, and the fourth watch of the night (three o’clock) found them endangered by a roaring sea. In a former experience in the ship the Master had fallen asleep during a storm, and they had awakened Him, saying, “Master, carest Thou not that we perish?” On that occasion He had changed the storm into a great calm, for He was near to them, but now He seems so far away. Although absent from them and away in the mountains He, nevertheless, is deeply interested in them, and undoubtedly pours out His heart in intercession for them.

Beloved saints of God, when the winds of temptation and persecution blow against you, and the waves of affliction lash your little barque, take courage from the fact that there is a real Man in the glory Who braved the storms of life and death before you, and that He is there praying for you.

Knowing the biting winds of temptation soon to assail Peter, Jesus said to him, “I have prayed for thee that thy

faith fail not." The path of faith is often beset with perils, but Christ, through His ceaseless intercession, preserves us in the temptations of life. He says to all, "Cheer up, I am here; Have faith, not fear!"

"When stormy waves our barque assail,

And dangers cross life's sea,

May this assuring thought prevail,

My Lord, He prays for me."

He knows when the winds are contrary, and He surely will come to our aid in every time of need.

Christ's Power Avails For Us

The adequacy of divine power is evident in the experience of Peter here. We admit that he uses a word that implies a secret doubt, "If it be Thou," and we also admit that very frequently an ugly doubt intrudes into our seasons of trials. How often we question God's voice, God's ways, God's will, and God's loving wisdom! His word, "Be still and know that I am God" (Psa. 46:10) leaves no room for any "ifs" or "whys" in His gracious dealings with us. Faith can do the will of God; therefore, Peter, in simple confidence upon the permission of the Lord, did the impossible. He walked upon the water.

It became necessary that the Lord teach Peter that faith is not merely an initial act, but that faith must be maintained (v. 31). As long as his eyes were on Christ he made steady progress, but when he saw the waves, he began to sink; his faith gave place to fear. When we turn our eyes away from the Saviour, and fix them on the troubles and dangers around, we are apt to doubt His ability and distrust His faithfulness, and it is then we

begin to sink. In times of trouble and fear, it is Christ Himself who is the source of relief to the despairing soul. We may begin to sink, but He will never let us drown. Peter's prayer, "Lord save me, I perish," brought immediate deliverance. Remember, dear saint of God, although the storm in your life seems to have hidden his face. He is as near to you as He was to Peter. Send up the cry to the Throne of Grace, "Lord same me," and the power of Christ will bring deliverance to you. Trust in His unfailing promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5).

Christ's Coming For Us

This scene in the life of our Lord is typical of the night of His absence, in which the Church is left to battle her way amid the storms of persecution, the night during which the risen Lord continues to watch her struggle and to intercede for her. Christ appeared to the anxious disciples at the fourth watch of the night, at the hour just preceding the dawn, and promptly He hushed the storm and piloted them safely to shore. We are in the darkest hour of the world's midnight, the hour preceding His glorious appearing. Are you ever tempted to say, "Where is the promise of His coming?" Fear not! "In the fourth watch of the night," when the darkness is thickest and the billows highest, "He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. Before He comes in judgment, He will take his storm-tossed Church to be forever with Himself. Then that prophetic word will be brought to pass, "He maketh the storm a calm … so He bringeth them unto their desired haven" (Psa. 107:29). Then, as never before, we will praise the Lord for His goodness, and His wonderful works to the children of

men. For His beloved people, beset around by stormy waves and billows of afflictions,

“O ‘twill be a glorious morrow

To a dark and stormy day!

When we smile upon our sorrow,

And the storms are passed away.”

* * *

Trouble and perplexity drove me to prayer, and prayer drove trouble and perplexity away.

The Parable of the Seed (Sept 1957)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 3 No. 9, Sept 1957.

Thomas Wilkie

This simple parable of planting, growing, and harvesting teaches us the certainty of success in the sowing of the seed of the gospel. The parable that the Lord had spoken immediately before this one might have discouraged the disciples because it had intimated that only one fourth of the seed sown brought forth fruit. Possible disappointment and failure are suggested by that parable of the sower. When the evangelist thinks of the “wayside hearer,” “the stony ground hearer,” and “the thorny ground hearer,” he might be tempted to say, “Well, what is the use of carrying on when so much of the seed seems to be wasted?” This beautiful parable is the complement of the former one, and is intended to encourage the sower, giving assurance of success.

This heavenly story spoken by the Lord of the Harvest assures of the sure though secret growth of the seed and of the certainty of a harvest. Some of the salient points to be noticed in this parable are:

The Quality of the Seed

The prudent farmer selects the best graded seed to cast into the earth. That which God has given us to sow is called “good seed” (Matt. 13:24), and “incorruptible seed” (1 Pet. 1:23). This seed is the Word of God; therefore, we do well to heed the instruction of Paul to Timothy, “Preach the Word” (2 Tim. 4:2). Illustrations have their place for they often illuminate the truth, but

let God's Word have pre-eminence in all our preaching. The gospel seed contains the germ of life within itself; consequently, we ought to pack much of the Word of God into our messages.

J. B. Gough was an old man at twenty-five. Nobody seeing him that night would have suspected that he had seen so few winters, and nobody would have thought that forty-four summers filled with sunshine and song would have lain between him and his grave.

He is sitting at a bare table in an empty cheerless room. He has folded his thin arms across the table, and his haggard face rests upon them. Sitting in that squalid room he suddenly finds himself possessed of incalculable riches.

He has been thinking of his mother in that Kentish home where he spent his boyhood. It seems as if the very light she radiated at the time of her passing has spanned the chasm of those seven dreadful years and has struck open his heart. Passages of Scripture that she had taught him, that had been buried in his memory, have come to him as if again they were being whispered into his ear by her loving lips, "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." This is the very thing that he needed. He wanted to be saved. If that be true, thought the disconsolate figure, then Christ is the Saviour for me. Eventually he rises; draws his sleeve across his eyes; pulls himself together, and clutching at that text as a drowning man clutches his rescuer's hand, walks out of that room in the power of a new and endless life. God's Word will always operate and prosper in the accomplishment of the divine purpose (Isa. 55:10-11).

The Sower's Limitations

Perhaps the disciples watched a man. He cast the seed into the ground, he slept, he arose the following day and went about his daily tasks. This he now does for several days before he sees the seed grow up. He does not know how it germinates, but he knows that it does, and that it grows. Let us learn from this that, having sown the seed earnestly, faithfully, and in fellowship with God, we can do no more, and that we must leave the results with Him. God never abandons the field; He watches over His Word to perform it. There is the sowing time and the reaping time, and between these two periods there is the waiting time. The growth is sure for God giveth the increase (1 Cor. 3:6). Let us wait, watch, and pray expecting results.

The Miracle of Growth

The growth is secret: After the sower has cast the seed into the ground, he sleeps (not the sleep of indolence and carelessness but of confidence), and as he sleeps the forces of nature impel the seed to fruition. In the quiet watches of the night as well as under the sun's rays the growth goes on. It is thus with the gospel seed you are sowing; unseen by you the power of God in the spiritual realm operates (John 3:8), and what a joy and delight to see the first signs of divine life!

The growth is orderly: "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear" (28). This does not teach gradual conversion, but, rather, the progress of divine life in the soul of the one who has professed faith in Christ. This is beautifully exemplified in the life of young Timothy, who from a child had known the Holy Scriptures which were able to make him wise unto

salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:15). The blade represents his early conversion to God; the ear, his growth in grace; the full corn in the ear, the full maturity of his Christian life for Paul speaks of him as “A man of God.”

The Apostle John in his First Epistle also gives us these three stages in the development of the seed, “I write unto you little children because your sins are forgiven for His Name’s sake,” the blade; “I write unto you young men because ye are strong,” the ear; and, “I write unto you fathers because ye have known Him that is from the beginning,” the full corn in the ear (1 John 2:12-14).

The Certainty of Harvest

The certainty of reaping ought to encourage us to continue sowing the incorruptible seed. What joy it will be to meet souls in the glory who shall be our “crown of rejoicing” in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 2:19)! Even now the Lord of the Harvest cheers us in our service for Him with definite conversions, but the full results will be known only when the harvest is safely garnered at the end of the age. What an honour to share in the joy of winning souls for the Best of Masters!

“Sowing in the sunshine, sowing in the shadow,

Fearing neither clouds nor winter’s chilly breeze;

By and by the harvest, and the labour ended;

We shall come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves.”

Beloved, men do not know what God is like, but we ought to give them some idea by our lives. We should allow the Holy Spirit so to develop the fruit of the Spirit

within us, that we may, day by day, wherever we are, show them something of the beauty of God.

A missionary in Jamaica asked a little black boy, ‘Who are the meek?’ He answered, ‘Those who give soft answers to rough questions.’

The Transformed Life (Jan 1958)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 4 No. 1, Jan 1958.

The Scripture Reading — Romans Chapter 12.

The Apostle Paul by the Spirit of God presents in the Epistle to the Romans the doctrine of the gospel of the grace of God. He proves that all who believe the gospel message are justified by the blood of Christ (5:9), that they are united to Christ (7:4), and that they should bring forth fruit unto God. He teaches that they are to enjoy freedom in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit Who delivers from the dominion of sin (chap. 8).

The word “therefore” with which our chapter begins refers to the preceding parts of the Epistle, and the blessings which are therein revealed. Paul’s reference to those blessings as “the mercies of God,” suggests that they form the ground work of a transformed life.

Having set forth in simple fashion the great doctrines of the Christian faith, he proceeds to give a list of practical exhortations which are the evidence of true Christian living. The basic teaching of the Scriptures is that duty follows the reception of doctrine. The doctrines of the gospel are not cold, barren speculations, but truths which affect the life of the believer. We do well, therefore, to note the tone of the writer as he introduces the truth about the transformed life. He uses a favorite clause of his, “I beseech you.” He does not exercise dominion over their faith, but he pleads with them, “Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.”

The Foundation Of The Transformed Life

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God.” As has already been suggested “the mercies of God” refer to the blessings of the The Foundation of the Transformed gospel. Paul by the spirit has proved that all are under sin, and that all are guilty before God (chap. 3), and are, therefore, condemned already. God in his compassion sent forth His Son to die for the guilty, and on the ground of His atoning death they are justified by His grace. Such a blessing is good reason surely why they should yield their bodies as a living sacrifice to Him.

This exhortation corresponds with a similar one in chapter 6:13, “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”

When the body of the believer is under the control of the Holy Spirit, and is yielded to Him as the vehicle for the manifestation of the transformed life, this act of yielding is described as spiritual worship.

Notice the negative side of this matter, “Be ye not conformed to this world” (v. 2). See also the passages of Gal. 1:4; 6:14. Col. 2:20. The expression “this world” pictures that form of life that excludes God, the spirit of which is absolute selfishness in the sphere over which Satan holds sway. The Christian must ever be separated from the world. The positive side is, “Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (V. 2). This transformation is effected, not from without, but from within, by the replenishing of the spiritual mind.

Meditation upon the Word of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit will surely produce this desirable change. What the mind feeds upon affects the walk, “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7).

The Effect Of The Transformed Life

“That ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (V. 2). By avoiding conformity to the world, and by the renewing of our mind, we are transformed into His image. By doing the will of God, we thus fulfil His purposes in our lives. His will is sometimes perplexing and may even be painful, but it always is perfect. His will is best whatever it may be! We read that God is not willing that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9), and that He will have all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4); we conclude, therefore, that His will embraces the justification of all. Moreover, we read, “This is the will of God even your sanctification” (1 Thess. 4:3). His will must be then the sanctification of His own. We know that His will specifies also the glorification of all His people for we read, “And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one.” (John 17:22).

General Gordon said, “I learned that to be like Christ, we must not only have our wills subordinated to His, but that we must delight to have it so.”

“Send what Thou wilt in future days

As tokens of Thy love;

Fearless amid the gloom I gaze

As seeing Thee above;

For, Oh, Thy will must ever be

The sweetest thing on earth to me."

The Marks Of The Transformed Life

The evidence of the transformed life is manifest, first, in the believer's attitude toward self. There is a complete absence of conceit, and instead a marked humility. The Christian is exhorted "not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly." The habit of over-estimating the ability and the importance of self grows out of failing to think soberly; whereas, he who think of himself as he ought is modest and prudent. It has been said, "Be natural and simple, be what you are and where you are, spiritual."

Another distinct mark of the transformed life is seen in our attitude to fellow-believers. It will help to keep us humble when we remember that the full revelation of God is not given to any one member of the body of Christ. We are fellow-members of Christ, therefore we should have respect to God's grace in others. We are only part of a whole. Let us recognize the gifts possessed by each as they are enumerated in this chapter, namely; the gift of prophecy (V. 6), of ministry (V. 7), of teaching (V. 7), of exhortation (V. 8), of giving (V. 8), of ruling (V. 8), and of shewing mercy (V. 8). Grace is needed for the exercise of these gifts, and grace is needed in order that we may rejoice in their benefits.

We notice various other marks of the transformed life in a very brief manner. Love will be genuine and without hypocrisy (V. 9). There will be an abstaining from evil (V. 9), and a readiness to esteem others better than ourselves (V. 10). Kindness and courtesy will be part of our behaviour toward others, and there will be fervency in service (V. 11). Furthermore, hopefulness, patience,

and prayerfulness will also characterize the yielded life. A care for others will be exercised, and a sincerity that is glad to see them will be obvious as will be a tenderness to those in grief. (Vv. 12-13). Above all, there will be no retaliation, but rather a seeking to conquer by love (Vv. 14, 19-21). Notice the true self-effacement that is a distinct mark of the transformed life. What grace is needed to be a nobody, and to live in peace with all men! The believer who is living peaceably with others, and who refuses to touch the bone of contention at home or in the assembly, will be easy to love.

This chapter closes with the distinctive marks of Christ-likeness, the marks of Him Who when He was reviled, reviled not again. The life that is transformed by the renewing of the spiritual mind will do all possible for even enemies, and will melt all opposition with the warmth of heavenly love. Surely, this is what Christ personally taught His disciples, “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” (Matt. 5:44).

May we have grace to measure ourselves by the standards of this chapter, and wherein we have failed, confess it, and God will give us the grace to yield ourselves afresh to Him.

Christ's Resurrection Ministry (Apr 1958)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 4 No. 4, Apr 1958.

Thomas Wilkie

This terse statement gives us the inspired record of the greatest proof of the resurrection, the proof of the Lord’s showing Himself to His disciples in their own actual experiences. The remembrances of those visible appearances of the Master were never forgotten by those who saw Him. Those early personal contacts with Him formed, to the end of their days, the unshakable foundation of the Apostles’ preaching and conduct.

The passing of the years has not minimized the importance of the power of those manifestations of the risen Christ, for they inspired in the hearts of those disciples true love, trust, and devotion. Our blessed Lord, after finishing the work of redemption, remained for forty days with His own in order to comfort, strengthen, and assure them. His ministry to them as He appeared in person is suggestive of the ministry that He carries on today through His presence within His people.

The first appearance of the Lord after His resurrection, which was to Mary Magdalene, intimates

His Ministry Of Sympathy - (John 20:1-18).

Through the Lord Jesus, Mary had experienced a great deliverance; consequently, she loved Him, and in her devotion lingered at His tomb long after others had returned to their own homes. Nothing would please her

except a sight of her Lord. Her yearning heart was satisfied only when, although blinded by tears, she saw the Christ Himself. “Mary,” her name spoken by the Lord changed her deep sorrow into exquisite joy, He, the Good Shepherd thus called one of His sheep by name. In reply Mary said unto Him “Rabboni,” which really means, “My great Master,” and promptly yielded herself to the authority and supremacy of her risen Lord.

May His sorrowing saints in this late hour of the Church’s history remember that this same Jesus, Who dried Mary’s tears, lives to sympathize with them. As our Great High Priest, He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and able to succour all who are tempted.

His Ministry Of Courage - (John 20:19-23).

Christ appeared to the ten disciples shut in for fear, and He showed them His hands and side. This sight of their triumphant Lord changed these cringing men into joyful and courageous witnesses of His resurrection. In like manner, today, our blessed Lord inspires His trembling saints with valour in order that they might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of their lives (Luke 1:74-75). The disciples began that evening in sadness, but they ended it with gladness. The secret of this change lay in the fact that they had seen the Lord, and they had heard His voice saying, “Peace be unto you.” He had shown them His hands and His feet, and had delighted their hearts. Cheer up, discouraged saint! The risen Lord Jesus even now encourages each one by revealing Himself to them through His blessed Word.

His Ministry Of Assurance - (John 20:24-29).

Thomas, through being absent from the group on the first Lord's day after the resurrection, missed the blessing of the presence of Christ. Moreover, during the week that followed he vowed that he would not believe what the others told him unless he saw the print of the nails in the hands of the Saviour. The Great Shepherd of the sheep, in His condescending love and infinite care, appeared especially for the benefit of this wayward one and showed to him the tangible proofs of His resurrection and life. All doubts of Thomas were changed into faith, and with humility in worship he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" and in this, he gave the greatest testimony to Christ that man can give. We do not need to see in order to believe; notwithstanding, it is good of the Lord to give this proof to Thomas, a proof that helps us today to overcome our doubts. These appearances of the risen Lord to the disciples were striking proofs of His resurrection and life. Furthermore, they were recorded for us, for it is written, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29). "Whom having not seen, ye love; in Whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8).

His Ministry Of Recovery

(John 21:15-17). The living Saviour forgives the utter collapse and failure of faith. Peter probably would have given all that he owned to recall his words of denial. His Lord, before He went out to die, turned and looked upon him, and that was a ray of comfort in his troubled mind. Now that the Master was dead and buried, this

greathearted fisherman longed for a sense of forgiveness.

The angel in the garden assured the trembling disciples that Christ was risen and commanded them saying, “Go your way, tell His disciples and Peter” (Mark 16:7). Later the eleven disciples declared, “The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon” (Luke 24:34). A veil apparently is drawn over this special meeting with Peter, but it must have been the greatest moment in the life of this disciple, a moment in which he saw his Lord, and heard His own words of pardon. From the depths of his sad failure, he, by love divine was restored to fellowship with his now risen Lord.

There have been many who have failed like Peter by denying the Lord, if not in word in behaviour. For all such there is this same forgiveness of the risen Lord. It is still true of our Great Shepherd, “He restoreth my soul.” Though we have failed Him, there is no need to give up in despair. Think of our gracious Lord using the man who with oaths and curses had thrice denied that he belonged to Jesus, to win so many souls to Christ on the day of Pentecost. In this passage in John 21, the Lord commissions Peter to feed and shepherd His sheep. Take courage, failing saint, from this appearing to Peter of our risen Lord. Remember He still lives to forgive our failures and to restore us again into happy fellowship and service with Himself.

His Ministry Of Refreshment - (John 20:1-24).

In another of the recorded appearances of the resurrected Lord, He banishes care and despair from His disappointed disciples. Practical and bustling Peter saw that inactivity was useless, so he said to the others,

“I go a fishing.” This proposal met with the instant approval of the others. Consequently, they go back to the fishing business from which the Lord had called them (Luke 5:10-11). Their venture was marked by disappointment and failure. Had they been successful that night, it would have been harder for them to renounce their boats and nets forever, but their non-success made them more willing to give it up and to turn their thoughts to catching men with the gospel net.

When morning dawned the disciples were tired, disappointed, and hungry. During this desperate state, the Lord appeared to them and dismissed their care and provided them with nourishing food, and restored them to fellowship with Himself. They went forth to fish in self-will; consequently they caught nothing. Any service originating in the energy of the flesh, even though securing the co-operation of others, is fruitless. Service directed by the risen Lord is always fruitful and happy. His presence immediately turns failure into success. When the Lord directed them to cast the net on the right side of the ship, they obeyed, and enclosed a great multitude of fishes. They then understood and said, “It is the Lord,” and reaching the shore they found that He had prepared a meal for them. How gracious! How considerate! The risen Lord showed His interest in their physical condition. He knew that they were cold and hungry, so He built a fire to warm them and prepared bread and fish to feed them. Our blessed Lord still refreshes His disheartened saints by the knowledge of His appearing for them in the presence of God. He knows all about their daily walk, and blesses their efforts in service with success in spite of much failure. The Christ Who made provision for the need of His tired

disciples on this occasion, looks after the needs of His servants today. His provision is sure and unfailing.

In His resurrection glory, He is not far from any one of us, but is deeply interested in all that we undertake for Him. He shows sympathy even in our weaknesses.

Paul’s Passion for Souls (Aug 1958)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 4 No. 8, Aug 1958.

Thomas Wilkie

Scripture reading, Romans 9:1-5.

Certain forceful expressions that we find in this Scripture reading, such as, “Great heaviness,” “Continual sorrow,” and “I could wish myself accursed,” reveal to us Paul’s ardent passion for the souls of his fellow countrymen. From the moment, when on the Damascus road, he received the heavenly vision through which Christ was revealed to him as Saviour of men, Paul became all things to all men, that he might by all means save some. He affirms the reality of his burning desire by asserting that the Holy Ghost bore witness to the fact that he was speaking the truth in Christ. As we examine these pregnant words, may the same passion for souls be created in us by the Holy Spirit.

Let us notice his summing up of all the blessings which belonged to Israel as a nation: (a) the divine adoption belonged to them as a nation; (b) the glory which was the mark of God’s presence with them shone upon their encampment; (c) the covenants of God were formed with them; (d) the law was given to them through Moses; (e) the services of God in the tabernacle and the temple with all their spiritual significance belonged to Israel; (f) the promises found in the Word from Genesis to Malachi, were made to them and to their fathers; (g) the fathers, that is, the progenitors of the Jewish race, distinguished their ancestry; (h) the climax of this

enumeration of blessings is reached as we read, “Of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came.”

The thought that many of Israel still rejected Christ, caused Paul to here express his deep sorrow and his genuine concern for them.

There are three other passages in the Word of God comparable to his remarkable utterance, “I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.” The first is Moses’ great prayer for the forgiveness of Israel when they had so shamefully bowed down to an idol made of gold (Ex. 32:29-33). They attributed delivering power to a god of their own making, instead of to the only true and living God.

When God proposed to blot them out as a nation, Moses pled with Him to blot out his name from the record of the living, and to spare sinful Israel.

The second is the request of Jonah to be thrown into the sea in order that those who sailed with him be saved (Jonah 1:12). The final word in this connection came from the lips of the Lord Jesus. As He was facing Calvary, He spoke of His death, saying, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit’’ (John 12:23-28). Praise God! He died as the corn of wheat, and the result is that a great harvest of souls will be garnered in glory.

In this statement, Paul expresses the yearning desire of a great winner of souls. As we bear in mind these salient words mentioned, let us ask ourselves, the meaning and the message of this passage. What does it teach us? May we suggest three things:

The Importance of a Deep Concern for the Salvation of Sinners.

The need of Israel as Paul sensed it is indicative of the need of all with whom we come in contact. Now compare the great concern of the Apostle with our own puny concern for the souls of the lost. We must feel humiliated by our lack of compassion for them, and we ought to pray that some of the passion of Paul might have a place in our hearts.

Paul had surely imbibed the spirit of His Lord Who, as He thought of their doom, wept over the sinners of Jerusalem. Think of Paul who was willing to go the length of being severed from Christ, if only he could ensure the salvation of his brethren according to the flesh. This intense desire has well been described by another as “a spark from the fire of Christ’s substitutionary love.” The gospel entrusted to us is for the whole world; may there be a revival of that yearning in our hearts for the perishing. May our prayer be:

“Lord give me a vision, a vision of Thee,

Lest people should perish who live around me.

A vision I pray Thee, a vision of love

To win those around me for heaven above.”

Loved Ones According to the Flesh Should be our First Concern

We owe to those relatives whom God has given us, our deepest concern for their salvation. The Lord’s words to Lot, when about to destroy Sodom, “Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of

this place" (Gen. 19:12), should deeply move out hearts to supreme effort and earnest prayer on their behalf.

Israel was instructed to let none go out of the blood-sheltered house until the morning (Ex. 12:22). This indicates God's gracious concern for the whole household. The promise of salvation to the jailor of Philippi was, "Thou and thy house." Our loved ones should be influenced by our genuine concern for their eternal welfare. We should so live Christ before them that they may be won for the Saviour. Being associated with those who belong to Christ, augments their responsibility. This also should deepen our concern, lest their accumulated blessings bring greater judment upon them. Let us commit our loved ones to Christ, and although our faith and patience often be tried, and the worst of things happen, yet God is able and ready to grant the salvation for which we pray. When we have committed dear ones to the Lord, and have received the assurance that He hears and answers our prayers, there is nothing to be afraid of but doubting God.

Let this Concern for the Salvation of Sinners Become the Vehement Desire of our Lives

This concern will deepen if we do something about it. Let us be doers of the Word, and not hearers only.

Here are some suggestions whereby this concern may be increased:

(a) By giving ourselves to constant prayer for loved ones and others who need the Saviour.

(b) By making personal appeals to those whom we meet about their souls' salvation.

(c) By the distribution of good sound gospel literature to those with whom we make contact, and also by enclosing good tracts in letters. Personally, I have received hundreds of requests for further gospel literature from those to whom tracts were first sent by mail.

The coming of the Lord draweth nigh; may the earnest consecration displayed in Paul's life inspire us to gather in the lost ones for whom our Lord did die.

When the Lord comes, how blessed it will be to meet those in His presence whom we have helped to win for Christ. Paul in writing to the Thessalonians, reminds them that they would be his joy and crown of rejoicing in the presence of the Lord at His coming.

"When I am dying, how glad I shall be

That the lamp of my life has been blazed out for Thee:

I shall not mind in whatever I gave,

Labour or money — one sinner to save,

I shall not mind that the way has been rough:

That Thy dear feet led the way was enough.

When I am dying how glad I shall be

That the lamp of my life has been blazed out for Thee."

Reverence (Nov 1958)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 4 No. 11, Nov 1958.

It is sincerely hoped that this timely exhortation by our esteemed brother may correct our individual behaviour, and may elevate our standards in regard to our congregational etiquette. Shame and confusion of face is ours because of the lack of sincere reverence among us as the professed people of God.

Scripture reading: Leviticus chapter 19.

The conception of reverence presented in the Holy Scriptures suggests the holding sacred or exalted that which one regards with deep affectionate respect. This is applied to God and also to His commandments.

The lack of reverence in these days is so noticeable that one feels the necessity of drawing the attention of God's people to what the Scriptures teach regarding this now rare grace.

When the saints are gathered for worship or prayer, or when in any act of service, it is well to remember that "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of His saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him" (Psa. 89:7).

Frequently, when we are gathered together, the quiet that should prevail is disturbed by undue noise that indicates a lack of respect for the presence of God. Surely, the promise of our blessed Lord to those who assemble in His precious name, "There am I in the midst of them," ought to control our deportment in all our gatherings. Any, who by force of circumstances come in

after others are in the attitude of worship, should take his place in the quietest possible manner. The moving of a chair or the stamping of the feet can easily mar the consciousness of the Lord's presence, thereby hindering the silent meditation of the saints who worship.

It will be profitable to take note of the references in the Word of God to the importance of the subject.

Reverence for the Name of God

"Holy and reverend is His name" (Psa. 11:9). The holiness of His name demands that our approach to Him should be characterized by the utmost reverence. The hymn of praise sung by Mary when she was about to become the mother of the Messiah expresses her holy regard for the name: "He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is His name" (Luke 1:49). The grandeur, majesty, and might of His works inspire us to worship as we breathe His name.

Our blessed Lord is our example in this, for in addressing the Father in His high-priestly prayer, His words express a profound regard for the holiness of God's name. He prayed, "Holy Father," and "O righteous Father" (John 17:11 and 25). Thus our blessed Lord recognized the Father's holiness and righteousness, both of which attributes reveal the true character of God. This true character should bow our hearts in reverence as we approach Him.

No mere human should add the word "reverend" as a title to his name. Such a use of the word occurs only once in the Bible where it is definitely applied to God, "Holy and reverend is His name" (Psa. 111:9). Let us speak the name of God with sincere reverence.

Reverence for the Sanctuary of God

“Ye shall reverence My sanctuary” (Lev. 19:30). In Exodus 25:8, to Moses the Lord communicates His gracious purpose of establishing a sanctuary, a holy dwelling place, in the midst of His redeemed people. In view of that, the Lord constantly reminds His people of His holiness in the recurring statement, “I the Lord your God am holy” (Lev. 19:2). These words were addressed to the entire assembly of Israel; moreover, in this same chapter, we have a summary of what was to mark those who reverenced God’s sanctuary. This chapter should be read carefully, and particular attention paid to the demands of the Lord upon practical holiness. He insists upon reverence for the sabbath day (V. 3), reverence for father and mother (V. 3), and reverence for God Himself (V. 4). This reverence was to be shown in their offerings to the Lord, and also in their attitude the one to the other.

The Christian assembly is a dwelling place for God. The Lord Jesus said, “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20). The sanctity enjoined upon His people Israel, similarly, should characterize every believer in the local assembly today. Stealing, defrauding, telling lies, and swearing falsely (Lev. 19:11-13) are all inconsistent with the holy character of a New Testament church. The things that were condemned in Israel are likewise rebuked in the churches of God (Eph. 4:28-31).

Reverence is actively manifest in the caring for the poor and the helpless (V. 14), in judging righteously (V. 15), and in the refraining from the sin of talebearing (V. 16).

Those who reverence His sanctuary will avoid bearing a grudge, shewing hatred, or in avenging wrong (Vv. 17-18).

That this sanctity which God imposed upon His ancient people is lacking among His people today should cause each to search his heart and to pray, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psa. 139:24). The positive aspect of reverence may be summed up in the one word love for God and His commandments (V. 37), and love for one another (V. 34).

Since the assembly is the dwelling place of God today, may we ever remember the words of the Psalmist, “Holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, forever” (Psa. 93:5). If this were done it surely would mould our behaviour toward the Lord, and fashion our movements in our service for Him. The fruit of such reverence would be love and kindness toward our brethren. Furthermore, our worship would be marked by an attitude similar to that of Moses when he discovered that Jehovah dwelt in the bush. God’s presence made that place holy ground to Moses, and he bowed before God in reverence (Ex. 3:5).

Reverence for the Aged

“Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the Lord” (Lev. 19:32). If the fear of God prevailed in our hearts, we would respect the aged in spite of the tendency in these last days to despise the presence and the advice of elderly persons. In the New Testament the exhoration is given, “Likewise, ye younger, submit

yourselves unto the elder" (1 Pet. 5:5). Submission is the fruit of humility. Let us remember that God promises grace to the humble. Respect for elders is the basis of the statement, "Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father" (1 Tim. 5:1).

"The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness" (Prov. 16:31). Godliness makes the gray hairs of age beautiful, so that old people if they would be respected, must preserve their integrity. Andrew Bonar aptly wrote: "When you meet the aged in public places, or they come where you are, show them reverence. Infirmity and age have a claim upon us. Age even apart from its qualities has in it solemnity. We are reminded of the shadow of Eternity, for one cometh who is almost in Eternity." No sight is so beautiful as the silver locks and the radiant features of godly and joyous old age.

Reverence for the Home

"Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father" (Lev. 19:3). Respect of parents on the part of their children is a divine principle that has a large place in the Holy Scriptures. The father and the mother in the home, living in the fear of God will exert a godly influence upon their little ones. The husband who loves his wife, and the wife who reverences her husband will command the respect of their children (Eph. 5:28-33). The children are exhorted to reverence those who have a care for them in childhood and youth. There is nothing more lovely than a Christian home in which the parents by their godly influence preserve the children from the corrupting influence of the world. Many a wayward boy and girl who have been brought through divine grace to the Lord

Jesus, eventually have learned to value the immense privilege of a Christian home where reverence prevails.

A quotation from the Epistle to the Hebrews provides a very fitting conclusion to this message: “Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:28-29). May all of our service in the assembly, in the home, and in the world be characterized by a reverential fear of God. It is when we have a real sense of the majesty and the glory of the Lord, and a real consciousness of our own unworthiness that our lives become marked by a spirit of reverence.

* * *

He never comes too late;

He knoweth what is best.

Vex not thyself in vain;

Until He cometh, rest!

Fear Not (Apr 1959)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 5 No. 4, Apr 1959.

Thomas Wilkie

This year opened with conditions in the world at such tension that one is convinced Christ has definitely described these very days in which we live; He predicted, “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” (Luke 21:25-26).

Today, nation competes with nation in accumulating weapons of ruthless destruction. Lawlessness abounds on every hand, and licentiousness prevails in much of the social life of the world. In Christendom, the fundamentals of the faith are denied, and even the testimony of the true Church is tarnished by strife and envy. Furthermore, bitterness mars the fellowship of the saints in places where they otherwise would witness to the oneness of the Body of Christ.

With gloomy forebodings possessing our hearts, how precious are the fear not’s of the Word of God. In tracing these lovely reassuring words repeatedly spoken by the Lord, it was found that they occurred eighty-four times in the Scriptures. May they, and the frequency with which they occur, convey comfort to the hearts of the readers even as they have to the heart of the writer.

The “Fear Not” of Salvation

When the shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night, saw the angel of the Lord,

attended by the glory of the Lord, they were sore afraid. What comfort the message of the angels brought to them! “Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10-11). These good tidings of the Saviour’s birth dispelled not only fear from their hearts, but they now bring peace to every heart that trusts in Him as Saviour. The advent of the Lord Who died to save us removes the fear of the penalty of sin for the believer in Christ; therefore, the fear of future judgment need not harass.

The “Fear Not” of God’s Presence

“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness” (Isa. 41:10). Here we have the assurance of God’s presence for each step of the journey homeward. May we be conscious of His companionship for it imparts strength to travel the weary pathway through this desert drear and wild.

We are further assured by this Scripture, of the upholding power of His right hand. The same Lord, many centuries later said to His disciples, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world (age)” (Matt. 28:20).

When Paul experienced contrary winds during his dangerous voyage over the Mediterranean to Rome, and when the hearts of those who sailed with him were overawed with fear, the God Whom he served stood by him, and said, “Fear not” (Acts 27:24). Those two words changed the whole circumstance, and enabled Paul to

speak with a certainty that stilled and calmed the terrified members of the crew as well as the passengers.

How like our experiences! When we, too, are beset by contrary winds of trial and persecution, His “fear not’s” calm our troubled hearts, and His presence provides us with perfect rest.

The “Fear Not” of Provision

“Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows” (Matt. 10:3).

There are two things which bring fear and anxiety to the people of the world: “What shall we eat?” and “Wherewithal shall we be clothed?” These need not worry the Christian, for his heavenly Father knows that he has need of those things (Matt. 6:32). Our blessed Lord constantly taught His hearers lessons from the world of nature. To impress them with the futility of anxiety over the food question, He said, “Behold the fowls of the air.” The very sparrows flitting around were free from the fear of starvation. This should prove to the disciples that the Lord is able to meet their need. He also said, “Ye are of more value than many sparrows.” Moreover, He told them that they did not need to have anxious thoughts as to what they should wear, for He, Who clothed the lilies with a beauty surpassing the glory of Solomon, would certainly clothe His own.

Whatever the need of the future may be, let us rest in His word,” Fear not.” He knows; He loves; He cares; therefore, He will provide for His own. Since we know that our heavenly Father is concerned about those who by faith are His children, let us trust Him for all that is to come.

Remember the supposed conversation between the robin and the sparrow:

“Said the robin to the sparrow,

I would really like to know,

Why those anxious human beings

Rush about and worry so?

“Said the sparrow to the robin,

Friend, I think that it must be

That they have no heavenly Father

Such as cares for you and me.”

The “Fear Not” of Prayer

Daniel was a man of prayer; consequently, the Lord spoke to him, saying, “Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words” (Dan. 10:12).

He and his companions prayed to the Lord for the interpretation of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and the Lord gave him the answer (Dan. 2:17-19). At a later time, Daniel again prayed although he knew that Darius the king of the Medes had signed a decree that endangered his life. In spite of the fact his life was in jeopardy, “He kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime” (Dan. 6:10).

On another occasion, Daniel sought the Lord as to the meaning of the vision of Beltshazzar, and the answer immediately was given (Dan. 8:15).

In chapter nine verses three and four, Daniel says, “I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: And I prayed unto the Lord my God.” The result of this deep exercise of heart was a message to him from the Lord which said, “O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel” (Dan. 10:11-12). This experience of Daniel would indicate the high esteem in which heaven holds men of prayer. Let us face the future problems of our Christian experience by taking everything to God in prayer. Remember that the God Who lived in Daniel’s day is just the same today.

Think also of the fear that possessed the saintly Zacharias when he prayed in the temple and how the angel appeared, saying, “Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard” (Luke 1:13). The lesson we may learn from this incident is, that even when things are impossible with men they are possible with God. When we present our petition to the God of all grace, believing that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, we can be confident that He hears and answers (Heb. 11:6).

“Beyond our utmost wants

His love and power can bless:

To praying souls, He always grants

More than they can express.”

The “Fear Not” of Protection

The Psalmist praises the Lord for His loving kindness and His mercy, and although encompassed by enemies, he can confidently say, “The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?” (Psa. 118:6).

The Christian today also is encompassed by enemies. Because of loyalty to his risen Lord, he may incur the hatred of the world, but since Jehovah is on his side, he can say, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31). God is on our side: He is with us, His people; therefore, fear should have no place in our hearts. Victory over our spiritual enemies is assured.

One of the last occurences of the expression, “Fear not,” is in Revelation 1:17. When John saw the vision of Christ in glory, he fell at His feet as dead. As John lay there, Christ placed His right hand upon him, saying, “Fear not: I am the first and the last.” If John was overwhelmed by this vision of the Saviour in glory, the Saviour on Whose bosom he had leaned, how will it be with those who do not know the Lord? How will it be with us when the trump of God shall usher us into His presence, and when His eyes shall look into ours? Let those words, “Fear not” given by the Lord in glory, be a comfort to us in view of seeing Him face to face. The true Christian is ever safe. If a person is in the Spirit, and the Spirit is in him, fear need not cause him any alarm. In weakness, Christ is the Christian’s strength, and in terror, Christ is his consolation. When we see our blessed Lord, our victory in Him will be complete. May our hearts, in the meantime, exclaim, “Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy” (Rev. 15:4)!

* * *

“My God shall supply all your need.” Phil. 4:19.

Dost thou in thine inmost heart bebieve this word?
Then trust, yes, wholly trust thy loving Lord.
Trust Him each day, each hour, and thou shalt see
Each need supplied, Christ’s riches used for Thee.

Ye Belong to Christ (June 1959)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 5 No. 6, June 1959.

Thomas Wilkie

Scripture Reading, Mark 9: 33-50

The Lord Jesus, in this passage, teaches the standard of character expected in those that belong to Him. The key to this entire portion is found in the expression, “Ye belong to Christ” (V. 41).

We are redeemed by His precious blood, therefore, are His own peculiar possession. This New Testament truth is typified by the redemption of the first-born from the bondage of Egypt through the blood of the pascal lamb sprinkled upon the door. The Lord said of Israel’s first-born, of both man and beast, “It is Mine” (Ex. 13:2).

Similarly, in the cleansing of the leper (Lev. 14), the anointing of the different members of his body with blood and oil signified that his cleansed members were to be used for God.

May our hearts acknowledge, in the language of the Psalmist, “O Lord, truly I am Thy servant;… Thou hast loosed my bonds” Psa. 116:16).

Let us notice some of the evidences which prove that we belong to Christ.

Humility

“He (Jesus) took a child, and set him in the midst of them” (V. 36).

How this must have shamed the quarrelling ambitious disciples, as under the shadow of His cross, they strove

about who should be the greatest among them. Any aspiring to be emminent is contrary to the spirit of Christ Who made Himself of no reputation.

Jesus teaches His own that true greatness is to have a child-like mind to serve and not to be served. Humility has characterized the holiest of God's saints throughout every age. All the men whom God has used in His service: Abraham, Job, David, Daniel, and Paul were truly humble men. This grace is available to every child of God. A knowledge of the holy character of God, and an apprehension of the wonders of the redemptive work of Christ, should keep us from pride, and should produce in us that humility which is one of the true marks of those who belong to Christ.

Gentleness

David in one of his psalms of thanksgiving says to the Lord, "Thy gentleness hath made me great" (11 Sam. 22: 36).

Gentleness was abundantly manifest in the life of Christ. He was gentle in His attitude toward children as well as in His dealings with needy souls. How gentle He was in His binding up the wounds that sin had made, in His compassion toward the broken-hearted, in His drying the tears of the sorrowful ones! He has exhorted us, saying, "Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest to your souls" (Matt. 11:29). If, as good scholars, we obey our Teacher, the gentleness that was so manifest in Him as Master will be seen in us.

Kindness

The words of the Lord on this occasion intimate that Christians ought to be kind. Said He, "Whosoever shall

give you a cup of water to drink in My name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward" (V. 41).

There are opportunities every day to show kindness to His beloved people. Little things which seem trivial to the natural man are of inestimable value in the eyes of the Lord. The giving of a cup of cold water to one who belongs to Christ is of more value than the service which is considered great in the eyes of men.

On the Day of Christ, when our service is reviewed at His Judgment Seat, He will remind us that, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me" (Matt. 25:40).

Let us strive to be kind for His sake, and thus prove that we belong to Christ.

Tolerance

The disciples found a man doing work in the name of Christ, but he did not belong to their immediate circle. Since he was accomplishing his work in the name of the Lord, he must have been a disciple. Nevertheless, the twelve forbad him, "Because," said they, "he followeth not us."

For their zeal they apparently expected a commendation from the Lord, but instead, He replied, "Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in My name, that can lightly speak evil of Me. For he that is not against us is on our part" (Vv. 39-40). What a rebuke to their intolerance, bigotry, and sectarian narrowness!

Let us not judge other people's service because they do not exactly fit into our ideas. They probably are making some contribution to the cause of Christ. In the Book of

Judges, chapter 12, we have a sad exhibition of the bigotry that led to the strife between the men of Gilead and the men of Ephraim.

Because the men of Ephraim could not pronounce the party “Shibboleth,” they were slain at the passage of the river Jordan. What a pity! How sad that these men of Israel were found fighting against their own brethren rather than against the enemy, but such is the evil of envy and malignity in the human heart.

It was a sad day in the history of Israel when the children of Israel used the sword the one against the other. Happy indeed would it be, if the history of “Shibboleths” had ended then! Unfortunately, its pernicious influence is felt in various forms to the present day. The Master alone is able to judge properly our service for Him; therefore, it behooves us, instead of judging one another, to judge ourselves in the light of the Judgment Seat of Christ. Undoubtedly, the Lord will find something in all His servants to commend, for we read, “Then shall every man have praise of God” (1 Cor. 4:5).

Carefulness

Let us be careful not to do anything that will stumble others in their spiritual life. Our sanctified members are not to cause offences. “Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe on Me,” said the Lord Jesus, “it is better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea. And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter life maimed … If thy foot offend thee, cut it off … If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out.”

The hand suggests what we do; the foot, where we go; the eye, what we look at. These very things may be an offence to others.

Those who belong to Christ have a desire to eliminate from their lives all the things that hinder growth in themselves and in their fellow-believers; therefore, we should deal faithfully with ourselves, but never offend our brother. We must deal with sin in ourselves in a radical way and cut it off. Another has said, “Pain is preferable to sin.” The stern condemnation of Christ expressed against those who offend (V. 42) should produce in us carefulness lest any of His “little ones” be stumbled by our actions.

Testimony

The Lord Jesus closed His remarks on this occasion with the statement, “Salt is good: … Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.” Elsewhere He told His own “Ye are the salt of the earth” (Matt. 5:13).

As salt possesses a purifying influence that preserves from corruption, so those who belong to Christ possessing the divine nature, should by their life and testimony check the corruption in the sphere where God has put them. Furthermore, salt creates thirst; therefore, the testimony of the believer should produce a thirst in others to know the Lord Jesus. Salt, in like manner, contributes to taste and flavour making things palatable; similarly, the true follower of the Master, by his Christian joy and character, attracts others to Christ.

“If the salt have lost his savour, … it is thenceforth good for nothing” (Matt. 5:13). How sad! Think of a Christian, because of his unlikeness to Christ, being good for

nothing. May the Lord give us grace, and grace abundant, so that we may prove by our lives that we belong to Christ, and so that many others may be attracted to our beloved Lord Jesus.

Spiritual Developement (Nov 1959)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 5 No. 11, Nov 1959.

Vol 5:11 (Nov 1959)

Spiritual Development

T. G. Wilkie

“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

It is interesting to trace the occurrences of that precious word “grace” in the two Epistles given to us by the Holy Spirit through Peter. In 1 Peter 5:10 we have the title, “The God of all grace,” suggesting that He is the source of it, and reminding us of His ability to supply all the strength and power needed for the daily life. In 1 Peter 5:12 we are assured that we stand in the true grace of God. In that same chapter, verse 5, we are instructed that humility is the requisite for receiving a continuous supply of grace. The word is found in other passages, but I want particularly to note some of the essentials for growth in grace.

When we received Christ as our Saviour (John 1:12-13), we received divine life. God is the fountain of that life (Psalm 36:9); Christ is the channel through Whom it flows to us (John 5:21-25), and the Word of God in the hands of the Holy Spirit is the instrument by which the new life is imparted (1 Peter 1:23). Our Heavenly Father desires that we should grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, and has made abundant provision to effect the maturity of the new life. It must be disappointing to God when our spiritual growth is

stunted, and we remain as babes (Heb. 5:12-13) instead of going on unto perfection or, as it reads in another translation, “Let us advance to mature manhood” (Heb. 6:1).

I once visited a home in Northern Ontario and the mother with three children was in the room where I was received; I said to the mother.” Are all the children here?” I noticed a look of pain upon her face as she shook her head negatively and directed me into another room. I never can forget the sight that met my gaze. In a crib lay a boy twelve years old whose body was like a child of two. There had been a measure of pride in the mother’s reference to the other children, but it changed to bitter disappointment when she referred to the underdeveloped child. I left that home thinking how disappointed God must be when we make no progress in the divine life.

The first, and perhaps most essential exercise for the maturing of the new life is the study of the Word of God. A neglected Bible means a lean Christian. Just as material food is necessary for the development of the physical body, so the sincere milk of the WORD (1 Peter 2:2) is essential for the development of the new life. Job could say, “I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food” (Job 23:12). Another Scripture to remember is, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). From our new birth to the glory, the Word of God plays an important part in the Christian life.

Paul instructed Timothy: First, to give attendance to reading (1 Tim. 4:13); Second, to meditate on what he

read (1 Tim. 4:15); Third, to continue in them (1 Tim. 4:18).

One Bible teacher suggests six rules for profitable Bible study. They are listed here as follows:

Read it lovingly: “O how I love Thy law” (Psa. 119:97). “Therefore I love Thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold” (Psa. 119:127). The Christian should love the Bible because of its revelation of the love of God to man. He should love it because of its unfolding of Christ to his soul. All who love the Living Word (Christ) will love the Written Word.

“O, Book of wondrous depths and heights,

Of wisdom ever new,

Which in ten thousand various lights

Brings Jesus into view.

O, not for wealth, nor fame, nor power,

Nor love, nor truest friend,

Would I forego the sacred hour

Which o’er God’s Word I spend.

I steal it from the hours of sleep,

If leisure be not given;

For only thus the soul can keep

In touch with God and Heaven.” (W. Blane)

Read it reverently: “My heart standeth in awe (reverential fear) of Thy Word (Psa. 119:161). “Access to the inmost sanctuary of Holy Scripture is granted only to those who come to worship” (Agar Boet).

Read it prayerfully: It has been said that one who has prayed the Bible, through turning the Word of God into supplication, is far advanced in holiness.

Read it systematically: Go through the whole Bible. The Old Testament is part of the “all Scripture” written aforetime for our learning.

“In the Testament called Old is hid the New;

In the Testament called New the Old we view;

In the pages of the Old are golden mines:

In the pages of the New the gold all shines.”

Read it meditatively; (1 Tim. 4:15). “The Holy Scriptures are to believing souls what the meadow is to the ox, what the home is to the man, what the nest is to the bird, the stream to the fish, and the cleft of the rock to the sea-bird” (Luther).

Read it resolutely: One reason is that a resolute mental and spiritual effort is involved in its reading. Bible study is an athletic exercise. To know the Bible we must sweat over it. It demands real application of the mind. If we seek the power of application from God, He will give it to us. The Great Teacher is the Holy Spirit (John 14:26).

As definitely as you accepted Christ as your Saviour, accept the Holy Spirit as your Teacher. He will guide you into all truth. My heart’s desire and prayer is that you will search the Scriptures and thereby your growth in grace will appear to all. God’s promise to Joshua was that if he would meditate in the Book of the Law and observe to do according to all that is written therein, “Then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success” (Joshua 1:8). So, in order to have success and spiritual prosperity in the Christian

life, we must feed in the green pastures of His Holy Word and seek grace to obey it.

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Some fishermen had caught a boatload of fish, but they lost their freshness because they had no chance to swim, being so crowded. Another time a cat-fish was among them. It chased the others and kept them on the move, and they stayed fresh. After that the fishermen always put a cat-fish in among the others, in order to keep them alive and fresh. “I think perhaps the devil is God’s cat-fish” says Leland Wang, who tells the story.

* * *

Quiet tension is not trust; it is simply compressed anxiety.

Spiritual Power (Feb 1962)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 8 No. 2, Feb 1962.

Our blessed Lord when He was on His way to Calvary promised the disciples He would send the Holy Spirit to indwell His own, and to abide with them forever (John 14:16-17). The promise, “He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:17), marks a dispensational difference. Until Pentecost the Holy Spirit was with these disciples; after Pentecost, He was in them.

When we trust Christ, the Holy Spirit enters and indwells us. The truth of Scripture is clear and undeniable. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit. This is not only a truth to be believed, but a fact to be enjoyed and practised. Herein lies our only hope of holy living, our only hope of gaining spiritual knowledge, and certainly, our only hope of effective service. Although He is in every believer, it is all too possible, as 1 Corinthians 6:19 states, to live as not relying on Him, which results in bringing shame rather than glory on Him whose name we bear.

The ideal standard of Christian living can only be attained when we realize that the Holy Spirit is a Person whose presence we claim by faith. He gives guidance in the practical matters of life and conduct, using the Word of God to reveal God’s will. The Scriptures teach how the Christian should live, and the Spirit of God supplies the power to live for the glory of God.

Every Christian possesses the Holy Spirit, but not every Christian is filled with, that is, controlled by, the Holy Spirit. The filling of the Spirit comes by yielding to

Christ. “To yield” is a family concept, children should yield lovingly to the wishes of their parents; in like manner, our yielding to Christ is the action not of compulsion but of love.

The command in Ephesians 5:18, “Be filled with the Spirit,” is as binding on the believer as the command, “Be not drunk with wine.” This filling is God’s purpose for every Christian, for the husband and the wife in the home (Vv. 22-25), for the servant and the master (Eph. 6:5), and for the child and the parent (Eph. 6:1-4). In the filling of the Spirit rests the possibility of being filled with spiritual knowledge, of doing all for Christ, and of being morally like Christ. The experience is not a once for all but a daily surrender to the Lordship of Christ. God’s will is that the Spirit of God may have complete control and not be confined to any particular sphere of our lives.

The Book of the Acts records for us the possibilities of the Spirit-filled life. There are four men of importance in this Book of whom it is stated that they were filled with the Holy Spirit; Peter, Stephen, Barnabas, and Paul. The interesting results of their being filled demonstrate the secret of power in the Christian life. The first example, as stated, is Peter (Acts 4:8).

Power to Witness for Christ

Peter empowered because he was filled with the spirit, along with John preached a crucified and risen Saviour. They were threatened; public opinion was stirred to open hostility against them; and they were considered “unlearned and ignorant men” (4:13). This in itself proves that it is unnecessary to have a scholarly education to be a power for God. The secret of their

power is evident in the fact, “They had been with Jesus” (V. 13). Whether young or old, may the power of the Spirit be felt in our lives in a practical way. If we are going to witness effectively for Christ, we must be “filled with the Spirit.”

As suggested, the second example before us in the Book of the Acts, is Stephen (Chap. 6:5).

Power to Suffer for Christ

“They chose Stephen a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.” The evidences of his being “filled with the Spirit” are seen in his defence recorded in chapter seven. What wisdom is manifested in his approach to his accusers! No wonder it is said, “They were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke” (Acts 6:10).

The power of the Spirit is confirmed by Stephen’s bold testimony of the dealings of God with the nation, and by his calmness and forgiving grace as fanatics grinding their teeth pounded him with stones. “They stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Chap. 7:59). The Spirit of God gave him power to suffer for his loyalty to Christ. After Stephen, the next example before us is Barnabas who similarly was “filled with the Spirit” (Chap. 11:24).

Power for Soul Winning

It is said of Barnabas, “He was a good man.” His goodness was the product of faith and the filling of the Holy Spirit. His generosity in parting with his property to assist needy saints (Acts 4:36-37), and his sympathy in assisting Saul the new convert were also “the fruit of the Spirit.” As a result of his Spirit-filled life “a great

multitude believed and turned to the Lord." The Spirit of the Lord gave him power to be an effective soul winner. Finally, after these three wonderful characters, we come to the Apostle Paul; he, too, was "filled with the Spirit" (Chap. 13:9).

Power Over Satan

In Acts chapter 13, the filling of the Holy Spirit is connected with satanic opposition. Satan uses Elymas the sorcerer to hinder the work of God. Paul, being "filled with the Spirit," was empowered to detect the sin of this evil man and to inflict just punishment upon him. The result was he triumphed over the devil, and proved the Gospel to be "the power of God unto salvation." "The deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord." "The Spirit in power creates His instruments; adapts them for His work; and sends them forth in His own energy. Moreover, He sustains by His power in the midst of all circumstances, whatever they may be" (J.N.D.).

Are there any other four things which we would covet more than these? Do we not long above all things to witness for Christ, to suffer for Christ, win others to Christ, and conquer Satan? These are some of the privileges and victories within the reach of young believers as well as more mature Christians. To enjoy experimentally spiritual power in our service for the Best of all Masters, the Lord Jesus, we need to heed the exhortation. "Be filled with the Spirit."

The Joy of Soul Winning (June 1964)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 10 No. 6, June 1964.

Scripture Reading — Psalm 126:5-6

Soul winning should be the chief concern of every true beliver. All may not be able to preach, nevertheless each one should seek converts to the Lord. The bringing of a person to Jesus is the highest achievement in this life.

The best method of winning the lost to Christ is the personal method, the bringing of individuals. Andrew is an example of this type of action, “He first findeth his own brother Simon … and brought him to Jesus” (John 1:41-42). We do not read of Andrew himself preaching a sermon. How it must have thrilled him to hear his own brother Peter preaching Christ on the Day of Pentecost when 3,000 were saved!

What joy results from the bringing of a soul to the Saviour! The sinner rejoices, so do the Saviour and the angels (Luke 15:10). To these the value of a soul is much; it is described by the Lord. “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8:36). This in itself should be a strong incentive in winning souls.

When we realize that the lost suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, we discover another weighty argument for warning every man and attempting to win them for Christ.

Another great reason why we should rescue souls is the love of God shown at Calvary. All the agonies and

sufferings endured by our blessed Lord are proofs of the worth of one precious soul.

The pertinent words of Psalm 125 have often been an inspiration and encouragement to those who serve in the spread of the Gospel. Notice, please, some of the salient points in these verses.

The Soul Winner's Commission

"He that goeth forth." Our Lord, after persuading the disciples of His resurrection, gave them His great commission: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15-16). This command is still the daily duty of every Christian. We are not to wait for the sinner to come to us; God's Word is that we are to go to him, and declare to him the glad tidings of a Saviour's love.

The Soul Winner's Compassion

"And weepeth." The Lord Jesus is our perfect example in this as in all else. He wept over sinful Jerusalem as He thought of her doom, proving that His heart was full of pity for the perishing (Luke 19:41). The Apostle Paul also wept for souls; he said, "I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:31). His anxiety for an erring people led Jeremiah to cry, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears" (Jer. 9:1).

I had the joy of pointing a young man to the Lord who had been brought under deep conviction through the tears of his parents after a Gospel meeting he had attended. He sensed that those tears were being shed for him.

The Soul Winner's Text Book

"Precious seed." Our Lord Jesus sowed good seed and it brought forth fruit, some one hundred fold, some sixty, and some thirty (Matt. 13:3-8). Peter reminds us that men are born again through this incorruptible seed, the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever (1 Peter 1:23). One may plant, another water, but God gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:6).

We must not expect people to be saved by arguments. Faith cometh by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). A young man who was saved through the reading of a tract gave it to his own brother, and he likewise through it found the Saviour. Good scriptural tracts have been often used by the Lord in reaching the unconverted.

The Soul Winner's Assurance

"Shall reap in joy." The seed may not yield fruit immediately, for the law of the spiritual kingdom is that the good seed cast into the ground springs and grows, "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear" (Mark 4:26-29). That which goes on in secret under the ground is not in vain.

The sower "shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." We may witness to the same person ten times, and win him the eleventh. Keep praying; keep sowing the good seed; God will give the increase.

The Soul Winner's Joy

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." There is joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth. How gracious of the Good Shepherd to call us to share this delight! He

says, “Rejoice with Me; for I have found My sheep which was lost” (Luke 15:6). Paul knew that the souls he had won for the Lord would be his joy and crown of rejoicing (1 Thess. 2:19).

In due time there will be the joy of harvest. Let us have confidence in the Word of God, and having sown the seed earnestly and well, leave the results with the Lord. The future will prove that no sowing of God’s seed in God’s own way will be in vain. There is the danger of expecting quick returns, but if these result from arguments rather than from the Word of God, much damage may follow.

If one soul through my feeble efforts meet me in glory, I shall feel like Samuel Rutherford who said, “My Heaven will be two Heavens in Immanuel’s Land.”

The Bible In Miniature (Jan 1965)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 11 No. 1, Jan 1965.

Thomas G. Wilkie

“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” (John 3:16).

This text has been spoken of as the Bible in miniature, and this is quite appropriate, as almost every fundamental doctrine in the New Testament is compressed into this one verse. God who is the source of our salvation is at the beginning of the verse; Christ who has secured our salvation is in the very centre of it. Eternal Punishment from which Christ died to save us, and Eternal Life offered as a Gift to the believing sinner, are also prominent in the text.

There will be thousands of souls in Heaven through these life-giving words, and our prayers today is that as you read this message you will receive the gift of Eternal Life through Jesus Christ our Lord. The writer will praise God for all Eternity for John 3:16. It was this verse displayed on a large billboard in the City of Toronto that forced him to consider where he would spend Eternity. In passing the text many times a day, the truth of the love of God to guilty sinners wrought conviction and repentance, and upon receiving Christ as his personal Saviour he had the assurance that he would never perish, and became the happy possessor of everlasting life.

This wonderful verse brings before us the love of God in its four dimensions.

Paul in speaking of this love in Ephesians 3:18, prays that the saints in Ephesus might be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and heighth; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. It is almost impossible to comprehend with our finite minds the measureless love of God, the magnitude of which is expressed in the simple lines:

“Could we with ink the ocean fill,

And were the skies of parchment made;

Were every blade of grass a quill,

And every man a scribe by trade;

To write the love of God above

Would drain the ocean dry;

Nor could the scroll contain the whole,

Though stretched from sky to sky.”

The Breadth of God’s Love

The breadth of God’s love is manifest in the object to which it is extended “For God so loved the world.” How marvellous that God should love the world of sinners lost and ruined by the Fall! The world, whose mind is enmity against God, whose course is evil, whose sin is self-pleasing, whose heart is wicked, whose trend is sin-ward, whose god is the devil, is the world God loved. Had our text said that God loved the angels, or even if it said that God loved the world in its unfallen state we could understand it, but that God should love a world sunk in the darkness of sin, whose enmity culminated in

the crucifixion of His blessed Son, is too vast to comprehend.

Friend, you are included in that world that has rebelled against high Heaven, and you deserve the wrath of God that its enmity merits. The wonder is that God yearns over you with love unspeakable. My text assures you that God loves the world and, as part of that world, you are an object of divine love. God loves you notwithstanding your sin and guilt, and He will save you today if you believe the love that God has toward you.

The Length of God's Love

The length of God's love is evident in the fact that He gave His only begotten Son to die the shameful death of Calvary for us. In John 15:13, we read, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." There you have the length to which human love will go. Many a mother has given her life for her children, and a father will often lay down his life for his son, but "God commendeth His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Who can sound the deeps of such a sentence as: "That He gave His only begotten Son." It is all the more amazing that God should send His Son into the world, when we remember that He who knew the end from the beginning, knew that they would despise and reject the Lord Jesus, that they would pluck the hairs from His cheeks, and lay the scourge upon His back, and nail Him to a malefactor's cross, and cry, "Away with Him, away with Him; we will not have this Man to reign over us." The Lord Jesus by His agony in Gethsemane's Garden, and the shame and suffering of Golgotha, when He died crushed beneath the load of the wrath and curse of God,

fully expressed the love that is eternally in the Father's heart to a lost world.

"Tis that 'Man of Sorrows' yonder,

Object of contempt beneath,

But in Heaven, the highest wonder,

Teaches fully by His death,

That God is love.

"Not for those who ever loved Him,

Did the Lord of Glory die;

Pity to the wretched moved Him:

Who that hears it will deny,

That God is love."

How can you doubt the love of God that went the length of giving Heaven's best for earth's worst. The sacrifice of Christ on Calvary should forever assure your heart that God loves you. May the Spirit of God who loves to take of the things of Christ and reveal them to us enable you to say from your heart with deep thanksgiving:

"It was for me, yes all for me,

Oh love of God so great, so free;

Oh wondrous love; I'll shout and sing;

He died for me, my Lord and King."

The Depth of the Love of God

Is expressed in the words "should not perish." God, in His mighty love, desires that sinners should be saved from the penalty of their sins. Who can understand that word "perish"? In it we hear the groans of the damned;

we have the depths of misery, the despair of the lost, the outer darkness of the unsaved, the doom of the wicked. In the groans of the Saviour and in the tears that He shed, and the darkness experienced when He was forsaken by God, we see the depths to which He in His love for sinners was willing to go, that He might save them from the doom of hell.

“Deep were those sorrows, deeper still

The Love that brought Thee low,

That bade the streams of life from Thee

A lifeless victim flow.”

The Height of the Love of God

We have “Everlasting Life.” God in love will lift the sinner from the depths of sin and shame, from the state of death, and impart to the believing sinner divine life. This everlasting life that God offers to sinners occupies a prominent place in the Gospel of John. Our Blessed Lord says in John 6:47, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me hath everlasting life.” Again He says, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death until life” (John 5:24).

To receive Christ means to possess Eternal Life, to be saved with an Eternal Salvation, liberated by Eternal Redemption, kept for an Eternal Inheritance, to be indwelt by the Eternal Spirit, and loved with an Eternal love. Notice how simply we obtain the blessing, “Whosoever” believeth in Him.

Gypsy Smith, the Evangelist, in his book tells of a time when he climbed a plum tree in a farmer's yard and was helping himself to the plums. He looked down and saw the farmer standing at the foot of the tree. The farmer gave him a very pressing invitation to come down. Gypsy Smith answered, "I'm not in a hurry, Mister," and prepared to sit in the fork of the tree until the farmer would leave. To his discomfort, the farmer said, "I'm not in a hurry, either, sonny," and he sat down. Gypsy Smith saw that the farmer meant business, so he sheepishly backed down the tree. The farmer took him by the ear and led him over to another tree with a notice on it. He said to Gypsy Smith, "Can you read?" "No," said Gypsy, "I never went to school." The farmer said, "Listen and I'll read it to you: 'Whosoever is found trespassing will be prosecuted'." Gypsy Smith said, "I never had any trouble from that day on believing that 'whosoever' meant me."

When his mother read John 3:16 to him, "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," he believed that whosoever included him,

Will you take your place among the "whosoevers" that believe in Jesus? God's Word assures you, that you should not perish, but have everlasting life. If you despise and spurn the love of God, and continue in unbelief you will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. We read in Romans chapter 16:26 of the Everlasting God, and this title given to God refers to His duration. The life which He gives to all who believe in Christ as Saviour is as everlasting as the God who gives it. The punishment

meted out to the Christ rejector is everlasting. God in His love and mercy has provided a full and free salvation through the precious blood of Christ shed on Calvary. If you receive Christ as your Saviour today, you will possess Eternal Life now, and when by death your sojourn on earth is ended, you will enter into that life in all its fulness, in that Eternal Home where there shall be no more death.

Timothy (May 1965)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 11 No. 5, May 1965.

An Example Of The Believers—1 Timothy 4:12

This manuscript from brother Wilkie is the last he prepared for FOOD FOR THE FLOCK, the magazine of which he was one of the founders, and to the last one of its loyal members.

His last written message is a spiritual challenge to all our readers.

It is intensely interesting to study the lives of the men and women mentioned in the Bible. The ways of God reveal wonderful wisdom in His dealings with different persons. Much helpful instruction and delight may result from meditation upon these events narrated in the Word of God. The recorded friendship of Paul and Timothy is one of the most pleasant companionships in the annals of history. Of course, any study of the life of Timothy should begin with his childhood.

His Home Life

What privileges he enjoyed! It is not difficult to understand, even from the little that is stated, the godliness of the home at Lystra. In that benign atmosphere he was raised by his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois (2 Tim. 1:5). He was taught the Scriptures by them, and from their example he learned the value and practice of prayer. The soil of his heart was thereby prepared for the good seed later to be sown by Paul. All the references to him suggest that he was of a retiring disposition, of a rather nervous temperament.

In the list of friends named by Paul in his last letter, he approves of Timothy's godly life and service (2 Tim. 4:21).

His Conversion

Paul visited Lystra where Timothy lived on both his first and second missionary journeys, between which there was a period of some seven years. During that interval, Timothy had grown to young manhood. The stoning of Paul and the persecution of the Christians must have made a profound impression upon his young heart (Acts 14:1-20). Shortly after this experience by Paul, it is stated of Timothy that he was a disciple (Acts 16:1). The Scriptures that he had learned made him wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15), and inasmuch as Paul calls him "My own son in the faith" (1 Tim. 1:2), and "My dearly beloved son" (2 Tim. 1:2), we conclude that the last link in the circumstances that brought him to the Lord was the ministry of Paul.

His Christian Testimony

What kind of Christian was he? He was well reported of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium (Acts 16:2). Furthermore, this good report spread from his own town to Iconium so that the elders of both these assemblies chose him to do the work of an evangelist (1 Tim. 4:14). What joy this must have brought to the hearts of his mother and grandmother, and also to his spiritual fathler Paul! Others are watching our Christian testimony! Have we a good report among those that are without as well as those who are within the Church?

His Loyal Companionship

Timothy first joined Paul in his second missionary journey at Lystra (Acts 16:2), and travelled with him and Silas to Philippi where Lydia was converted. There although Paul and Silas were imprisoned the jailor was converted. After their release they moved on to Thessalonica and Berea where they met with further violent persecution. From Thessalonica Timothy rejoined Paul at Corinth (1 Thess. 3:6) and engaged in evangelistic work. Later he associated with Paul in Rome and was with him when he wrote the epistles to the Philippians, the Colossians, and the personal one to Philemon.

His loyalty and faithfulness made him a strong and reliable support to Paul. He was unselfish, humble, and affectionate for with Paul "he served as a son with the father," sharing in the persecutions endured by Paul (Phil. 2:19-20).

We might well challenge ourselves as to whether or not we have these same qualities, and whether or not the Lord because of them would choose us for similar work!

His Sympathetic Comfort

The friendship that had existed between Paul and Timothy for fifteen years was drawing to a close. Paul was enduring his second imprisonment and was suffering from the winter cold. These sufferings were further intensified by loneliness so he wrote his last letter to Timothy. In this letter, he says, "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me… The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments" (2 Tim.

4:9-13). The last picture of Timothy is of his possible arrival at the prison with these items for Paul who so soon was to be martyr of Jesus Christ. In the cloke Timothy brought physical comfort to Paul, in the books mental diversion and in the precious parchments, the Holy Scriptures, real spiritual nourishment and consolation.

Oh, that we as believers might emulate this young “man of God” as he is called. (1 Tim. 6:11). That the love of Christ may likewise constrain us to be as zealous as Timothy in our testimony and service for the Lord Jesus.