

EDIFICATION

A MONTHLY
MAGAZINE

“Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of
the Church” (I COR. 14: 12).

VOLUME XIII.

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EDITOR'S FOREWORD.

FROM its first number there has appeared upon the cover of our little magazine the text, "Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the Church" (1 Cor. 14: 12). It has appeared there as a reminder of that at which we aim, and as an incentive to us all, though we confess how far we come short of it. At the start of another year we do well in calling it afresh to remembrance.

We are self-centred and self-seeking creatures according to nature. The tendency to this is fundamental, and deep-seated in the fallen sons of Adam; and it crops up with sad frequency amongst those who are children of God. Paul's complaint that he had with him no one like-minded to Timothy, "for all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Phil. 2: 21), could be uttered with increased emphasis to-day. Many may be found who not only are seeking their own things, but seeking great things for themselves.

Baruch the son of Neriah was a helper of the prophet Jeremiah during the last few years of the kingdom of Judah. The overthrow of all that surrounded him was plainly foretold, and the word

of the Lord to him was, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for, behold I will bring evil upon all flesh" (Jer. 45: 5). The tendency to seek **great things** for **himself** was there, even with Baruch, and even when Jerusalem was about to crash into ruin. The tendency is just the same with us.

And with us the situation is very similar to that of Baruch. Modern civilization and the great kingdoms of the nations are threatened with catastrophe and ruin. We seem to be very near the moment when shall be fulfilled that word, "Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations" (Haggai 2: 6, 7). It were folly to seek great things for ourselves at any time, but especially at this time, when the overthrow of things both great and small is so near.

We are so constituted, however, that we must be seeking something. We cannot exist as aimless and object-less beings. Though it is folly to seek great things **for ourselves** there are great things to be sought **for the glory of God**. When the Lord was on earth He said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matt. 6: 33). When He was exalted into the heavens, as the fruit of redemption being accomplished, the Spirit gave the word, "Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Col. 3: 1). The things we are to seek are **great**

things indeed, but they are **for Him**. We may add however, that, while primarily for Him, they do turn out ultimately and in a secondary way to be for ourselves.

When we seek the salvation of men, we are seeking the furtherance of the kingdom of God in its present mysterious form. The Divine authority and righteousness is established in the heart of the saved man. When the church is edified the Divine authority is expanded and confirmed in the hearts of the saints, and they are led into increasing acquaintance with "the things above," both in their present and their future character.

We desire to be stirred up ourselves, and to stir up all our readers to an earnest quest in both these directions. Oh, that our hearts may be full of zeal, not for the dying things of earth, but for the salvation of souls and the establishment and up-building of saints! In so doing we shall be pursuing heavenly objects upon earth, and be used of God in achieving something that will be displayed in heavenly circles in the coming age. We shall also find that rest—not only as to outward circumstances but in heart—in which of old "the churches were edified," and which leads, as obedience marks them, to the churches being "multiplied" (Acts 9: 31).

As far as in us lies, this shall be still the object we set before us in continuing through another year, if the Lord permit, to issue this magazine.

BRIEF OUTLINES OF READINGS ON REVELATION.

HELD IN PORTOBELLO, MIDLOTHIAN.

IN the section which extends from verse 9 of chapter 21 to verse 5 of chapter 22, we are brought back to the millennial state, and the church as the bride is again seen under the figure of a city. Because of her relation to Christ, the Lamb's wife is seen in displayed glory. John is invited to "Come hither," and this is followed by his being transported to a great and high mountain, where he would be above the mists and influences of the earth. There he was "in the Spirit," for the Spirit, as always, is the Revealer of the things of God.

In this vision the church is seen, not as she is at present, rejoicing in "**hope** of the glory of God," but as "**having** the glory of God." In chapter 4: 3, jasper was mentioned as the symbol of God's glory, and if we link up with this verses 11, 18 and 19 of our chapter, we may gain some thought of the fulness that is compressed into those words, "**having the glory of God.**"

The twelve gates indicate not only that there is **entrance**, but also that there is the **going out** of rule and administration from that city. At each gate stands an angel—one of those unenvious servants of the will of God. They are the willing messengers of that system of government and blessing,

as the Lord Himself indicated in John 1: 51. The twelve Apostles have administratively a special place in the **heavenly** kingdom, and the same thing is true of Israel in the **earthly** kingdom. As a result perfect government will be established.

The wall of the city speaks to us of protection and security which is perfect; for it is said to be "great and high." But though so high it does not obscure, since the height of the city is equal to its length and breadth of twelve thousand furlongs: hence every ray of glory will be visible. Measuring with the **golden** reed indicates that while the city is finite yet everything answers to the mind of God in divine righteousness. Then again, it is "according to the measure of a man," for God's righteousness is now expressed in the saints, and thus is apprehended by the world. Then will be displayed in its fulness what is stated in 2 Corinthians 5: 21—the saints are made "the righteousness of God in Him."

The twelve stones set forth the one sure foundation. At the same time each stone represents a particular Divine glory, and all together they set forth the varied glories of God, in the measure in which those glories can be communicated to men. It is of interest to note that the gates were of pearl. The truth connected with the "pearl of great price" (Matt. 13: 46) has been for well-nigh 2,000 years a secret, as far as the world is concerned. It will then be displayed openly, for the gate is a most public place.

At the beginning of chapter 22, we have the concluding verses of this, the eleventh section. They refer to blessings of the very choicest character. The throne of God and of the Lamb is a very wonderful expression. Being God's throne it must speak of supreme majesty and supremacy: being the Lamb's throne it equally speaks of mercy, grace and blessing. Christ Himself is the "tree of life," and the Source of the blessing. Not only is He the satisfying Portion for the Christian heart, but also the Healer of all the ills that have afflicted the nations. The curse will have vanished away. The richest of all blessings will be to see His face, and to have His Name prominently upon us. This Spirit-given vision closes with the promise of reigning for ever and ever—embracing both the millennial age and eternity.

From verse 6 to the end we have the last section of this wonderful book. First comes assuring testimony as to the sayings of this book, given through the angel to the servants of God. They came from "the Lord God of the holy prophets" (New Trans.)—those men whose spirits had been Divinely controlled in earlier days, speaking "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1: 21). The blessing promised in verse 7 is of an individual nature: *an incentive to each of us to read this book and be controlled by its sayings.*

Verse 10 stands in sharp contrast with Daniel 12: 4. There the words were to be shut up and the book sealed till the time of the end. But now

Christ is come, has been rejected and is seated in glory, so that the time is at hand for its fulfilment. Therefore this prophecy is not to be sealed up. Then verse 11 following implies that the return of the Lord will bring in a fixed state, whether *for blessing or condemnation*. There are the two classes to-day, but then their state will be fixed beyond the possibility of change.

When Paul referred to "a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me **at that day**" (2 Tim. 4: 8), his mind was dwelling on the event referred to in verse 12. Verse 13 guarantees that the reward will be perfectly apportioned and absolutely final. The One who gives it fills all eternity—nothing before and nothing after Him!

The contents of this book are referred to by "these things" (verse 16), and we are shown how the Lord counts upon our interest in all that He has made known to us. Jesus presents Himself to our hearts as the bright Morning Star, and the answer is spontaneous and immediate both from the church and the individual believer. The Spirit indwells the bride and prompts her cry of, Come! That cry is followed by the final Gospel appeal of *the Bible*.

In the two verses which close the whole book we have the Lord's last message, "Surely I come quickly." This is followed by the last prayer, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Last of all comes

that which has sustained, and will sustain, the saints until that bright moment comes—"the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."

For those readers, who did not see the opening article in this series, the following division of the Book of Revelation in its twelve sections, is appended:—

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Chapter 1: 1—9. | 7. Chapter 11: 19—14: 20 |
| 2. Chapter 1: 10—20. | 8. Chapter 15: 1—16: 21 |
| 3. Chapter 2: 1—3: 22. | 9. Chapter 17: 1—18: 24 |
| 4. Chapter 4: 1—5: 14. | 10. Chapter 19: 1—21: 8. |
| 5. Chapter 6: 1—8: 1. | 11. Chapter 21: 9—22: 5. |
| 6. Chapter 8: 2—11: 18. | 12. Chapter 22: 6—22: 21 |

READY!

A TRAVELLER in Italy, writing to a paper, describes a visit paid to a certain spot as follows:

I arrived at the Villa Areconati, on the banks of Lake Como, the "beauty-spot" of the Italian Alps. A gardener opened the heavy gate, and conducted me through the exquisite garden.

"How long have you been here?" I asked him.

"Twenty-five years."

"And how often has the owner been to see the estate?"

"Four times."

"When did he come last?"

"Twelve years ago."

"He writes to you, I suppose?"

"Never."

"From whom, then, do you get your orders?"

"From the steward, in Milan."

"Does he come here often?"

"Never."

"**Who** comes, then, to look after matters?"

"I am left pretty much alone; very seldom do I see any stranger."

"Yet you keep the garden so spick and span, and in such apple-pie order, that one would think you were expecting the owner to-morrow."

"**To-day**, sir, **TO-DAY**," was the old man's reply.

This is how we should be, each day of our lives; our conduct, our manner of life, our affairs, all arranged as if we were expecting the Saviour **to-day**. "Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."

"MY GOSPEL."

(I) "THE GLAD TIDINGS OF THE GRACE OF GOD"

ACTS 20: 24.

THE words which we have chosen as the title for this and succeeding papers,—if the Lord will — are at once arresting and suggestive. If they were not inspired by the Holy Spirit we might be disposed to think that the Apostle Paul, whose words they are, was making too strong a

claim. Why should he alone write of the Gospel that he preached as "**My Gospel**"? (Romans 2: 16; 2 Timothy 2: 8). This feeling might be intensified as we read the very strong statements found in Galatians 1: 8 and 9. Might we ask our readers to read this and all other Scripture references as we proceed.

Let us read on in chapter 1 till we reach verse 12, and there we see how completely the Apostle justifies his claim as, writing of the Gospel, he says: "I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Then in the first two verses of chapter 2 he tells us that with Barnabas, and Titus, he went up to Jerusalem by revelation in order that he might communicate to them which were of reputation the Gospel which he preached among the Gentiles. All this is calculated to increase our desire to know just exactly what this Gospel is; and causes us to ask ourselves to what extent it is being preached to-day.

Of this we may be sure, the Gospel of the first century is the Gospel for the twentieth century. We cannot too earnestly warn our readers against the specious theory of so-called Modernists that the Gospel has to be re-stated to-day in a form suited to the altered conditions, the learning, and the culture of this advanced (?) period. The "Modernists" of Paul's day proposed to improve (?) his Gospel, hence his stinging words in Galatians 1: 8 and 9, to which we have already referred; and the "Modernists" of this day bring

themselves under the same condemnation. It is God's Gospel and He will not tolerate any attempt to alter it one iota. The heart of man is unchanged, the heart of God is unchanged, praise His Name, and the Gospel that met man's need nearly two thousand years ago is the Gospel that meets his need in this present year of grace.

The Gospel, as we know, is God's Glad Tidings. We propose to adopt these beautiful words as we consider this subject, and in the scriptures to which we shall refer we shall quote frequently from the New Translation by J. N. Darby. In the five portions which we shall cite let it be noted it is the same Glad Tidings but presented from five different points of view. Here they are in the order in which they occur in the pages of the New Testament:

"THE GLAD TIDINGS OF JESUS AND THE RESURRECTION."

"THE GLAD TIDINGS OF THE GRACE OF GOD."

"THE GLAD TIDINGS OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST."

"THE GLAD TIDINGS OF THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST."

"THE GLAD TIDINGS OF THE GLORY OF THE BLESSED GOD."

We shall indicate the Scriptures as we consider each in order. Meanwhile it might interest some of our younger readers to search them out and meditate upon them. We shall commence with the second because obviously it comes first in the

divine order. "THE GLAD TIDINGS OF THE GRACE OF GOD."

We read the remarkable valedictory address given by the Apostle Paul to the elders of the Assembly at Ephesus, and recorded in Acts 20: 17—35. He had preached the Glad Tidings in Ephesus, souls had been saved, an assembly had been formed, and in this address we see something of his deep exercise and longing for their spiritual prosperity; and his intense desire that they might be preserved from the ravages of the enemy, whether from within or without. We must notice a few points just in passing.

He served the Lord (a) "With all humility of mind, and with **many tears**" (v. 19).

(b) He pressed home two essential things, "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 21). DO WE PREACH THESE?

(c) He could declare himself "pure from the blood of all men" (v. 26).

(d) He laboured for the building up of the saints and therefore declared unto them "All the counsel of God" (v. 27). We have evidence of this in the Epistle to the Assembly at Ephesus.

(e) Realizing the grace of God as the source of everything, he uttered the thrilling words of verse 24 which we must quote from the New Translation:

"I make no account of my life as dear to myself, so that I finish my course, and the ministry

which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify THE GLAD TIDINGS OF THE GRACE OF GOD."

What words are these! He might be termed an enthusiast, and he was; some might label him a monomaniac, a man of one idea. He certainly had one thing before him, to live, to serve, to die proclaiming the Glad Tidings. This he did and encouraged others to do so, for among his last words are these: "PREACH THE WORD" (2 Timothy 4: 2). How marvellous this conception of the grace of God.

To refer again to the fivefold presentation of the Gospel, taking the expressions in the order in which we shall consider them, we have

- (i.) The Source.
- (ii.) The Basis.
- (iii.) The Object.
- (iv.) The Wealth.
- (v.) The Objective.

All proceed from the first, for the grace of God is the source.

Who can speak or write of it? What heart can conceive, what tongue can tell the immensity of it? The undeserved, unreserved, unconditional, unlimited favour of God. Grace that was in His heart from all eternity, grace which, with truth, came by Jesus Christ (John 1: 17). Grace which, bringing salvation to all men, hath appeared (Titus 2: 11). Incomparable! Immeasurable! Indescribable!

Grace that planned the very best for the very worst, that takes us from the abysmal depth of ruin and degradation, and will presently set us down in His presence conformed to the image of His Son. Grace that will be displayed to a wondering universe when He will show "the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2: 7).

Every believer is a subject of that grace and sets forth the triumph of it. Who would not seek to extol it; to live in the enjoyment of it; and to proclaim it to others by life and lips. This grace could have its source only in the heart of God; could be secured for us, and brought to us, only by the coming into manhood, the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ; and it is now proclaimed as "the glad tidings by the Holy Ghost, sent from Heaven" (1 Peter 1: 12).

Herein lies the keynote, the subject, the charm, the power of glad tidings, and, as believers, we rejoice that we have been brought under its beneficent sway. It subdues the wildest son of Adam's race; it breaks the will of the most stubborn; it attracts the poor and the needy; it wins the heart of the little child. Oh, the grace of God! Its magnificence! Its marvel! Its greatness! Its power!

Did not the Apostle Paul speak and write of MY GLAD TIDINGS as "The Glad Tidings of the Grace of God," first because he received them "by revelation of Jesus Christ"; and second, because he himself was such an outstanding example of their

power? Never did he cease to extol the grace of God, and his life was a shining example of what that grace had done, was doing, and would do for him.

May our souls be saturated with that grace: may our lips sound it forth; and may our lives manifest it until in glory we praise our God for it through a glad eternity; for

"Grace all the work shall crown
Through everlasting days;
It lays in Heaven the topmost stone:
And well deserves our praise."

W. BRAMWELL DICK.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(ACTS I: 1—2: 47).

This outline of Acts is brief and condensed. Except the above passage of Scripture be read, it is hardly likely that these notes will prove to be of real interest or profit.

BY its opening words the Acts of the Apostles is linked in the clearest way with the Gospel of Luke. The same Theophilus is addressed, and in the first chapter the story is resumed just at the point where the Gospel left off, save that a few extra details are given of the Lord's words after His resurrection, and the account of His ascension is repeated in a somewhat different setting. The Gospel **leads up to** His resurrection and

ascension. The Acts **starts from** those glorious facts and develops their consequences.

In the first verse Luke describes his Gospel as a "treatise . . . of all that Jesus **began** both to **do** and **teach**." The word "began" is worthy of note. It infers that Jesus has not ceased to do and teach by reason of His going on high beyond the sight of men. The Acts tells us what Jesus proceeded to **do**, by shedding forth the Holy Spirit from the Father, so that by Him He might act through the Apostles and others. In the same way we discover by reading the epistles what He proceeded to **teach** through the Apostles in due season. Before He was taken up He gave necessary instructions to the Apostles, and that, "through the Holy Ghost," though as yet the Spirit was not given to them. In his Gospel Luke had presented the Lord to us as the perfect Man, ever acting in the power of the Spirit, and in that same light we see Him here.

For the space of forty days He manifested Himself as the One living beyond the power of death, and thus abundant proof was furnished of His resurrection. During these contacts with His disciples He spoke to them of things concerning the kingdom of God, and directed them to await in Jerusalem the coming of the Spirit. John, who baptized with water, had pointed to Him as the Baptizer with the Holy Ghost, and that baptism was to reach them in a few days.

The Lord had been speaking of the kingdom of

God; their minds however still ran on the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. In this they were like the two going to Emmaus, though now they knew that He was risen. Their question gave to the Lord the opportunity of indicating what was to be the programme for the opening dispensation, and we see again just what we saw in Luke 23; the Centre of the programme is not Israel but Christ. The coming of the Spirit would mean power, not that the apostles should be restorers of Israel, but "witnesses unto Me" — witnesses to Christ unto the utmost bounds of the earth. The four circles of witness, mentioned at the end of verse 8, supply us with one way of dividing up the book. We begin with the witness in Jerusalem, and until the end of chapter 7 we are occupied with that city and Judaea. Then in chapter 8 comes Samaria. In chapter 9 the man to carry the Gospel to the Gentiles is called; and in chapter 13 the mission to the uttermost parts begins.

There appears to be a contradiction between verse 7, and what Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5: 1 and 2. But there the point is that they knew well **what** was going to transpire as regards God's dealing with the earth: here that we may not know **when**, since that is a matter reserved by the Father for Himself alone. Our business is to render true and diligent witness to Christ. What that witness will effect is not plainly stated until we reach verse 14 of chapter 15.

Having said these things Jesus was taken up and

a cloud—doubtless the cloud of Luke 9: 34—hid Him from their eyes. Two heavenly messengers however stood by their side to supplement His declaration of a few moments before. Their **mission** was to be witnesses to the ascended Christ; but their **hope** was to be His return just as He went. His going was not something figurative, shadowy, mystical, but actual and literal. His coming will be actual and literal in like manner.

Ten days had to pass before the coming of the Spirit, and the rest of the chapter tells us how those days of waiting were occupied. The number of avowed disciples in Jerusalem was about one hundred and twenty, and prayer and supplication filled their time. There could be no witness until the Spirit was given, but they could take and maintain the safe place of utter dependence upon God.

And further, they could refer to the Scriptures and apply them to the existing situation, inasmuch as the Lord had opened their minds to understand, as recorded in Luke 24. It is remarkable that Peter should have been the one to take the initiative in this matter, seeing he himself had so sadly sinned only about six weeks before. Still it shows that the Lord had thoroughly effected his restoration, and he was able to piece together Psalm 69: 25, and 109: 8, in this striking way. "Bishoprick" of course should be "office" or "charge," as reference to the Psalm will show. It was the office of apostleship that was in question, as also verse 25 of our chapter shows. Verses

18 and 19 are evidently not the words of Peter, but a parenthesis in which Luke gives us further details of the fearful end of Judas.

An essential feature of apostleship was first-hand knowledge of the risen Saviour. The apostle must be able to testify of Him as having personally seen Him in His risen estate: hence Paul's third question in 1 Corinthians 9: 1. Paul saw Him, not during the forty days but later in the full blaze of His glory. However, from the outset there must be the twelve apostolic witnesses, and Matthias was chosen. They had recourse to the Old Testament practice of casting lots: guidance, such as we read of in chapter 13: 2, could not be known until the Holy Ghost had been given.

If we read Leviticus 23, we can see that just as the Passover was prophetic of the death of Christ, so Pentecost was prophetic of the coming of the Spirit, in whose power there is presented to God the "new meat offering" consisting of the two loaves of firstfruits—an election from both Jew and Gentile, sanctified by the Holy Ghost. Just as that to which the Passover pointed was fulfilled on the Passover day, so that to which Pentecost pointed was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. On Jesus the Spirit came as a dove: on the disciples as the sound of a mighty blowing or breathing, and as cloven tongues of fire. The wind appealed to the ear, and was reminiscent of the Lord's own in-breathing, of which John 20: 22 speaks. The tongues of fire appealed to the eye, and were quite

unique. The wind filled **all**; the tongues sat upon **each**. We may connect inward power with the one; and with the other the expression of the power in the many tongues as the Spirit gave utterance. When Jesus came, He was audible, visible and tangible—see, 1 John 1: 1. When the Spirit came He was audible and visible only, and that in this mysterious way.

It is important that we should, from the outset, distinguish between the great **fact** of the Spirit's presence, and the **signs** and **manifestations** of His presence, which vary so greatly. This is the definite gift of the Spirit, referred to in John 7: 39; 14: 16, though, since here only Jews were in question, the pouring out of the Spirit upon believing Gentiles (see chapter 10: 45) was an act supplementary to this. Having come thus the Spirit abides with the saints right through the dispensation. As the result of the outpouring here, they were all filled with the Spirit, so that He was in complete control of each. We must also distinguish between the **gift** of the Spirit and the **filling** with the Spirit, since the former may be had without the latter, as we shall see later. Here both were present together.

Those upon whom the Spirit came were a **praying** people, in this resembling their Lord. They were also people of **one** accord, and consequently in **one** place. The one place is not named: it may have been the upper room of chapter 1, but more probably, in view of the crowds that heard the

Spirit-given utterances, some court of the temple, such as Solomon's porch. At any rate the thing was real and powerful and could not be hid. It was, within a limited sphere, a reversal of Babel. There man's proud building was **stopped** by the confusion of tongues: here God signalized the **start** of His spiritual building by giving mastery over the tongues and reducing them to order.

We may see another contrast in the fact that when the tabernacle had been made in the wilderness and the Lord took possession of it by the cloud of His presence, He at once began to speak to Moses concerning sacrifice. This is shown by connecting Exodus 40: 35, with Leviticus 1: 1 and 2. In our chapter we have God taking possession of His new, spiritual house by His Spirit, and again He at once speaks by His inspired Apostles. Many people from different countries hear "the wonderful works of God."

The enquiry of the crowds gave the opportunity for witness. Peter was the spokesman, though the eleven stood with him as supporting his words, and he at once directed them to the scripture which explained what it all meant. Joel had predicted the pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh in days that are yet to come, and what had just transpired was a fulfilment of it, though not **the** fulfilment. Peter's words, "this is that which was spoken," imply that it was **of the nature of** that which Joel had foretold, but not necessarily the full and conclusive thing which the prophecy had in view.

John the Baptist had said of Jesus, "The same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost" (John 1: 33). Joel had said that, after Israel's repentance and the destruction of their foes, there should be this pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh. Now on the day of Pentecost there had been a kind of firstfruits of this in the pouring out of the Spirit upon those who formed the nucleus of the church. That was the true explanation of what had happened. They were not drunk with wine, but filled with the Spirit.

But Peter did not stop there: he proceeded to show **why** this baptism of the Spirit had taken place. It was the direct action of Jesus, now exalted to the right hand of God. This we find when we reach verse 33; but from verse 22 he had been leading the minds of people through the scenes of the crucifixion to His resurrection and exaltation. Jesus of Nazareth had been most manifestly approved of God during the days of His ministry, yet they had slain Him with their wicked hands. He had been delivered up to this by God according to His "determinate counsel and foreknowledge," for God knows how to make the wrath of man to praise Him and accomplish His designs of blessing; though this does not diminish man's responsibility in the matter. Verse 23 is a clear instance of how the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man do not clash, when it is a question of practical results; though we may have difficulty in reconciling the two as a matter of theory.

What they had so wickedly **done** God had triumphantly **undone**. The collision between their programme and God's was complete. It presaged their own complete undoing and overthrow in due season; particularly as the resurrection had been foreseen by God, and foretold through David in Psalm 16. Now David could not possibly have been speaking of himself, for he had been buried and his grave was well known amongst them at that day. When he spoke of One, whose soul was not left in hades and whose flesh did not see corruption, he spoke of Christ. What he said had been fulfilled: Jesus was not only raised but exalted to heaven.

As the exalted Man, Jesus had received of the Father the promised Holy Ghost, and had shed Him forth upon His disciples. At His baptism He received the Holy Ghost **for Himself** as the dependent Man; now He receives the same Holy Ghost **on behalf of others** as their Representative. By shedding forth the Spirit these others were baptized into one body and became His members. This we learn from later scriptures.

In verses 34—36, Peter carries his argument a step further to its climax. David had prophesied of his Lord, who should be exalted to God's right hand. David himself was not ascended to the heavens any more than he was risen from the dead. The One of whom David spoke was to sit in the seat of administration and power until His foes were made His footstool; therefore the conclusion of the whole matter was this:—the shedding forth

of the Spirit, which they had seen and heard, proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that God had made the crucified Jesus both Lord and Christ.

As Lord He is the great **Administrator** on God's behalf, whether in blessing or in judgment. His shedding forth the Spirit had been an act of administration, which had revealed His Lordship.

As Christ He is the anointed **Head** of all things, and particularly of the little handful of His own left upon earth. His reception from the Father of the Spirit on their behalf, preliminary to shedding Him forth, had revealed His Christhood.

Being "made" Lord and Christ is quite consistent with His having been both during His sojourn on earth. These things were ever His, but now He was officially installed as such, as the risen and glorified Man. Wonderful news for us; but terrible news for those who had been guilty of His crucifixion. It simply guaranteed their dreadful damnation, if they persisted on their course.

The Spirit, who had just fallen upon the disciples, now began to work in the consciences of many of the hearers. As they began to realize the desperate situation in which they were placed by the resurrection of the Lord, they were pricked in the heart and cried out for direction. Peter indicated repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ as the way to remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit; for, as he points out in verse 39, the promise in Joel is to repentant Israel, and to the children of such, and even to distant

Gentiles. Thus in the first Christian sermon the extension of Gospel blessing to Gentiles is contemplated. Remission of sins and the gift of the Spirit carry with them all Christian blessings.

It may strike us as remarkable that Peter does not mention faith. But it is inferred, for no one would submit to baptism in the name of Jesus Christ except they believed in Him. Baptism signifies death, and consequently dissociation from the old life and connections. They would not be prepared to cut their links with the old life unless they really believed in Him who was Lord of the new life. With many words Peter testified, and exhorted them to cut their links, and thus save themselves from that "untoward generation."

Faith was present, for no less than three thousand received Peter's word. An hour before they knew the anguish of being pricked to the heart. Now they received the Gospel and cut their links by baptism. Having thus dissociated themselves from the mass of their nation, who had crucified their Lord, they took their stand by the side of the original 120, who were multiplied twenty-six times in one day. Further, not only did they **begin**, but they were marked by **stedfast continuance**.

The four things that marked them, according to verse 42, are worthy of note. First comes the apostles' doctrine or teaching. This lies at the foundation of things. The apostles were the men to whom the Lord had said, "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into **all truth**"

(John 16: 13). Their doctrine was consequently the fruit of the Spirit's guiding. The church was now in being, and the first thing that marked it was **subjection to the Spirit's teaching through the apostles**. The church does not teach; it is taught, and is subject to the Word as given by the Spirit.

Continuing in apostolic doctrine, they continued also in apostolic fellowship. **They found their practical life and society in apostolic company**. Formerly they had everything in common with the world; now their communion with the world had disappeared and communion with apostolic circles had been established — and the apostolic communion was "with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1: 3).

They continued also in the breaking of bread, which was the sign of their Lord's death, and also incidentally—as we learn from 1 Corinthians 10: 17—an **expression of fellowship**. Thus they were in constant remembrance of their Lord who died, and preserved from reverting to the old associations.

Finally, they continued in prayers. They had no power in themselves; all was vested in their Lord on high and in the Spirit given to them. Hence **constant dependence on God** was necessary for the maintenance of their spiritual life and testimony.

These things marked the primitive church, and should no less mark the church to-day. The things mentioned in the closing verses of the chapter were of a less permanent character. The

apostles, with signs and wonders are gone. The Christian communism, which prevailed at the outset, also passed away; as did the continuing with one accord in the temple, and the being in favour with all the people. Yet all was over-ruled of God. The selling of their possessions led to much poverty amongst the saints when years later the famine came, and thus was the occasion for that ministry of relief from Gentile assemblies (see, Acts II: 27—30) which did so much to bind together the Jewish and Gentile elements in the church of God.

For the moment there was simplicity, gladness and singleness of heart with much praise to God. And the work of God, adding the believing remnant to the church, still went on.

F. B. HOLE.

THE POSITION OF A CHRISTIAN.

SUBJECTION of heart to God and His word is the sole attitude which becomes one before God; to this we are called by the word of His testimony; and when we rest on Christ's redemption, His Spirit is given to be in us as thus brought to God. Such are those who have received the name of the Lord Jesus; for there can be no real faith in God now without accepting Christ, the Son of God and the Son of man. Impossible to please God without accepting that glorious Person, who is as truly God as Man, and who has wrought our reconciliation, which supposes indeed the reality

of His Godhead and the perfection of His Manhood, by a sacrifice in which sin has been completely and for ever judged before God. Consequently he that believes in the name of the Lord Jesus steps into all the blessing that is founded on the work of Christ and commensurate with the infinite dignity of His Person.

Such is the position of a Christian. Hence all questions as to acceptance with God are absolutely settled for him, by His grace in Christ; and no matter who or what he may be, whether here or there, black or white, high or low (I do not speak of heterodoxy or sin), every Christian is to be accepted equally as a member of Christ's body. We must rejoice to accept them all as belonging to that one Head, not only for heaven by and by, but for church fellowship now. For what can be more self-condemnatory than to acknowledge a relationship for Christ which you are ashamed to own for yourself and others on earth? It is not of the essence of Christianity to act now on what is unseen and eternal? To allow circumstances to outweigh this does not seem to evidence real faith or genuine love. Be it our joy then as it is our duty to remember in practice that we are called now to be witnesses of what God has done for all that are Christ's, always supposing that there be no question of plain scriptural discipline. There will be no doubt of it in heaven; there should be none on earth among those who are of heaven.

SEVEN STRIKING CONTRASTS

2 CORINTHIANS 4: 16 — 5: 8, furnishes us with seven striking contrasts. We acquire much of our knowledge by contrasts, which help us to exercise the power of discrimination. **We have to think.** One great tragedy of the present time is the refusal of so many men and women seriously to think, and this applies to believers as well as unbelievers. Thought would banish frivolity, but not at all the real joy of life. True thought would put its mark on our character, deportment, and aim.

OUTWARD MAN—INWARD MAN

(2 Cor. 4: 16).

The outward man is the physical man, the man that walks, eats, sleeps, performs the ordinary functions of life. The inward man belongs only to the Christian. It bespeaks a gracious work of God in the soul, the start of which is seen in the new birth, the fruit of God's sovereign act. So we find the wretched man in Romans 7, struggling to find out the enigma of real life, telling us, "I delight in the law of God after **the inward man.**" (Romans 7: 22). He had a new nature with a delight in God, which the flesh never has. Paul prays that the Ephesian saints might "be strengthened with might by God's Spirit in **the inner man**" (Eph. 3: 16). Colossians 3: 10 speaks of having "put on **the new man**, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him."

How good for the believer to realize that by the grace of God he has an inner man, the character of which will come out as we continue our study of these contrasts; an inner man of a new creation order, sinless and stainless. **We** are not sinless. We do not believe in sinless perfection; but we have a nature that is sinless. We read, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit [**practise**] sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3: 9).

The sinful nature alas! is with us as evil as in the unconverted. Every action of this is sin, whether in converted or unconverted. But there is, thank God, a sinless nature.

PERISH—RENEWED (2 Cor. 4: 16).

The outward man perishes. We all know this. It needs no explanation. The body is connected with a scene of death, because of sin. The body of the believer need not die for the Lord may come, and change our bodies of humiliation, and fashion them like unto His glorious body, since He has met the sentence of death, and freed the believer from its necessity. Apart from the second coming of Christ, the outward man perishes. How short is life! How quickly one generation passes after another!

But the inward man is renewed day by day. It never grows old, age creeps on to the outward man, because the renewal is not equal to the wear and tear. If it were we should never grow old. The

full renewal is wanting because of sin. But with the new nature the renewal is perfect and full. New creation knows not the meaning of the word, age. I once heard a trite saying, "There will never be a grey hair on the head of eternal life." How glorious it is to connect ourselves in thought with our true self, the inner man, the indestructible, the gift of God.

I remember many years ago a gentleman, who had been an army officer, and was the owner of an estate, saying to a business man, "I am 77 years old. I have had an interesting life. I have enjoyed every minute of it. Now I am old, and cannot live much longer, I am not going to grouse about it. You cannot eat your cake, and have it."

How true it is that you cannot eat your cake and have it. I was a very young Christian then, but I said to myself, "I have been eating the cake of eternal life for some time, and there is not a crumb less, nor ever will be throughout the ages of eternity. I have a cake, which I can eat, and HAVE." Hallelujah!

AFFLICTION—GLORY (2 Cor. 4: 17).

Affliction—how many endure it! How grievous it is, especially when there is wearying pain night and day! The time seems interminable. But let the mind reflect on "the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," and the true proportion is discovered, the divine perspective is ours. What seems so heavy becomes "light affliction." The

contrast is most vivid. "A far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!" Put the affliction which is for a moment in the scale that it may be weighed against the glory, which is eternal. How light the affliction; how weighty the glory.

A MOMENT—ETERNAL (2 Cor. 4: 17).

What a contrast! A moment no sooner arrives than it is gone. Eternal is something that unending ages make no impression upon. What a glorious prospect the afflicted saint has! We heard of a Christian who was bedridden. Months and years had gone by, and the heart grew weary at the prospect of its continuance. She asked the doctor one day, "Doctor, how long am I to lie here?" He replied, "A day at a time." But in the light of the glory that day shrinks to a moment. How blessed!

SEEABLE—UNSEEABLE (2 Cor. 4: 18).

Are we looking at the things which are seen, or the things that are unseen? Much will depend upon our standpoint. We have all heard of the old-fashioned prisons of long ago. Situated on the street, often merely a big room with strong iron bars, the prisoners could look into the street, and even put their hands out through the bars of their prison, and beg food and alms of the passers-by. It was said of two prisoners, one looked up, and saw—**stars**; the other looked down, and saw—**mud**.

Do we look up, and see the unseeable beyond

the stars, or do we look down and see merely the mud of this world of pride and lust? The unconverted can have no vision beyond this life, but faith puts the telescope to the eye of the believer in Christ, and he sees things that are unseeable. What glorious things these are! Did not Stephen at his martyrdom see "the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God"? (Acts 7: 55). What a glorious sight, surpassing infinitely anything upon earth! Did the fanatics with the stones in their hands, and hate in their hearts, see what the victim of their anger saw? They were blinded, and saw nothing of the glory that filled the eyes of Stephen.

As a matter of fact the unseeable things are more real than the seeable. If a Christian dropped down dead, in a moment the seeable things for him are no more. His link with the environments of earth is broken. But are the unseeable things, that faith can apprehend, no more? Nay, the believer has got into the region of the unseeable things, and that for ever. Paul, when caught up to the third heaven heard things which were unlawful to utter on earth. What a change for the believer when these things shall be ours in their fulness. Even now we have the Holy Spirit by which they are revealed; but then we shall know as we are known.

TEMPORAL—ETERNAL (2 Cor. 4. 18).

How this contrast is urged again and again upon our attention. It reminds us of Dr. Thomas

Chalmers, that great evangelist of Scotland. He was a man formerly given to hobbies. One was the study of higher mathematics, another of astronomy. As a young minister, alas, he was unconverted; a blind leader of the blind. He wrote a pamphlet urging that ministers should have ample time for their hobbies and particular pleasures. He got converted and his standpoint was completely altered. On one occasion he was urging upon his brethren whole-hearted zeal in the work of the ministry, when a minister present, who remembered his early pamphlet, twitted him publicly with his change of front. Dr. Chalmers rose, and said, "I was fond of mathematics in my young days, but I missed the mark. I had not realized two magnitudes, the littleness of time, and the vastness of eternity." It is the recognition of these two magnitudes that helps us to make the right choice.

How temporal are the things that are seen; how eternal the things that are unseen.

TABERNACLE—HOUSE (2 Cor 5: 1).

The "tabernacle" in our Scripture refers to the outward man, the earthly bodies which are our temporary home. The tabernacle in the wilderness was a movable structure, easily taken down and moved from place to place. A few brief years, and the tenure of our bodies is over. What a wonderful solace the words of the inspired writer, "WE KNOW . . . we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the

heavens." A building, a house, something in contrast to the tabernacle of our present dwelling, something stable, permanent, yea, eternal, a body of glory like to our Redeemer's own body of glory. What a prospect! How happy that we can say, "WE KNOW." Certainty of such a nature is a great happiness; it is, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11: 1).

May we learn by these striking contrasts, and be helped to realize where our true interests lie, and put first things first.

A. J. POLLOCK.

"MY GOSPEL."

- (2) "THE GLAD TIDINGS OF JESUS AND THE RESURRECTION" (ACTS 17: 18).

(The above and other quotations in this article are from Darby's New Translation).

WE have already observed that the source of the glad tidings is "the grace of God." We are now to learn that the basis of the glad tidings is "**Jesus and the resurrection.**"

He is the only One who could bring to ruined man the revelation of the grace of God. In Him it was personified; by Him it was expressed; by it He tasted "death for everything" (Heb. 2: 9). His words, His ways, His acts were the perfect expression of it. If however we were to be brought into the knowledge, the benefit and the enjoyment

of it He must die, and, as the scripture just cited indicates, He has died. Measure, if we can, the distance that He travelled from the Throne of God to the Cross at Calvary, and thus try to form some idea of the grace that led Him to travel so far, to stoop so low, and to suffer so much. Right into the domain of death He went that God might be glorified; that the sin question might be settled; that the grace of God might be made known; that we might be saved and brought to know the Father as revealed in His well-beloved Son.

Not only had He to die however: more was necessary. If God's glory was to be maintained; His throne established; His righteousness vindicated; if the defeat of the enemy, the final clearance of every trace of sin, the annulling of death was to be complete; He must rise out from among the dead. Herein lies the very kernel of the glad tidings: He **is** risen, He **has** "the keys of death and of hades" (Rev. 1: 18), He **is** Master of the situation. Every foe has been vanquished and Jesus lives. Hallelujah!

The risen Saviour is the Object of our faith; the delight of our heart; the One upon whom all our hopes rest; in whom everything is established and sure. Upon this great fact the enemy has focussed his attack ever since it happened. Someone has remarked:—

"The devil paid men for denying it when it occurred, and he has been paying men for denying it ever since."

In the Acts of the Apostles we note that it was when resurrection was mentioned Satan was roused. The chapter we are considering supplies evidence of that. We read that the wise men of Athens said, "What would this chatterer say? And some, he seems to be an announcer of foreign demons, because he announced the glad tidings of Jesus and the resurrection." The enemy will not object to a cross outside or inside a religious building; on a lady's breast, or on a gentleman's watch-chain, he will allow people to bend the knee before it; but he will put forth all his power to prevent souls believing, "the glad tidings of Jesus and the resurrection."

We wonder if all our readers are resting upon this immovable foundation? To know that the Lord is risen is to know that every demand of God's Throne has been met; every claim of divine justice has been satisfied; God has been glorified; and everything is now centred in Christ, His well-beloved Son, as Man risen out from among the dead. Every purpose of God is established in that risen Man, and will be fulfilled to the very letter by Him. Peace for the guilty sinner; blessing for the happy believer, such as no words can describe; everything, in time and for eternity, in Him who voluntarily went into death; who has triumphantly come out of death; and who is the pledge that all that God has planned will be carried to full fruition; that all that vast wealth of blessing for those for whom Christ died is theirs now in Christ risen out from among the dead.

We lay stress upon the fact that He is risen **out from among** the dead. The Jews believed in resurrection. Martha spoke of "the resurrection in the last day" (John 11: 24), but resurrection out from among the dead was unheard of. A Man, who had lain dead in a sepulchre, came out from that sepulchre alive, and for forty days went in and out among His disciples, afterwards taking His seat on the right hand of God. He was a real Man yet the Son of God eternal. Because He is risen all who are His, and who have fallen asleep, shall, when He comes for "His own," be raised out from among the dead.

But that is not all. All believers who are alive when He comes will be changed, and, without passing through death at all, will, with sleeping saints raised, be caught up "TOGETHER" to meet the Lord in the air, and all that will be accomplished "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." Then will death and the grave be challenged, as well as all opposing forces, as the cry of triumph rings out, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? . . . Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15: 55—57).

Nor is that all. A thousand years later, those who have died in their sins will be raised. They may have had a reverent burial; they may have perished in the sea; or their bodies may have been cremated, and their ashes scattered to the winds. All the dead will be raised and their identity will

be maintained, and death and hades will be cast into the lake of fire (see Rev. 20: 11—15). Then shall be established the New Heavens, and the New Earth, where death and every woe shall be unknown.

"That world of bliss without alloy,
The saints' eternal home."

Are we surprised that this is called, "The glad tidings of Jesus and the resurrection"? Do we wonder that the Apostle, himself once a relentless opponent of it, delighted now to proclaim such a message? Ye preachers of the Gospel, Sunday School teachers, Christian workers; be sure that this is the main plank of your Gospel platform, otherwise you give your hearers no sure foundation upon which to rest. Tell it out wherever you go that the once crucified, now risen Saviour is available for all; that by believing on "Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification," they are entitled to say, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 4: 24, 25; 5: 1). Tell it out! Tell it out!

At the same time let us feed our souls upon it; rejoice in the victory of it; live in a way that is worthy of it; and thus ceaselessly announce "THE GLAD TIDINGS OF JESUS AND THE RESURRECTION."

W. BRAMWELL DICK.

THE BEGINNING OF MIRACLES

JOHNSON alone of the four Evangelists tells us that Jesus was present at a marriage feast. He also tells us, and he alone, that He stood with bereaved and sorrowing women at a closed grave. The marriage is the brightest day of a man's life, its true beginning, the closed grave is the darkest day, the end of all its hopes and joys, and Jesus was at both.

It was given to John alone to tell us so. This is remarkable for John is the one who shews us the Lord in His divine glory. He was Jesus of Nazareth truly, the despised and rejected of men, from the most despised of all the towns of Galilee. Philip speaks of Him by this Name in chapter 1, and it was the Name that Pilate gave Him when he wrote the writing for the cross. But Jesus of Nazareth was **the Word**, without a beginning, and the Word was God. Is God interested in the joys and sorrows of men then? Yes, He is. "The only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him;" and we believe that these two incidents are recorded for us in John's Gospel in order that we might be impressed with this great fact.

It was at the marriage that He performed His first miracle and at the grave He performed His greatest. Our subject is the former. There He began to manifest His glory, the first ray of it shone in the darkness and penetrated the minds and hearts of His chosen disciples and they believed on

Him. Of this incident it has very beautifully been said, "Here He tolled for the first time the great bell of the universe, that summoned men to listen to His sermon."

It was a humble feast to which He went. These friends of His were poor in circumstances and lowly in heart. Only such would have asked Him to share their joy, and only to such would He have gone. The rich and ruling who had their mansions in Jerusalem did not want Him, and "men full of meat" had their own wine and plenty of it, and wanted none of His, but may we not conclude that these humble Galileans had a felt but unspoken need in their hearts when they bade Him to their marriage?

"The mother of Jesus was there," and her character comes out in the incident; she was observant and compassionate. Things were not going well and she sensed it. There was a great lack at that feast, and the young people were beginning to be embarrassed, and she realized it, and for their sakes she speaks to the Lord. It is more than likely that she had often turned to Him in her own need, now she speaks to Him of others' need. "They have no wine." Or may it be that she had waited long for Him to manifest Himself, and vindicate Himself and her, and had begun to chafe at the long and apparently useless delay?

We may be sure that His rebuke was ministered with great tenderness, and in such a way that she would not be humiliated in the presence of others.

But it was not for her to direct Him, and she had still to learn that He had to be about His "Father's business," and to wait His Father's time and His Father's word; and she had to learn to wait also. "Mine hour is not yet come" was a mysterious word; it runs through this Gospel, and we cannot in this paper search out its meaning; it reached far beyond that marriage feast, but it did not mean that He would not intervene for the present need.

I notice that there is a reference from this saying to Isaiah 30: 18 in the "Scofield Bible." "Therefore will the Lord wait that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted that He may have mercy upon you blessed are all they that wait for Him." He waits for the right moment to bless, and happy are those that wait for Him. He will not move before His time and He cannot be behind it, and when He moves not only does He bless, but in blessing He is exalted; His glory shines forth as in our story. And that passage reminds me of another word in the same prophecy. I will quote it as it is given in Darby's New Translation, "Never have men heard, nor perceived by the ear, nor hath eye seen a God beside Thee, **who acteth for him that waiteth for Him**" (Isaiah 64: 4). We see how He acted at the marriage feast and we may stake our everlasting well-being upon the fact that He is the same to-day. He still acts for him that waits for Him.

Six waterpots were there, the witnesses to an external and unprofitable purifying. Yet the waterpots were as empty as the wine bottles; but He

was there, the Creator, full of love and pity for His needy creatures, to supply the lack and more beside. He only looked for a willing obedience to His word; then He would work, and these servants, who must have been impressed by His mother's words, were most admirable in their obedience. "Fill the water-pots," He said, "And they filled them up to the brim." "Draw out now and bear it to the Governor of the feast," He said, "And they bare it." No doubts nor questions entered their minds. It was enough that He commanded, and they obeyed with enthusiasm. This willing and unquestioning obedience is an indispensable condition for blessing. How often He would have filled us with all joy and peace in believing, but we did not trust Him enough to simply obey His word.

Obedience results in intelligence. The governor of the feast did not know from whence this good wine had come, nor did the bridegroom, **"but the servants which drew the water knew."** But if this governor did not know from whence the good wine had come, he knew the ways of men and the character of the world. "Every man," said he, "at the beginning doth set forth the good wine: and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse." It is even so, "the grass withereth and the flower fadeth." Such is man: with what hope he begins and with what disappointment he ends. How doleful are the words, "then that which is worse." Alas for those who have no resources nor hopes outside their own plans and schemes, that

are bounded by the world and its lusts that pass away.

"But thou hast kept the good wine until now." Yes, He gives the good wine that never fails and of which those who drink do not tire. How wonderfully, how bountifully He gives.

"Light that groweth not pale with day's decrease;
Love that never can fail when life shall cease;
Joy no trial can mar,
Hope that shineth afar,
Faith serene as a star
And Christ's own peace."

Of this miracle it has been said, "The quality and greatness of the gift were worthy of God; and we see the generosity all the more clearly when we remember that this bountiful Creator had a little while before refused to create bread to save Himself from the pangs of hunger."

Deep lessons and illuminating dispensational truths lie hidden in the story and will yield themselves to the searching heart, but we must not miss that that lies on the surface. We are taught by it that the Lord is interested in the lives of His creatures and He will give His presence to them in their bright days and dark days if they desire Him and will ask Him. We are taught also that the brightest of God's gifts beneath the sun fails, for even the best is marred by sin, but that the Lord has come to bring in a new life and a new joy that cannot fail, to give to all who are obedient to Him joy unspeakable and full of glory, and **this is the beginning of miracles.** If this is **the beginning** what shall **the end** of His gracious wonders be?

“If here on earth the thought of Jesus’ love
Lifts our poor hearts this weary world above;
If even here the taste of heavenly springs
So cheers the spirit that the pilgrim sings:

What will the sunshine of His glory prove?
What the unmingled fulness of His love?
What hallelujahs will His presence raise?
What but one loud eternal burst of praise?”

In His presence is fulness of joy and at His right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

J. T. MAWSON.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(ACTS 3: 1—5: 42).

This outline of Acts is brief and condensed. Except the above passage of Scripture be read, it is hardly likely that these notes will prove to be of real interest or profit.

THE Acts is an historical book, but it is not mere history. An immense amount of apostolic service is left unrecorded, and mention is made of just a few incidents which serve to show the way the Spirit of God operated in bearing witness to the risen and exalted Jesus, and in conducting the disciples into the fulness of Christian blessing. The book covers a period of transition from the beginning of the church at Jerusalem to the full ingathering from among the Gentiles.

Chapter 3 opens with the healing of the man who, lame from his birth, lay at the Beautiful gate of the temple. As the next chapter tells us he was

above forty years old—the complete period of probation had been fulfilled in him. The man had not been healed by the Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh, though He so frequently taught in the temple; but he was healed by the power of His Name, now that He was glorified in heaven. Peter had neither silver nor gold, but the power of the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth he could wield, and the man was instantly healed in most triumphant fashion. To-day many earnest Christian folk are mostly concerned about collecting the silver and gold for the support of the work of the Lord, and the power of the Name lies largely unused. This is to our reproach.

By reason of his deformity the lame man had lain under certain disabilities according to the law; now grace had removed his deformity and with it the disability, so that he could enter the temple with freedom; and holding on to the Apostle there was no hiding those who had been the instruments of his deliverance. This gave Peter the opportunity of testimony. He at once put himself and John out of the picture, in order that the glorified Jesus might fill it.

Peter's boldness is remarkable. He charged the people with their denial of "the Holy One and the Just," though he himself not many weeks before had denied his Lord. They had had before them "the Prince [Author] of life" and "a murderer;" that is a taker of life. They killed the One, and chose the other; yet He, whom they killed, God had raised from the dead, and thus they were

caught in red-handed rebellion against God. Moreover this "perfect soundness" has been granted to the lame man in the power of His Name, through faith. They could not see the glory of Jesus in heaven, but they could see the miracle wrought in His Name upon earth. The soundness on earth was linked with the glory in heaven.

Verse 17 shows that God was prepared to treat their dreadful crime as a sin of ignorance—as manslaughter, for which a city of refuge is provided, and not as murder. This was a direct answer to the prayer on the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." By their sinful act God had accomplished His purpose as to the suffering of Christ, and hence there was still an offer of mercy for them as a nation. That offer Peter made, as recorded in verses 19—26 of our chapter. Everything hinged upon their repentance and conversion.

Whether Isaiah 35: 6, 7, was in Peter's mind as he spoke about "the times of refreshing," we cannot say, but it does seem as if it must have been in the mind of the Spirit who was speaking through him. When "the lame man" shall "leap as an hart," then, "in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." But all this refreshing predicted by Isaiah is for "the ransomed of the Lord," and for no others. Hence only repentance and a complete turning round would bring such times; if that took place God would send Jesus Christ to bring them to pass.

The term, "restitution of all things," has been misused in the service of the idea that God is going ultimately to save and restore everybody—even the devil himself. But the passage reads, "the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken" It is things, not persons, and things which from the outset He had spoken by His prophets. God is going to make good every word, and to establish in Christ everything which has broken down in the hands of men. That time will not come till Jesus Himself comes, and since He is the Prophet of whom Moses spoke, all things will be brought to an issue when He does come, and everyone who disregards Him will be destroyed from among the people. There will be a time of blessing established, the like of which has not been since the world began.

In these words, then, Peter made the definite offer on God's behalf that if at this point there was repentance and turning to God on a national scale, Jesus would return and establish the predicted times of blessing. In the last verse of the chapter he also added that, whatever their response was, God had raised up Jesus to bless them in turning them from their sins. These two things we all need: first, the judicial blotting out of our sins; second, to be turned away from our sins, so that they lose their power over us.

As we read the opening verses of chapter 4, we find the answer to this offer, which was given by the official heads of the nation. The offer being based on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, it was

particularly obnoxious to the Sadducees and to the priests, who were of that party. They gave it an unqualified rejection by arresting the apostles. The work of God, in converting power, went on however, as verse 4 records; and the next day, when examined before the council, Peter found fresh opportunity for testimony, in answering their question as to the power and Name in which he had acted.

The Name and power was that of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom they had crucified and whom God had exalted. Psalm 118: 22 had been fulfilled in Him, and Peter proceeded to widen out the testimony from that which was particular to that which is universal. The power of the Name was right before their eyes in the particular case of the lame man healed: it was no less potent for the salvation of men universally. The physical healing of the man was just a sign of the spiritual healing which the Name of Jesus brings. The despised Jesus of Nazareth is the only door into salvation.

Verses 13—22, show most strikingly how Peter's testimony was vindicated. The apostles were unlearned and ignorant according to worldly standards, yet they had been with Jesus and were bold, and this impressed the council, who would fain have condemned them. Three things hindered however:—

- (1) "They could say nothing against it" (verse 14);

- (2) They had to confess, "we cannot deny it" (verse 16);
- (3) They found "nothing how they might punish them" (verse 21).

When men wish to discredit anything, they usually in the first place deny it, if that be at all possible. If that be not possible, they find some way of speaking against it, misrepresenting it, if need be. Lastly, if that be not possible, they attack the persons involved in the thing, blackening their characters and punishing them. These three well-known devices were in the minds of the council, but all failed them since they were fighting against God. They could merely threaten them and demand that they ceased to proclaim the name of Jesus. Peter repudiated their demand, since God had commanded them to preach in the name of Jesus, and as He was infinitely the higher Authority, they must obey Him rather than them.

There follows, verses 23—37, a beautiful picture of the early church in Jerusalem. Released by the council, the apostles went to "their own company." This shows us that at the outset the church was a **"company" distinct and apart from the world**, even from the religious world of Judaism. This point needs much emphasis in days when the world and the church have so largely been mixed together.

The early church found its resource in **prayer**. In the emergency they turned to God and not to

men. They might have wished for a council less Sadduceean in character with more liberality and breadth of outlook, but they did not agitate to get it; they simply sought the face of God, the sovereign Ruler of men.

In their prayer they were led to the Word of God. Psalm 2 shed its light on the situation that confronted them. The interpretation of it would refer it to the last days, but they saw the application of it which referred to their days. The early church was marked by **subjection to the Word**, finding in it all the light and guidance they needed. This also is a very important and instructive feature.

They were marked too by far more concern for the honour of the name of Jesus than for their own ease and comfort. They did not request a cessation of persecution and opposition, but that they might have boldness in speaking the word, and that miraculous support which would exalt His Name. The church is the place where **that Name is held dear**.

As a result of this there was an exceptional manifestation of **the power of the Spirit**. All of them were filled with Him; the very building where they met was shaken, and their prayer for especial boldness was instantly answered. And not only this, that which they had not requested was granted to them, they all were **"of one heart and of one soul."** This of course flowed out of the fact that the "one Spirit" was filling every one of

them. If all believers to-day were filled with the Spirit oneness of mind and heart would mark them. It is the only way in which such oneness can be brought to pass.

Out of this flowed the next feature which verse 33 mentions. There was **great power in the Apostles' testimony to the world**. The church did not preach, but filled with grace and power it supported those who did. The preaching then, as always, lay in the hands of those called of God to do it, but the power with which they did it was largely influenced by the state that characterized the whole church.

The closing verses show that just as there was powerful testimony flowing without so there was the circulation of **love and care within**. The Christian communism, mentioned at the end of chapter 2, still continued. The distribution was made to each, "according as he had need." Not people's wants, but their needs were met, and so nobody lacked. At a later date Paul could say, "I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need" (Phil. 4: 12), but at this time such experiences were unknown by the saints in Jerusalem. Whether, by escaping such experiences, they profited more than Paul did, by having them, may be an open question, though we incline to think they did not. At any rate, the action of Barnabas was very beautiful, and the love and care found in the church then should be known to-day, though there may be some variation in the

exact mode of expressing it.

Chapter 5 opens with a solemn incident which throws up in striking relief one last feature which characterized the early church: there was **the exercise of a holy discipline** by the power of God. The case of Ananias and Sapphira was exceptional without a doubt. When God institutes anything new, it seems to be His way to signalize His holiness by making an example of any who challenge it. He did so with the man who broke the sabbath in the wilderness (see, Num. 15: 32—36), and also with Achan when Israel began to enter Canaan (see, Josh. 7: 18—26), and so with Ananias and his wife here. Later in Israel's history many broke the sabbath and took forbidden Babylonish things without incurring similar penalties, just as during the church's history many have acted lies or told them without falling dead.

What lay behind the lie in this case were the twin evils of covetousness and vainglory. Ananias wanted to keep part of the money for himself, and yet gain the reputation of having devoted all to the Lord, as Barnabas had done. Such is the mind of the flesh, even in a saint. How many of us have never had the workings of similar evils in our own hearts? But in this case Satan had been at work, and by the unhappy couple he issued a direct challenge to the Holy Ghost present in the church. The Holy Ghost accepted the challenge, and demonstrated His presence in this drastic and unmistakable fashion. Peter recognized that this

was the position, when to Sapphira he spoke of their doings as an agreement "to tempt the Spirit of the Lord."

In result Satan's challenge was made to serve the interests of the Lord and His gospel, as the following verses show. In the first place, this episode put great fear upon all who heard of it, and even upon the church itself. Here is indicated something which is very lacking in the church to-day—to say nothing of men generally. The fear of God is a very wholesome thing in the hearts of saints, and it is quite compatible with a deep sense of the love of God. Paul had that fear in the light of the judgment seat (see, 2 Cor. 5: 10, 11), though for the unbeliever it will go beyond fear to positive terror. A godly fear, springing from a deep sense of the holiness of God, is much to be desired.

Then, as the early part of verse 12, and verses 15 and 16 show, there was no slackening in the miraculous power of God, ministered through the Apostles. Indeed the power increased, so that the mere shadow of Peter wrought wonders. Within the parenthesis printed in brackets (verses 12—14) we get the statement that after such an happening men were afraid to join themselves to the Christian company; yet this was no real loss, for it stopped anything in the nature of a mass movement, that would have swept a good deal of unreality into the church. The real work of God was not hindered, as verse 14 states. People may

be added to the church who are mere professors, but no one is "added to the Lord" save those in whom there is a vital work of God. Thus the sad business of Ananias and Sapphira was overruled for good, though to a superficial observer it might have seemed a heavy blow to the church's prospects.

God having wrought in this striking way for blessing, we see, in verse 17, the next counter-stroke of Satan. The priests and Sadducees, filled with indignation, again arrest them. This is met by God sending an angel to open the prison doors and liberate them. The next day, their escape being discovered, they are arrested, but in much more gentle fashion. The words of the priests confess the power with which God had been at work, for they admit that Jerusalem had been filled with the teaching; yet they manifest the awful hardness of their hearts in saying, "ye . . . intend to bring this Man's blood upon us." Why, they had themselves said, "His blood be on us, and on our children." The truth was that God was going to take them at their word, and do it.

Peter's answer was short and simple. They were going to obey God rather than men. Then he again summarized their testimony and repeated it. The Holy Ghost and they were witnesses to the resurrection of the Jesus, whom they slew. But God had exalted Him, not to be at that time a Judge, meting out damnation upon their guilty heads, but a Prince and a Saviour, giving repent-

ance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. Repentance as well as forgiveness is viewed as a gift.

Though mercy and forgiveness was still the burden of Peter's message, the proclamation of it only stirred them to fury. Mercy presupposes sin and guilt, and that they were not disposed to admit; hence they took counsel to slay them. Satan is a murderer from the beginning, and under his influence murder filled their hearts. Yet God has many ways of checkmating the evil designs of men, and in this case He used the worldly wisdom of the renowned Gamaliel, who had Saul of Tarsus as his pupil.

Gamaliel cited two recent cases of men who had risen up pretending to be somebody; the type of man to whom the Lord alluded in John 10, when He spoke of those who climbed up some other way, and who were but thieves and robbers. They came to nought indeed, and Gamaliel thought that Jesus might have been one of these spurious shepherds, instead of the true Shepherd of Israel. Had He been such, His cause also would have come to nought. Gamaliel's warning took effect and the Apostles were released, though with a beating and the demand that they ceased their testimony.

Truly the council was fighting against God, for the Apostles rejoiced in their suffering for His Name, and diligently pursued their witness both publicly in the temple and more privately in every house.

F. B. HOLE.

"MY GOSPEL."

- (3) "THE GLAD TIDINGS OF THE GLORY OF THE CHRIST" (2 COR. 4: 4).

(The above and other quotations in this article are from Darby's New Translation).

WE can have no difficulty in seeing a beautiful order in the unfolding of **God's Glad Tidings**. The source: The Grace of God. The basis: The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ consequent upon His having accomplished the great work of redemption on the cross at Calvary. Now we advance a stage further. In the portion which heads our paper we have set before us our Lord Jesus, risen from among the dead; now glorified, and presented as the Object for the delighted and worshipful contemplation of all who believe in Him.

The subject of the first epistle might be summed up as "**Jesus Christ and Him crucified**" (1 Cor. 2: 2). That was because there was so much in evidence in the Church at Corinth that had to be corrected. There was evil, ecclesiastical, moral,

social, doctrinal, and also the tendency to boast in natural wisdom and ability. The Apostle had to bring the truth of the cross to bear upon all this activity of the flesh, and to show that all that man is naturally, whether that of which he might think he had cause to be proud, or that of which he knew he had reason to be ashamed, had been ended judicially before God in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Happy for us when we learn that lesson! It would seem as if the saints at Corinth had done so to some extent, so that the Holy Spirit could carry on His normal and happy work of calling attention, as he does in the second epistle, to

JESUS CHRIST AND HIM GLORIFIED.

The key verse of the second epistle seems to be,

"But we all, looking on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3: 18).

What was not allowed to Moses in his day, (see Exod. 33: 18—23), is our holy privilege in this day, because that glory is seen in the face of Him who is the Son of God eternal, but who as the risen and glorified Man now adorns the throne of God. We are permitted to look with unveiled face upon that glory, and as we continue to do so, we are unconsciously transformed. In other words, we become like Him whose glory we behold.

But just as the enemy opposes the telling out of "the glad tidings of the grace of God," and "the glad tidings of Jesus and the resurrection," so he, "the god of this world has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving, so that the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine forth for them" (4: 4). Then we see how God works. Just as in creation He came into a scene of chaos and darkness and said, "Let there be light; and there was light" (Gen. 1: 3); so He has "shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (4: 6). We ask our readers to consider this. Some one has said:—

"The glad tidings of the grace of God gives me a Saviour for my soul. The glad tidings of the glory of Christ gives me an Object for my heart."

A Saviour for the soul we must have, and the grace of God carries with it salvation through Him who died and rose again. Now the Holy Spirit works to lead us on further, to know that glorious Person as the Object for our heart. Until we know Him thus, there will be no real progress in our Christian life. We are persuaded that the lack of this accounts for many derelicts in the Christian pathway.

Alas! How many there are who can recall a time when they trusted the Lord Jesus, got the know-

ledge of the forgiveness of their sins, and were satisfied that on leaving this world they would go to Heaven; but **what about the in-between?**

Their lives are unchanged; their former habits continue; the novel is their food; the picture house their recreation; and former companions, still unconverted, their preference. Why is this? Because the heart must have an object and they have not found it in Christ. They benefit by the blessing but they do not know the Blesser. At meetings they may sing: "Whom have we, Lord, but Thee, soul thirst to satisfy?" or, "Now none but Christ can satisfy," but it is not true of them. They are like salt that has lost his savour, "neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out" (Luke 14: 35); for, after all, men despise one who, while professing one thing, practises another. Those whom we have described are no use for God, and men have no use for them. This may seem strong language but we write thus because of our intense desire that we and all our dear fellow-believers should have Christ in glory as the satisfying Object of our hearts.

This knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is spoken of as "**treasure.**" Note that word. How keen men are for treasure. They will go to the ends of the earth, spend money, risk life to secure it. This treasure is ours; but we have it in "earthen vessels, that the surpassingness of the power may be of God, and not from us" (verse 7). God desires that the treasure should be

displayed; that the light having shone **in** should shine **out**. How is that to be done? Surely, by the breaking of the earthen vessel. Just as Gideon and his three hundred men who carried lamps in their pitchers, by breaking the pitchers, displayed the light, and went forth to victory (see Judges 7: 20), so the vessel is broken in our case that what has shone in may shine out.

The verses immediately following in our chapter show how this worked out in the case of the apostle. We see the breaking and the result:—

- (i). “Every way afflicted, **but not straitened;**”
- (ii) “Seeing no apparent issue, **but our way not entirely shut up;**”
- (iii) “Persecuted, **but not abandoned;**”
- (iv) “Cast down, **but not destroyed;**”
- (v) “Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, **that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body;**”
- (vi) “Always delivered unto death on account of Jesus, **that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh.**”

So completely was this devoted servant of God under the influence of Christ in glory that he was rendered superior to all the onslaughts of the

enemy. The more circumstances were calculated to press upon him, the more Christ was expressed by him. The breaking of the vessel was but the occasion for the shining out of the light that had shone in, and caused him to give thanks to God, "who always leads us in triumph in the Christ" (2 Cor. 2: 14).

Lastly: We observe how occupation with our Lord Jesus Christ and HIS world weaned Paul, as it will wean us, from MAN'S WORLD, caused him, as it will cause us, to hold but lightly the things that are "seen and temporal," and to live in the light of the things that are "unseen and eternal." Thus the affliction becomes "**light**" when measured by that "**weight**" of glory; and it is "**but for a moment**" when compared with that which is "**eternal**."

Two points we desire to emphasize in closing. (i) The Holy Spirit indwells us to engage our hearts with the Lord Jesus Christ where He now is, so that we may come out here to represent Him where He is not. (ii) An ever-artful enemy, of whose devices we are not ignorant, will ever seek to prevent this in order to hinder, if he can, the going forth of a testimony to the glorified Christ in the glory of God.

"O Lord! Thy glory we behold,
Though not with mortal eyes;
That glory, on the Father's throne,
No human sight descries."

W. BRAMWELL DICK.

CHRIST, THE SUPREME EXAMPLE.

“CHRIST also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps” (1 Peter 2: 21). He suffered an atoning death upon the cross, without which there could be no example. The question of sin must be settled, a righteous relationship with God must be established first. Then the example comes in.

As to our practical lives as Christians, Scripture appeals to the very highest example possible, even that of our Lord Jesus Christ. To examine one or two striking instances of this in Scripture will suffice.

Take the matter of Christian generosity. The Apostle Paul writing to the Christians in the wealthy city of Corinth refers to the generosity of the believers in the Macedonian assemblies. Their giving was magnificent. “Their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality” (2 Corinthians 8: 2). We read the secret of it all. They “first gave their own selves to the Lord.” They gave THEMSELVES. These poverty-stricken Macedonian believers put into the shade their rich Corinthian brethren. First giving themselves, all else fell into line. When the appeal came for help it was given with rich liberality; not grudgingly, but with much entreaty they prayed that their amazingly generous contribution should be received. It was not a question of a tithe, how-

ever handsome ten per cent. might be, as obtained under the law. The Lord gave Himself for them. What an Example! They would give themselves.

But Paul, whilst seeking to stimulate the rich Corinthian believers by the example of the Macedonians, does not stop there. He rises to the height of supreme example, than which there could be none higher. He says, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8: 9).

Who can estimate what the riches of the Lord Jesus were? His position in the heaven of heavens, the eternal Son, dwelling in the Father's bosom, the place of supreme and divine love, receiving the homage of myriad angelic hosts—who can, indeed, estimate what those riches were? See Him a Babe in humble circumstances! See the stable of the inn where the Prince of glory was born! See the rough manger where the holy Infant lay! Go to Nazareth! See the carpenter's workshop, and behold Him at his daily toil, subject to His parents! See Him step into witness for God! Mark Him on the lonely hillside, His only companions, the stars overhead and the birds in their nests, and the wild beasts in their lairs. His hair wet with the bounteous dew of those eastern lands! He had no home, no sleeping place! But further; see Him in the garden of Gethsemane! See Him in His agony! He shrinks from the terrible cup of God's judg-

ment on sin. "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." There comes the band of miscreants with swords and torches to take Him. He submits.

See Him on the cross of shame! Bitter indeed was the cup He had to drink. The ingratitude of His earthly people. He had served them, healed their sicknesses, fed their hungry, raised their dead. The hatred of the chief priests, the physical agonies of being done to death on a cross were His. Terrible as this was, the highest point of poverty was yet to be reached. Oh! listen to the cry of anguish, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27: 46). Can we ever realise, even faintly, what poverty was His at that moment? When He said that, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head," it was true there was no earthly spot, but He had the joy of pillowing His head on His Father's breast. But here is absolute abandonment to all the weight of God's wrath against sin. "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

With such an example before us, what shall be the kind and style of our Christian giving? Something like this must have been in the mind of the person who designed a collection plate, and fashioned it in the shape of a hand pierced with a nail. The rich man could scarcely have the effrontery to drop a sixpence on such a collection plate. He gave Himself. The widow's mites were

prized above all the gold and silver of the rich. She gave her all.

Let us turn to another example. The Apostle John exhorts the children of God to love each other in 1 John 4: 7 and 11. What lies between verses 7 and 11? The supreme example. Are we Christians told to love each other? We read, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (verses 9, 10).

Then we have the words, "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." What a climax! What an example! It would follow that, if we Christians do not love each other as we should, we do not appreciate God's amazing gift of His Son, that we might live through Him and have the propitiation for our sins. Such love should indeed move our hearts.

Moreover the divine nature is marked by love. "God is love." If we are made partakers of the divine nature one of its characteristics will be love. Sure is it, that the opposite, hate, comes from the flesh. It is well to know what tree it is that bears the fruit.

Take a third instance. "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and

gave Himself for it" (Ephesians 5: 25). What happy Christian homes there would be, if this standard were carried out.

It is indeed striking how the supreme example is put before us in Scripture. Let us pay reverent and earnest heed to these exhortations, which could be multiplied, as we run through the Scriptures.

A. J. POLLOCK.

"THE GOOD THINGS THAT BELONG TO ADVERSITY."

AN ancient writer has said, "The good things that belong to adversity are to be admired." Fidelity to Christ is indeed a good thing and we can admire its clear expression, as seen coming out in the conduct of the blind man of John 9. He was destitute, unknown and unnamed, yet, through the infinite grace of Jesus, his fidelity to Him in sharp adversity has been imperishably recorded in the Word of God.

His experience of the grace of Jesus was brief, and that makes the record so encouraging to the Lord's people, especially to the newly converted. Though young and inexperienced he lived right up to the light he had; refused to stoop to the despicable conduct of making the best of both worlds; thrived on persecution, and subsequently came,

in the knowledge of the Son of God, to worship at His feet—place of precious privilege and delight, the place proper to every enlightened soul!

Now this man's history sets forth in unmistakable terms the pathway of one taught in the school of God. We see a simple and honest heart, linked by gratitude and affection to Jesus, able to stand fast in the face of hatred and fierce persecution. And we would suggest three reasons for this superiority:

1. He never doubted what Jesus had done for him.
2. He did not go beyond what he knew but acted up to the light he had; and above all,
3. What he declared, he displayed.

1. He knew what Jesus had done for him. Listen to this poor man playing the sweet music of the psalmist. "Since the world began was it not heard that any **man** opened the eyes of one that was born blind." No, of course not; but "The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind; the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down" (Psalm 146: 8). How surely this man had proved the power of these words. None was in a better position to testify to the work of Jesus. Had he not himself been born blind? Had not the Sent One graciously fulfilled the glorious mission which He claimed as His own in Luke 4: 18? The blind man obediently washed his clay-anointed eyes in the pool Siloam,

which means "Sent," and came seeing. He now not only had power to enjoy the light but became a light-bearer to others.

Now the work of God in a soul invariably perplexes the world, especially the religious world. That about which the enlightened soul itself is calmly confident may become a source of considerable agitation to others and indirectly a condemnation. The blind man's immediate circle of friends and neighbours was greatly perplexed. The Pharisees would have been glad if able to prove that this man had never been blind, and so never needed or experienced the saving grace of Jesus. We cannot help thinking that they have their lineal descendants in Christendom to-day. However, the man is not perturbed. He very readily and simply confessed what great things the Lord had done for him. We may well be encouraged by his great boldness of faith.

2. He did not go beyond what he knew but acted up to the light he had.

A Man called Jesus had met him and anointed his eyes with clay and sent him to wash in the pool of Siloam. Like Paul, he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, and like Paul (though after a period) he saw Jesus. "I went," he said, "and washed and I received sight." The Latin of the Vulgate is even more terse, reminding us of Caesar's celebrated dispatch to Rome, "I came. I saw. I conquered." It reads, "I went. I washed. I saw."

This man's growth exemplifies the principle that to him that hath shall more be given. In his first account he confesses his indebtedness to a **man** called Jesus. Before the Pharisees he says, "He is a **prophet**"; in verse 33 he argues that He must be "**of God**" and when Jesus finds him again he discovers the "**Lord**" and worships at the feet of the "**Son of God.**" There is certainly no higher privilege than growth in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

"Get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding," urges the Preacher (Prov. 4: 7). Notice carefully this man's attitude when before men whom we may well suppose to have been his intellectual superiors. He refused to be side-tracked into a theological argument. He knew one thing with all the certainty that a work of God in him could give, "whereas I was blind now I see." Neither their arguments nor threats could move him. Their pressing him only brought out their baffled state and gave him an opportunity for gentle irony that unmasked their hatred (verse 27). Alas, they shared, in common with all who have religion without power, utter condemnation before an undeniable instance of divine intervention. God had dared to work, and not through them, the official preservers and exponents of Jehovah's word! Nothing was truer, and it spelt ruin and judgment for them and their system.

3. What he declared he displayed. Here are two things that God has joined together and which can only be divorced at peril of unreality! The

man's testimony was based upon a plain palpable fact. It was therefore incontrovertible. In their very midst he was displaying in his person and conduct the proof of what he declared. In his own way and words he was saying,

"I have heard the voice of Jesus,
Tell me not of aught beside,"

very soon he would be able to add,

"I have seen the face of Jesus,
All my soul is satisfied."

He used what he had where he was. Well aware then that to confess Christ meant excommunication, he did not shrink from that confession. Having reaped the fruits of Christ's work he was prepared to suffer the reproach of His Name. These two things are not to be divorced if we would remain faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ. Does He place any value on this? Listen to His words to those who, having a little strength, had not denied His Name. "I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is new Jerusalem . . . and I will write upon him My new Name" (Rev. 3: 12). Can anything surpass the joy of having the Lord's individual approbation?—the joy of knowing He approved of our conduct even though none but ourselves knew it? Is this enough for us or do we seek approval elsewhere? May He give us to be content with the approval which He only knows.

There can be only one place for a man who would remain faithful to Christ after his eyes have

been opened. To that place the erstwhile blind man was both **driven** and **drawn**. The ordeal through which he had passed tested every ounce of his fidelity to Christ. But neither the combined wisdom of priest and Pharisee nor the shameful conduct of his parents could shake his testimony or find inconsistency in his profession. By the traditional opposers of God's grace he was **cast out**, and surely we can say that by the gracious hand of Jesus he was **drawn out**. They only cast him from the narrow confines of Jewish intolerance into the place where was One who was calling His sheep by name and leading them out. Notice the stages of his rapid progress: blind beggar; earnest witness; enlightened worshipper! Could we leave him in a place more fitting or occupation more blessed than at the feet of Jesus the Son of God—worshipping.

We find the narrative in John 9 most refreshing to our souls. No reference has been made to any teaching that might be in the chapter. There is, however, one analogy we would like to draw. That is, during the time this man was witnessing, the Person of whom he witnessed, was **absent**. Jesus, however, did not forget the man to whom he had given sight. At the appointed moment He went for him and revealed Himself to him. Is our Lord not coming for us? Shall we not see Him as He is? Will not the sight of His face be rich compensation for suffering and loss? No master could be more worthy of faithful servants. What sort of men then ought we to be?

May the Lord become more and more **to us**, as He leads us more deeply into the knowledge of what He has done **for us**.

S. O. THURSTON.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(ACTS 6: 1 — 8: 19).

This outline of Acts is brief and condensed. Except the above passage of Scripture be read, it is hardly likely that these notes will prove to be of real interest or profit.

BEHIND all the attacks and difficulties which confronted the early church in Jerusalem lay the great adversary, Satan himself. He it was that stirred the Sadducees to violence and attempts to intimidate. He filled the heart of Ananias to lie, and thus bring in corruption, tempting the Spirit of the Lord. Now, these earlier attacks having been defeated, he moves in a more subtle way, exploiting small differences that existed within the church itself. The "Grecians" of whom the first verse of chapter 6 speaks, were not Gentiles but Greek-speaking Jews, coming from the lands of their dispersion, whereas the "Hebrews" were the home-born Jews of Jerusalem and Palestine.

The first and greater trouble within the church—that of Ananias—was about money. If the second was not about money, it was over a matter very akin to it; being as to the distribution of daily

necessities, entailed by having all things common. The first was about getting the money **in**: the second about doling **out** the money, or its equivalent. Those from a distance thought that partiality was being shown in favour of the local people. The greater trouble created only a small difficulty, for it was met instantaneously in the Spirit's power: the smaller trouble created the greater difficulty, as we see in our chapter. This, we believe, has nearly always been the way in the church's history: the most difficult cases to settle are those in which at the bottom there is very little to be settled.

It was only a "murmuring" that arose, but the apostles did not wait for it to become a formidable outcry. They discerned that Satan's object in it was to divert them from the preaching of the Word to social service, so they took steps to end any possible objections. They instructed the church to select seven men to undertake the business, who should be, "of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom." Their administration was to be marked by wisdom and honesty that should be above all reproach.

In this business the church was to select its own officers; but then the business was the distribution of the funds and food that the church had itself provided. We never read of the church being called upon to select or appoint its elders or bishops or ministers of the Word; inasmuch as the spiritual grace and gifts which they distribute are not pro-

vided by the church but by God. The selection and ordination of these consequently lies in the hands of God. To the elders at Ephesus Paul said, "The Holy Ghost hath made you overseers." **God appoints** those who are to administer **His bounty**.

So the apostles continued to give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. For those who are taught the Word comes first (see 1 Tim. 4: 5), for we only pray rightly as we are instructed in the Word. For those who minister prayer comes first, for apart from prayer they will not speak the Word aright.

Just as wisdom prevailed with the apostles, so grace prevailed in the church, for all the seven men chosen bore names which would suggest a Grecian rather than a Hebrew origin, and one of them is said to have been a proselyte, which infers that he came even of Gentile extraction. In this way the multitude took care that all murmurings and questionings, whether well-founded or not, should be hushed to silence. The apostles identified themselves with the church's choice, by laying their hands on the chosen men, with prayer. The adversary behind the scenes was again foiled.

He was more than foiled really; for instead of the apostles being diverted from the Word of God, it increased greatly, and many fresh conversions took place, even many priests being reached. Moreover one of the seven, Stephen, became a

special vessel of the grace and power of the Spirit of God; so much so, that for the rest of our chapter, and the whole of chapter 7, we follow that which God wrought through him, until the time of his martyrdom.

The power operating in Stephen was so marked that it stirred up opposition in fresh quarters. The men of the various synagogues, mentioned in verse 9, were apparently all of the Grecian class, to which Stephen himself belonged. All their argumentative skill was as nothing when pitted against the power of the Spirit in Stephen, so they had recourse to the usual device of lying witnesses and violence. In verse 11 they put Moses in front of God; but then they knew what would most appeal to the passions of the crowd, to whom Moses, being a man, was more real than the invisible God. So also, in verse 13, "this holy place" which was before their eyes, takes precedence of the law; and finally, "the customs which Moses delivered us," were perhaps dearer to them than all. Dragging Stephen before the council, they charged him with blasphemy, and with proclaiming Jesus of Nazareth as a destroyer of their holy place and customs. There was this much truth in this charge, that the advent of Jesus had indeed inaugurated a new departure in the ways of God.

In this public way the controversy between the nation and God was carried a step further. They threw down the gauntlet, and God accepted their challenge by so filling Stephen with the Spirit that

even the fashion of his face was altered, and everybody saw it. Through his lips the Holy Ghost proceeded to give a closing word of testimony against the nation. The council found themselves arraigned at the bar of God by the Holy Ghost, speaking through the very man that was being arraigned at their bar.

Their history began with God calling Abraham out of his old place and associations, that he might go to the land of God's choice and there be made a great nation. This is shown in Genesis 12: 1—3, and it was an epoch-making event, as is evident when we note that a rather longer period of time is compressed into Genesis 1—11, than the period expanded to fill all the rest of the Old Testament. The call of Abraham marked a new departure in God's ways with the earth, and with that new departure Stephen began his address.

Genesis tells us that Jehovah appeared to Abraham, but Stephen knew Him and spoke of Him in a new light. The Jehovah who appeared to Abraham was the God of glory, the God of far more glorious scenes than can be afforded by this world, even at its fairest and best. This it is, doubtless, which accounts for Abraham's faith embracing such heavenly things as are spoken of in Hebrews 11: 10—16. Called by the God of glory, he at least had glimpses of the city and country where glory dwells. On this high note Stephen began, and he ended, as we know, with Jesus in the glory of God.

The main drift of his remarkable address was evidently to bring to the people the conviction of the way in which their fathers and they had been guilty of resisting the operations of God by His Spirit all through their history. He dwells particularly upon what happened when God had raised up servants to institute something new in their history. There had been a series of new departures, of greater or less significance. The original one had been with Abraham, but then followed Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon; all of whom he refers to, though giving far more attention to the first three than to the second three. To none of these had they really responded, and Joseph and Moses they had definitely refused to start with. He ends with the seventh intervention, which threw all the others into the shade — the coming of the Just One—and Him they had just slain.

Stephen made it very plain that the Jewish rulers of his day were but repeating in a worse form the sin of their forefathers. The patriarchs sold Joseph into Egypt because they were "moved with envy;" and Matthew records the efforts of Pilate to deliver Jesus, "for he knew that for envy they had delivered Him." So too with Moses; the saying at which he fled, "Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?" was uttered by one of his brethren, and not by an Egyptian. The rejection came from amongst his own people, and not from outside. Thus too it had been with Jesus.

Exodus 2 does not give us such an insight into the fame and prowess of Moses at the end of his first forty years as is given in verse 22 of our chapter. He was a man of learning, oratory and action, when it came into his heart to identify himself with his own people, who were the people of God. Having made the plunge, it must have come to him as a terrible shock to be refused by them. At that saying he fled. He did not fear the wrath of the king, as Hebrews 11: 27 tells us, but he could not stand this refusal. He had acted in the consciousness of his own exceptional powers, and now needed forty years of Divine tuition at the back side of the desert to learn that his powers were nothing and the power of God everything. In all this he stands in contrast to our Lord, though he typified Him in the rejection he had to endure.

This Moses was again rejected by their fathers, when he had brought them out of captivity and into the wilderness. In rejecting him, they really rejected Jehovah, and they turned aside into idolatry of a very gross kind. Even in the wilderness, and not only when in the land, they were slack about Jehovah's sacrifices, and tampered with idols, thus paving the way to the Babylonish captivity. Still God had raised up David, and then Solomon built the house. Now in the house they boasted (see Jer. 7: 4) as though the mere possession of these buildings guaranteed everything, when really God dwelt in the Heaven of heavens, far above the most gorgeous building on earth.

Stephen's closing words—verses 51-53—are marked by great power. They are like an appendix to the Lord's own words, recorded in Matthew 23: 31—36, carrying the indictment on to its dreadful conclusion in the betrayal and murder of the Just One. Their standing before God was on the basis of the law, and though they had received it by the disposition of angels, they had not kept it. The law broken by flagrant idolatry, and the Messiah murdered; there were the two great counts in the indictment against the Jew, and both are prominent in Stephen's closing words.

The Holy Ghost, by the lips of Stephen, had completely turned the tables upon his persecutors, and they found themselves arraigned, as though they were in the dock instead of sitting upon the judicial bench. The very suddenness with which Stephen dropped his historic recital, and launched God's accusation against them, must have added tremendous power to his words. They were cut to the heart and stirred to fury.

The only calm person evidently was Stephen. Filled with the Spirit, he had a supernatural sight of the glory of God, and of Jesus in that glory, and he testified at once of that which he saw. Ezekiel had seen, "the likeness of a throne" and "the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it" (1: 26), but Stephen saw not a mere "likeness" or "appearance," but rather the MAN Himself, standing on the right hand of God. Jesus, once crucified, is now the Man of God's right hand: He

is the mighty Executive, by whom God will administer the universe!

In his address Stephen had pointed out that though Joseph had been refused by his brethren, he became their saviour and ultimately they all had to bow down to him. He also reminded them that though Moses was at first rejected, he ultimately became both ruler and deliverer of Israel. Now he testifies a similar, but vastly greater thing in connection with Jesus. The Just One whom they had murdered, is to become their Judge, and ultimately, for those who receive Him, their great and final Deliverer. In token thereof He was in glory, and Stephen saw Him.

Utterly unable to refute or resist his words, the Jewish leaders rushed into the murder of Stephen, thus fulfilling the Lord's words, recorded in Luke 19: 14, as to the citizens hating the departed nobleman and sending a message after him saying, "We will not have this Man to reign over us." Jesus was still "standing" in glory, ready to fulfil what Peter had said in chapter 3: 20, if only they had repented. They did not repent, but gave a violent refusal by stoning Stephen and sending him after his Master. Prominent in connection with this wicked act was a young man named Saul, who consented to his death, and acted as a kind of superintendent at his execution. Thus where the history of Stephen ends, the story of Saul begins.

Stephen, the first Christian martyr, ended his

short but striking career in the likeness of his Lord. Filled with the Spirit, his vision was filled with Jesus in glory. He had nothing more to say to men; his last words were addressed to his Lord. To the Lord he committed his spirit, and assuming the attitude of prayer, he desired mercy for his murderers. Who could have anticipated so astounding an answer as was given by his exalted Lord in the conversion of Saul, the arch-murderer? The prayer of the Lord Jesus from the cross for His murderers was answered by the sending forth of the Gospel, to begin at Jerusalem: the prayer of Stephen was answered in the conversion of Saul. That Saul himself never forgot it, is shown by chapter 22: 20.

Not content with slaying Stephen, the religious leaders in Jerusalem at this point launched the first great persecution against the church, and in this Saul was especially prominent. He ravaged the church like a wolf, invading the privacy of homes to secure his victims. In result, the disciples were scattered abroad through the provinces of Judaea and Samaria. Now, according to the Lord's words to His disciples in chapter 1: 8, these provinces were to come after Jerusalem, and before their mission widened out to the uttermost parts of the earth; so again it was a case of God making man's wrath to serve His purpose. Yet, remarkably enough, the Apostles, to whom the commission was given, were the exceptions to the rule. They still remained in Jerusalem.

This being so, the narrative leaves them unnoticed and continues with those who went everywhere evangelizing, and particularly with Philip, another of the seven. He went to the city of Samaria and preached; the power of God was with him, and wonderful blessing followed, as is always the way when a servant of God moves in the direct line of God's purpose. The sowing among the Samaritans had been done by the Lord Himself, as recorded in John 4. Then many had said not only, "Is not this the Christ?" but also, "This is indeed the Christ." Now Philip, coming to them, "preached Christ," as the One who had died, was risen again, and now in glory; as a consequence, a great time of reaping took place. There was great joy in that city.

Philip's message being received, he began to preach among them, "the things concerning the kingdom of God," and this led to multitudes being baptized. Amongst them was Simon the sorcerer, who also "believed" and was baptized. He found himself, as verse 7 shows, in the presence of a Power far mightier than the unclean spirits, with whom he formerly had traffic.

The remarkable thing about the work in Samaria was that although so many had believed the Gospel, and been baptized, none had received the gift of the Holy Ghost. The order that Peter had propounded in chapter 2: 38, was not observed in the case of the Samaritans. God so ordered, we believe, for a special reason. There had been reli-

gious rivalry between Jerusalem and Samaria, as John 4 witnesses, and therefore there must have been a strong tendency to carry over into the new conditions this ancient prejudice. This would have meant a Samaritan church independent of, if not in rivalry to, a Jerusalem church; and thus any practical expression of the "one body" would have been imperilled even before the truth of it had been revealed. As things were, they only received the Spirit when Peter and John had come down and laid hands on them; thus formally identifying the Apostles and the church in Jerusalem with these new believers in Samaria. The oneness of the church was preserved.

When the Holy Ghost was given, there was the drawing of the line between reality and unreality. Not all baptized prove to be real, but the Spirit is only given to those that are real. Hence at Samaria the baptized Simon was left without the Holy Spirit. Verses 12 and 16 show us that the baptized person professes an entrance into the kingdom of God, and to take upon himself the name of the Lord Jesus, as his new Master, just as Israel of old were baptized to Moses—see 1 Corinthians 10: 2. Simon submitted to all this, nevertheless, when the test came, reality was not found in him. He would never have said, "Give me also this power," had he already possessed it. Nor did he understand it, as proved by his offer of money.

F. B. HOLE.

"MY GOSPEL."

- (4) "THE GLAD TIDINGS OF THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST" (EPHESIANS 3: 8).

AFTER that which we have been considering we might well ask, Is there still more contained in the glad tidings? Indeed there is. The further we are permitted to explore the more amazed we are, until we can only magnify the grace of God; extol the Christ of God, and pray that we may be in such moral condition that the Holy Spirit of God may unfold fresh treasures to our wondering view.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians it would seem as if the inspired penman could hardly find language to adequately express that which He seeks to bring before us. After the splendid outburst of praise in chapter one and verse three, which leads us to expect great things, He writes not only of the grace of God, but of "the **glory** of His grace" (1: 6); "the **riches** of His grace" (1: 7); "the **surpassing** riches of His grace" (2: 7). Similarly when, in chapter 3, he unfolds the great truth of the mystery, a secret which had been "hid in God

from eternity" (verse 9), he writes of the honour and privilege that were his:

"To me, less than the least of all saints, has this grace been given to announce among the nations

THE GLAD TIDINGS OF THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES
OF THE CHRIST" (verse 8).

What glad tidings are these! Who can conceive the greatness of the riches of Christ? They are "unsearchable." His riches as a divine Person, for "by Him"; "for Him"; and "for His pleasure" were all things created (Col. 1: 16; Rev. 4: 11). As Man He has been appointed Heir of all that which He did create (Heb. 1: 2). He is "Head over all things" (Eph. 1: 22). A wonderful inheritance is His; so wonderful that it is spoken of as "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1: 18). We contemplate His eternal glory; His glory as Man; His matchless worth; His infinite preciousness; His varied offices; His inheritance; and we are lost as we seek to estimate "the unsearchable riches of the Christ." The Apostle was so overwhelmed by it, that as he thought of the honour that was his in being allowed to proclaim such glad tidings he was humbled and spoke of himself as "less than the least of all saints." He had written of himself as "the chief of sinners" (1 Tim. 1: 15), as "the least of the Apostles" (1 Cor. 15: 9); and now "less than the least of all saints." Is it not as the sense of the riches of Christ fills our souls that we dis-

cover ourselves to be "less than the least"? As He is exalted we are humbled. This too makes the world a very barren place to us.

As we are engaged with His riches, the very best the world can offer will not be good enough for us, for we are going to learn that such is His love that it,

"... gives not as the world, but shares
All it possesses with its loved co-heirs."

Gentiles with Jews were made "joint heirs," and "a joint body," and "joint partakers of His promise in Christ Jesus by the glad tidings" (verse 6). We read on in the Epistle and we learn from chapter five that "the church which is His body," is also His bride, and thus shares with Him in the unsearchable riches that are His as Man. Thus the great divine plan of eternity is opened out to us. Designed by God the Father; made possible by God the Son, come into Manhood; and revealed to us by God the Holy Spirit.

To sum up, we read the climax when we read in 1 Timothy 1: 11 that the glad tidings are,

(5) "THE GLAD TIDINGS OF THE GLORY OF THE
BLESSED GOD."

We have pondered over "the glad tidings of the grace of God"; of "Jesus and the resurrection"; of "the glory of Christ"; of "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Now we are carried back to the source "the blessed God." With none other could anything so magnificent originate;

"For, sure, no other mind,
For thoughts so bold, so free,
Greatness or strength could ever find;
Thine only it could be."

He is the **blessed** God; happy in the designing of the plan; happy in the carrying of it into effect; and how happy will He be when He sees the full result of it in a coming day! Then there will be to Him "glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages" (Eph. 3: 21). How the Gentiles must have been thrilled to hear this from the lips of the Apostle, for, as we have seen, it was among them that he was commissioned to announce these glad tidings. Not only deliverance from sins and from coming judgment, but being introduced into all the wealth of God. Surely this stirs our hearts in this day and calls forth grateful praise from our lips.

May God graciously enable us by His Spirit to apprehend better the fulness and the magnificence of the "glad tidings," so that they may be built into every fibre of our spiritual being; and not only be proclaimed with our lips but expressed in our life.

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Romans II: 33—36).

"THE WORD BECAME FLESH"

READ JOHN I: 1—5 & 14; I JOHN I: 1—4; 5: 20.

WE begin by asking the question, What was meant by speaking of the Lord as "**the Word**"? One thing which **marks** man as distinctive from the lower creation is his ability to speak. The animals can make their sounds—the lark can sing, and the sparrow can chirp, and the lion can roar; but it is reserved to man to utter intelligent speech. We could hardly know each other if we could not speak. We, therefore, see God's goodness in giving us speech. I have stood beside a very intelligent brother who was a German. I cannot speak German. He could not speak English. There we stood helpless. We could not understand each other. Why? Because we were not able to express intelligently our thoughts to each other.

The Greek word used is "**Logos**." There is another word, "**Rema**," and this is confined to the actual word. Take the case of a parrot. It can pronounce words, but has no idea of what the words convey. There is no thought behind the words. "**Logos**" means the expression of **thought in words**. You cannot dissociate the thought from the word here since "**Logos**" is the word which is given to us in this chapter.

Suppose I become the tenant of a house. I have not been in that house very long before I am told that I have a very remarkable neighbour. He

has never been seen. He does not go out into the street; but he goes out occasionally into his garden. Then I am told that the wall of that garden is very high and on the top of the wall are bits of broken glass. Very bushy trees still further obscure the view, and nobody can possibly see over into my neighbour's garden.

Now God cannot be seen. Scripture says that "God is light," and that God dwells in unapproachable light, and no man hath seen Him or can see Him. That was true then and it is true now and for ever. God in His absolute character as Creator, as Father, Son and Spirit—ONE GOD dwelling in unapproachable light—cannot be seen, just as my neighbour has never been seen.

To return to the illustration. One day I hear the sound of footsteps on the gravel path in the adjoining garden, and to my surprise my neighbour speaks to me. I had no knowledge of him until he spoke. I note that he has a cultured voice, and that he gives utterance to good thoughts. I am favourably impressed. I go into my garden again and again in the hope of hearing him speak, and again and again he speaks to me. Little by little I have a greater understanding of him. I cannot visualise his physical appearance, whether he is tall or short in stature, but I know his thoughts and his mind.

Now the eternal Thought is in God. He is the Fountain-Head of thought. How then is God go-

ing to make Himself known to us? In the wisdom of the Godhead the Son came forth. He is chosen as the Vehicle of divine revelation. Through Him alone can we have any knowledge of the blessed God. The Father and the Spirit sent Him (Isaiah 48: 16). The Lord Jesus Christ came, and He is **The Incarnate Word**.

Our illustration fails in this respect. I learned about my neighbour only by his **spoken** word. Is it not amazing? God has spoken to us by a wonderful Person — **The Living Word**. Is not that amazing? It is enough to bow our hearts in praise and worship! God has communicated His thoughts to us through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, we come to one or two details. It says "In the beginning was the Word." The Gospel of Matthew begins with the birth of Christ, and the difficulties of Joseph in connection with Christ's birth, and the coming of the Wise Men from the East. The Gospel of Luke begins with His birth, and His lying in the manger, and he sets the chronological order for certain events, which happened in the reign of Augustus. The Gospel of John begins in **eternity**. It is a beginning which never had a beginning. We go back to One who existed before the beginning of all that ever began. That is a very clear affirmation, is it not? "**In the beginning was the Word.**" These verses, I think, give as profound a revelation of Christ as any in the whole of the Scriptures. Then we are told "**the Word was with God.**"

Was He inferior to God? Was He a **second** God? Intuitively we say there cannot be **two** supreme wills! God is **One**. It says, "**the Word was with God.**" Then, who was He? We are told that the Lord Jesus Christ was more, if I may put it this way, than divine. Men talk of St. John the Divine; but the **Lord Jesus Christ** was **fully and absolutely divine**. He was and ever is God. We read, "**the same was in the beginning with God**" —**eternal relationship of the Word in the unity of the Godhead**. This relationship never had a beginning.

The thought of God from all eternity was to make Himself known. God is love, so He must have objects on which to bestow His love, and this love comes to such as you and me, and the saints of all time. We read, "**All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made.**" The Seventh Day Adventists teach that the Lord Jesus Christ was a wonderful creation of God, endued with such powers that He could create everything else, and that He was given this authority; but that He Himself was created by God. This verse brands this teaching as false. He is the **absolute Creator**. It is interesting to find that creation in 1 Corinthians 8: 6 is attributed to the Father, in Job 26: 13 that it is attributed to the Spirit, but here and in Colossians and elsewhere it is attributed to the Son. Why should it be so particularly attributed to the Son? Because the Son is **the Word**, who gives expression to God's mind in creation.

I should like to show you how blessedly this is true. The Lord Jesus Christ was the Creator—the **Word** was the Creator. Perhaps I see a picture painted by an old Master. I look at it, and admire it, and say, It is wonderful! What exquisite colour! What imagination! What perspective! Marvellous to think of painting on canvas such a magnificent scene as the historical event depicted. But that does not tell me what the painter is like in himself. He may be a sober man, or he may be a drunkard. He may be a truthful man, or he may be a liar. I only know certain things about him.

So when we come to the Psalms we read of Creation. Creation shows us the wonderful fingers of God—"When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers" (Psalm 8: 3)—"His eternal power and Godhead" (Romans 1: 20). But we travel down our chapter a little further, and we come to an amazing verse, "**and the Word was made [became] flesh and dwelt among us**" (verse 14). God's thoughts are to be manifested in a Person who is God, the Creator of all things, the Sustainer of all things, who became Man, who became flesh. He was crucified in weakness; yet when He made purgation for sins He was upholding all things by the word of His power.

A certain star is said to be two thousand times more brilliant than our sun. There are millions of stars in the sky, yet the Lord upholds all these stars in space. This is beyond our thinking! He

who can uphold all things in space is the **Word** made flesh.

"In Him was life." That means life **inherent**. We have life given to us by God; but He has life in Himself, and it says this life was the light of men.

We come now to the Lord's becoming flesh. He was born into this world, and God signalized who He was when the angels chanted His praises, though He were but a Babe to human eyes. The wise men of the east came and worshipped Him. And then there were those marvellous hidden years. Except in one instance (Luke 2: 41—52), when He was about twelve years old, nothing is said of those thirty years. And then He comes out for three-and-a-half years. Speaking, after the manner of men, He died in the midst of His years. Many a young man of thirty-three and a half years has not got very far in life. But that wonderful period of three-and-a-half years was sufficient for the display of God, which has made such a wonderful mark on the world.

He did not gather around Him the intellectuals of His day. He gathered around Him those ignorant fishermen, and as they watched Him they saw Him touch things like nobody else. They were impressed. Little by little they came to a certain understanding of Him. When the Lord came into this world He revealed the Father. All through John, that magnificent Gospel, we read

continually of the Lord speaking of His Father. The Father and the Son are so one that the Father is in Him and He is in the Father. He spoke of His Father to such an extent that those disciples could say at last, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of an only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth."

"That was the True Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." This light means external illumination; that is to say, the Lord Jesus Christ showed up everybody. He was the Test of everything and everybody. Think of the treachery of Judas! Think of the Pharisee, and of the woman, who came into the Pharisee's house. The light showed up the heart of the Pharisee, and it also showed up the heart of the woman. The Pharisee's heart was cold and dead. The woman's repentant and loving. Their relation to Him showed up where each one was.

Suppose the lights in a hall were to go out suddenly, and everybody tried to get to the door and all was confusion. Suddenly the lights go on. The light shows where everyone is, and what he is doing. The Lord Jesus Christ was the Great Light which tested everything.

We go on in the chapter, and we get the New Birth brought in. Only those who are born again can know anything of this outpouring of divine light and goodness which comes through Him, who was the eternal Word. He was the Word before He became flesh. Long before Christ was born, philo-

sophers tried to understand the word "**Logos**," but they did not get very far. They thought to find out the eternity of matter. But here the Spirit takes the word, and stamps it with the clear meaning, which we have in John's Gospel.

We read, "**The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.**" What did He stand for? Grace and Truth. It is interesting to note that grace is put before truth, and yet grace is not more important than truth, nor truth more important than grace. I understand that those two nouns are followed by a single verb to show us that we cannot separate the one from the other. We have got to come to the Lord's death to understand the secret of it, because at the Cross we find grace and truth are met together: righteousness and peace have kissed each other. If a man is convicted in our law courts he cannot expect grace: he cannot expect mercy. These two things do not come together in earthly circumstances. The only place where they come together is at the Cross and surely the Lord displayed these things in His death in a way which could not be otherwise. It was grace—amazing grace indeed — when we think of the Almighty God, the Everlasting Father, becoming a babe and then dying on the Cross—surely it was wonderful grace! You go into a garden, and you cut a stem, and this stem breaks into two stems, each stem holds a flower. So it is here—"**Grace and Truth**" two flowers on one stem. "The law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

Then we are told He is "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father." The bosom of the Father means that He ever abode in the affections of the Father. It is not a question of a place, but of a condition. It must be so. There is one will between them—one plan. He carried out the Father's will. Yes! even on the Cross He was ever in the affections of the Father. He was there from all eternity and uninterruptedly for all eternity.

When we come to the 1st Epistle of John we come to a different beginning to that of the Gospel of John. The beginning here was connected with what those disciples heard on earth. The beginning was in their life time. The beginning here is the manifestation on earth of the Word becoming flesh. This is the real basis of true fellowship. It speaks of that which is from the beginning. It is very interesting to see how three of our senses are invoked. "Which we have heard"—"We have seen with our eyes"—"Our hands have handled of the Word of life." It was no illusion to Thomas when he was told to put his hand into the Lord's side. It is very interesting to note what those disciples saw and heard. It was a long contemplation for three-and-a-half years. Little by little the attractions of the Lord drew the disciples to Him in a wonderful way. We are not much of Christians, if our hearts are not touched by the presentation of their wonderful experience. If these things are simply doctrines, they won't hold us! At this time I am sure it is personal attraction to the Lord Jesus

Christ, which is so necessary to draw us away from the great worldliness all around us, and self-seeking, and it is only as we are attracted to Him that our hearts are taken out of this world, and it is only as we are attracted to Him that we can walk as strangers and pilgrims. And as we are attracted to the Lord, we shall be drawn to each other.

When the Lord ascended the disciples were found for ten days in Jerusalem in prayer, waiting for the promise of the Father. They were drawn to the Lord, and in being drawn to the Lord they were drawn to each other, and that is the basis of real power and fellowship. If I love the Lord I shall love my brethren, and if I am cold towards the Lord, I shall be cold towards my brethren. As we are drawn to the Lord, so shall we be drawn to each other. It is put in different ways and from different angles in the Scriptures. "For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that Eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." Eternal life never has a beginning, but there comes a point when that life was manifested, and that is what the Apostle describes. He leaves us a testimony. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you," etc. Those Apostles were drawn into that wonderful fellowship, and in the fulness of his heart the Apostle John links up the others with him, and tells us of this fellowship that we too may be drawn into it. We are going to be with the Lord for ever and ever. We are going to see Him and whilst we are down here, we have

this wonderful fellowship, and it is given to us that our joy may be full.

Now, we go back to the beginning. How wonderful it is that God should communicate to us His mind through the Incarnate, the Eternal Word—the Lord Jesus Christ—the Word made flesh. This attracts our hearts, He did not come with pomp and power and show. He was born in a stable and cradled in a manger. He worked at a carpenter’s bench, and then in that three-and-a-half years we get His wonderful revelation of God. Think of the Gospels which show us the life of Our Lord—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They are precious to us, and is it not beautiful to read of what John said at the end of his Gospel:—“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written,” as also what he says at the end of his First Epistle.

“And we know the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and Eternal Life.”

What a Saviour we have! What a mingling of glories is found in His blessed Person and life. We shall thank Him through all eternity for this manifestation of what God is, as seen in Him.

A. J. POLLOCK.

THE WORD AND THE CHURCH

THERE are many who point out that the Church existed before a line of the New Testament was written; and from this they argue that the Church really gave us the New Testament, and therefore may rightly claim to be the interpreter of it.

Undoubtedly the Church did exist before the New Testament was written. But it is also true that the Church came into existence as the result of the WORD becoming flesh and dwelling among us. He brought the **Word**, and did the **Work**, on which the Church's very existence depended. **The Word existed before the Church**, and it was only its committal to writing that came after the Church existed.

Moreover, it was not the Church that gave us the New Testament, but the Spirit of God, guiding and controlling the Apostles and Prophets who wrote its pages.

Hence to understand the New Testament we need, not the Church's interpretation, but the illumination of the Holy Spirit who originally indited it, just as also He indited the Old Testament. The business of the Church is to receive and obey the Word. This is shown by 1 Corinthians 14: 36, where we read, "What? came the Word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?" The answer obviously is that it never came out from the Corinthian church: it came unto them only. And this stands true for every other church whether in their day or ours.

The next verse states that, if any man thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, he will show

he is so by acknowledging that the things written in Scripture are "the commandments of the Lord." The spiritual man does not **originate** anything, nor does he even **authenticate**: he only **acknowledges** the Word when he reads it. He acknowledges it in order that he may **receive** and **obey** it.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(ACTS 8: 18 — 10: 23).

This outline of Acts is brief and condensed. Except the above passage of Scripture be read, it is hardly likely that these notes will prove to be of real interest or profit.

IT must have been a great blow to Simon, who formerly had dominated the people of Samaria by his supernatural doings, to find a multitude now possessing a power, in the presence of which his own dark acts were as nothing. They possessed the gift of the Holy Spirit, and he had been left out. This led him to expose himself very thoroughly by offering money to the Apostles. He wished to purchase not only the Spirit for himself but also the power to convey Him to others by the imposition of his hands. He felt doubtless that if such a power as that could be his, any money laid out in its purchase would prove a very profitable investment.

This is the third recorded uprising of evil within the circle of those who had been baptized: first, Ananias; second, the murmuring as to the neglected widows; third, Simon the sorcerer. In each

case, you notice, **money** was involved. In this third case we see the beginning of the Satanic endeavour to turn the pure faith of Christ into a money-making religion. In Samaria it was but a trickling stream, flowing through one man. It soon increased into a flood, sweeping immense riches to Rome. In the religious system which has its centre there, everything which is supposed to be a gift of God may be purchased with money.

Peter did not spare Simon the sorcerer. He told him plainly that this atrocious thought of his meant that his heart was not right with God, that he was entirely outside the true faith of Christ, and that both he and his money would perish. Peter's words surely were prophetic of the doom that ultimately will overtake the great ecclesiastical system, which through the centuries has turned Christianity into "the religion of money."

There was a ray of hope for Simon, which Peter held out for him, in verse 22. He might repent, and therefore forgiveness for him was still a possibility. Notice how the very thought of his heart is characterized as wickedness, without referring to his words; an illustration this, of the statement, that, "the thought of foolishness is sin." Being still in bondage to money, he was still in the bond of iniquity and bitterness. The love of money being "the root of **all evil**;" that is, of **every kind of evil**, a large part of the bitterness which fills the earth, springs from it. Peter told Simon to pray to God; but from his answer, recorded in verse 24,

it looks as if he lacked the repentance which would lead him to pray for himself, and wished to make sure of Peter's intercession on his behalf without paying for it. Multitudes since that day have paid handsome sums hoping to obtain the intercession of Peter!

The Apostles had been slow to go forth from Jerusalem, as verse 1 of our chapter told us. Philip had been the pioneer at Samaria, but now that Peter and John had come down they further ministered the Word to the converts, and also evangelized in many Samaritan villages on their return journey. However there was more pioneer work to be done, and as to this the angel of the Lord spoke not to the Apostles but to Philip.

Philip's ready and simple obedience to the Lord's instructions is very striking. He was told to leave the place of his successful labours and depart to the desert region south west of Jerusalem. The record is that told to, "Arise and go," he "arose and went," though his brethren may have thought him misguided and eccentric in doing so. If he did not know, when starting, the object of his journey, he soon discovered it, for his steps were guided so that he should intercept an important Ethiopian official who was a seeker after God. This man had taken a toilsome journey to Jerusalem according to the little light he had. He arrived there too late to get any benefit from the temple, for as the house of God it had been disowned. He was too late to find the Lord, for He had been rejected and had gone to heaven. He

did however get an important book of Old Testament scripture, and he was on his return journey needing but one thing more.

That one thing more Philip was sent to supply, for God was not going to allow an Ethiopian to stretch out his hands to Him without getting an answer. He needed New Testament light, so, as the New Testament was not yet written, Philip was sent with the New Testament message. The Spirit of God was in control, hence everything moved to time with smooth perfection. The Ethiopian had just reached the middle of Isaiah 53 when Philip addressed him, and his keen mind was filled with the question which that chapter inevitably raises in the thoughts of every intelligent reader—Is the prophet speaking of himself, or of “some other man?” The Ethiopian raised his question: Philip found there his text, and preached unto him “JESUS.”

All that Philip told the Ethiopian is summed up for us by Luke in that sacred Name, and this is easily understood when we remember how Matthew 1: 21 introduces us to it and to its significance. All that the man needed—the light and the salvation—was found in JESUS; and while Philip was speaking he found it! Now Isaiah 53 presents Jesus as the One who died an atoning and substitutionary death, the One whose life was taken from the earth, and the Ethiopian, who evidently knew something of baptism and its significance, desired to be identified with Him in His death. In

baptism we are "identified with Him in the likeness of His death" (Rom. 6: 5), and he felt that nothing hindered him being identified in this way with the One on whom he now believed. Verse 37 is to be omitted as lacking any real manuscript authority: nevertheless nothing did hinder, though he was not a Jew, and Philip baptized him.

In this way the first Gentile was reached and baptized and sent on his way back to his own people with the knowledge of the Saviour. Philip disappeared from his sight more rapidly than he had appeared but, since he had believed not on Philip but on Jesus, this did not unduly disturb him, and he went on his way **rejoicing**. His faith was not entwined around Philip but around the One whom he had preached. For him it was not Jerusalem but Jesus, and also it was not Philip but Jesus. To be enamoured of the preacher makes for weakness: to be enamoured of the Saviour makes for spiritual strength.

As for Philip, the supernatural way in which he was removed to Azotus did not disturb him. He travelled north to Caesarea preaching in the cities as he went. Seven times in this chapter is preaching mentioned, and in five of these occasions the word used is one we have carried over into our language as, "evangelize." The occasions are in verses 4, 12, 25 (second occurrence), 35, and 40. In three out of the five it is Philip who evangelizes, so we need not be surprised that presently he is designated, "Philip the evangelist" (21: 8).

The conversion of the Ethiopian was a sign that the time for the blessing of the Gentiles was at hand. He was like the lonely swallow in transit, betokening the advent of summer. In chapter 9, is recounted the call and conversion of the man who is to be the Apostle to the Gentiles. As is so often the case the Lord's choice fell upon the most unlikely person. The arch-persecutor of the saints is to become the pattern servant of the Lord. To this end he was dealt with in an unprecedented way. The Lord Himself dealt with him directly, excluding in all essential things any human instrumentality.

Saul was still filled with furious, persecuting zeal when the Lord intercepted him on the road to Damascus, and revealed Himself to him in a blaze of heavenly light, which shone not only round about him but into his conscience as well. We may discern in the record the essential features which mark every true conversion. There was the light which penetrates to the conscience, the revelation of the Lord Jesus to the heart, the conviction of sin in the words, "Why persecutest thou Me?" and the collapse of all opposition and self-importance in the humble-words, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" When Jesus is discovered, when the conscience is convicted of sin, when there is humble submission to Jesus as Lord, then there is a true conversion, though there is very much that the soul has yet to learn. The Lord's dealings were intensely personal to Saul, for his companions, though amazed, understood

nothing of what had happened.

By this tremendous revelation of the Lord, Saul was literally blinded to the world. Led into Damascus, he spent three days which he would never forget, days in which the significance of the revelation sank into his soul. Being blind, nothing distracted his mind, and his thoughts were not even turned aside to food or drink. As a preliminary to his service, Ezekiel had sat among the captives at Chebar and "remained there astonished among them seven days" (Ezek. 3: 15). Saul sat astonished in Damascus for only three days, but his experiences were of a far deeper order. We may get a glimpse of them by reading I Timothy 1: 12—17. He was astonished at his own colossal guilt as the "chief of sinners," and even more at the exceeding abundance of the grace of the Lord, so that he obtained mercy. In those three days he evidently passed through a spiritual process of death and resurrection. The foundations were laid in his soul of that which later on he expressed thus: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2: 20).

During the three days Saul had a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying his hands on him that he might receive his sight, and at the end of them the vision materialized. Ananias arrived, doing what he was told, and telling Saul he was but the messenger of the Lord, even Jesus, and that he was not only to receive his sight but be filled with the Holy Ghost. By

this time Saul was a believer, for only to believers is the Spirit given.

The essential work in Saul's soul having been accomplished, a human servant is used by the Lord. Two things about that servant are worthy of note. First, he was just "a certain disciple," evidently of no special prominence. It was fitting that the only man to help Saul in any way was a very humble one. Saul had been very prominent as an adversary and was soon to be very prominent as a servant of the Lord. He was helped by a disciple who was undistinguished and retiring, yet who was near enough to the Lord to receive His instructions and hold converse with Him. It is often thus in God's ways. Second, Ananias dwelt in Damascus, and thus was one of those against whom Saul had been breathing out threatenings and slaughter. So one of those that Saul would have murdered was sent to call him, "Brother Saul," to open his eyes, and that he might be filled with the Holy Ghost. Saul's evil was requited with good in this overwhelming fashion.

Saul's days of blindness, both physical and mental, were now over: he was baptized in the Name of the One he had formerly despised and hated, and he consorted with the very people he had thought to destroy, for he had become one of them. He had been called as "a chosen vessel," so straightway his service began. Jesus had been revealed to him as the Christ, and as the Son of God, so he preached Him thus and proved by the

Scriptures that He was the Christ, to the confounding of his former friends. The friends however speedily became his bitter foes and took counsel to kill him, even as not long before he had thought to kill the saints. He had anticipated entering Damascus with some measure of pomp as the plenipotentiary of the hierarchy in Jerusalem. Actually, he entered as a humbled and blinded man; and he left it in undignified fashion, huddled in a basket, as a fugitive from Jewish hate.

From the outset Saul had thus to taste for himself the very things he had been inflicting upon others. Arrived back in Jerusalem, he was distrusted by the disciples, as was very natural, and the intervention of Barnabas was needed before they received him. Barnabas could vouch for the Lord's intervention and his conversion, and he acted as his letter of commendation. In Jerusalem he witnessed boldly and came into conflict with the Grecians, possibly the very men who had been so responsible in the matter of Stephen's death. Now they would slay the man who held the clothes of those that slew Stephen. In all this we can see the working of the government of God. The fact, that the Lord had shown such amazing mercy in his conversion, did not exempt him from reaping in this governmental way that which he had sown.

Threatened again with death, Saul had to depart to Tarsus, his native city. It may be wondered where came in that visit to Arabia, of which

he writes in Galatians 1: 17. We think it was probably during the "many days," of which verse 23 of our chapter speaks, for he tells us that he "returned again to Damascus." If this is so, the flight from Damascus over the wall took place after his return from Arabia. Be that as it may, it was his departure to distant Tarsus that inaugurated the period of rest and edification for the churches, which led to a multiplication of their numbers.

In verse 32 we return to the activities of Peter, that we may see that the Spirit of God had not ceased to work through him while working so powerfully elsewhere. There had been, first, a great work in Lydda through the raising up of the palsied man. Then at Joppa Peter was used to bring Dorcas to life, and this led to many in that town believing on the Lord. It also led to Peter making a lengthy stay there in the house of Simon a tanner.

Meanwhile also the Spirit of God had been at work in the heart of Cornelius the Roman centurion, as the fruit of which he was marked by piety and the fear of God, with almsgiving and prayer to God. The time had now come to bring this man and his like-minded friends into the light of the Gospel. Now to Peter had been given "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 16: 19), so just as he had used the keys on the day of Pentecost to admit the election from among the Jews, now it is his to admit this election from among the Gentiles. Chapter 9 has recounted how God called

and converted the man who was to be the Apostle to the Gentiles. Chapter 10 now tells how Peter was delivered from his prejudices and led to open the door of faith to the Gentiles, thus paving the way for subsequent ministry of the Apostle Paul.

The first thing in the chapter is the angelic ministry to Cornelius by which he is directed to send to Joppa and call Peter. No difficulty arose here, for Cornelius immediately did as he was told. The angel, you notice, did not cut a rather lengthy story short by himself telling the message to Cornelius. The **message** of grace can only be rightly told by a man who is himself a **subject** of grace. So Peter must be called. God had respect to the prayers and alms of Cornelius, since they expressed the sincere seeking of his heart after God. If, after hearing the Gospel, he had ignored its message and gone on with his prayers and alms, it would have been a different matter. Then they would not have "come up for a memorial before God."

Next comes the account of God's preliminary dealings with Peter by means of a trance. There was more difficulty here, for he was still bound by his Jewish thoughts, and from these he had to be delivered. The hearers were ready, but the preacher had to be made ready to go. The record is that he "went up upon the housetop to pray," consequently he was in the right attitude to receive the necessary guidance. There was not only a **praying seeker** but a **praying servant** also. Hence remarkable results followed.

The great sheet which Peter saw descended out of an opened heaven. It embraced within its folds all manner of creatures both clean and unclean. It was received up into heaven. Peter was bidden to satisfy his hunger by partaking, and he might have done this by selecting a clean animal for his food. Yet they were all jumbled up together, so he declined. He was told however that God could cleanse the unclean: that in fact He had done so, and what He had cleansed he was not to call common. This happened three times so that the significance of it might sink into Peter's mind. We can see in the vision an apt figure of the Gospel, which comes from an opened heaven, which embraces in its folds a multitude, amongst which are found many Gentiles, who were ceremonially unclean; but all of them cleansed by grace, and ultimately taken up into heaven.

Peter at first doubted the meaning of all this, for ancient prejudices die slowly; but, as he continued to ponder, the situation was cleared by the arrival of the messengers from Cornelius. The Spirit distinctly instructed him to go with them and thus carry the Gospel to the seeking Roman. The "unclean" Gentile was to be saved.

In chapter 8, we saw how accurately God timed Philip's interception of the Ethiopian's chariot. Now we see the servants of Cornelius arriving at the precise moment to clinch the Divine instructions to Peter's mind. The thing was of God, and Peter was irresistibly carried forward.

THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY GHOST.

IF you searched the New Testament you could not find a more arresting challenge than that made in 1 Corinthians 6: 19, 20. "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body." The challenge is addressed to those who are said, in verse 11, to have been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God; and it comes to all such down to this day. Let us consider this amazing fact of the indwelling Spirit, and discover the why and the wherefore of it.

In the first chapter of our Bibles we are told of the creation of man and the reason for it. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." The US is the Triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are admitted to the divine counsel and plan, and from it we learn that man was to be created to be the visible representative of God in the world; for that is what "image" means; and for this he was to be like God in character, for without this there could be no effective representation.

The great adversary, Satan, looked on God's work with envy and determined to spoil His plan and to rob Him of His divinely formed and well-loved creature, so that He might not be represented at all, and it seemed as though he succeeded beyond all his expectations. It seemed so easy; first a question as to God's Word; then a bold denial of its truth, and the suggestion that God was not as good as He pretended to be, and the work was done. The woman and then the man hearkened to the tempter; they disobeyed the God they knew, and obeyed the devil they did not know, and fell. They became lost to God, alienated from His life and purpose.

As fallen sinners they became the parents of the human race of whom God had to say, "There is none righteous, no, not one . . . there is none that doeth good, no, not one . . . there is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3: 10, 12, 22, 23). It will do us no harm to face the situation once more, and learn how terrible and complete the fall was. We learn from Romans 5 that we were "without strength," "ungodly," "sinners," "enemies," and from Ephesians 2, "children of disobedience," "dead in sins," "having no hope and without God in the world."

The situation seemed hopeless and the triumph of the enemy complete, but then there came into activity all the resources of the blessed Trinity, and nothing less would have availed.

The FATHER is shown to be the source from whence all blessing flows FOR men.

The SON became a Man that He might bring the blessing TO men.

The HOLY GHOST has come down from the Father and the Son to make the blessing good IN men.

Of the Father we read, "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John 4: 14). The Son came in complete obedience to the will of the Father to redeem men from the power of sin and Satan's dominion. There are some wonderful words of His as to this, "The good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep . . . therefore doth My Father love Me because I lay down My life that I might take it again . . . This commandment have I received of My Father" (John 10: 11, 17, 18); and again, "But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do, Arise let us go hence" (John 14: 31).

But the Father would have sent the Son in vain, and the Son would have come and died and rose again for naught as far as men were concerned, if the Holy Ghost had not come to give an answer in the hearts of men to the grace of the Father and the Son. His work is as essential to the carrying out of the divine purpose as is that of the Father and the Son. The glorious Persons of the

Trinity are one in purpose and equal in glory. There could have been no Christianity, not one of us would have been a Christian, apart from the Spirit. He it was that convicted us of our sinful, lost condition; it was by Him through the Word that we were born again. He shewed us that Jesus the Lord was our only hope and Saviour, that only through His blood could we have redemption; and when we believed the Gospel He sealed us as God's property.

The first effect of His indwelling was the shedding of the love of God "abroad in our hearts" (Romans 5: 5), and following that we could be called "them that love God" (Romans 8: 28). What a mighty change is that from the time when our minds were enmity against God.

Now we see how God has wrought to give effect to His original purpose that man should be in His own image and after His likeness. We read of Jesus that He was the Image of the invisible God when He was here, and the Spirit dwells in us to fashion us after Him. He produces in us likeness to Christ, and brings forth in us fruits of His indwelling, such as were seen in Christ in all their perfection. These are, "love, joy, peace; longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance [self-control]" (Galatians 5: 22, 23). As these things are manifested in the Spirit's power, God is glorified, and the devil is defeated in his determination that God's image should not be seen in any of us; we are more than conquer-

ors through Him that loves us.

Nor is that all, God's purpose is that we should be wholly "conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8: 29).

Now the challenge comes afresh to us. Do we not know that our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, that God Himself dwells in us?—with the great end in view that we might truly represent Him before men, being like Him in character and ways. "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life" (Phil. 2: 15, 16).

If we see that in the first instance this is a question between God and the devil; that God has not given up His original purpose in regard to us, and that the devil is as determined as ever he was to frustrate that purpose; and if we realize that God has not only loved us and bought us with a great price, thus setting us righteously free from Satan's domination, but has sent His Spirit into our hearts that in and through us He might make manifest His triumph, then we shall earnestly seek that His will may prevail and that He may be glorified in our bodies, and that we may truly be in His image and after His likeness, while we wait for the consummation of all His thoughts towards us.

"WE BELIEVE AND ARE SURE."

"**S**EEING is believing" is a saying as trite as it is untrue.

The following occurrence proves how utterly deceived one may be while trusting to what he believes to be the sight of his eyes.

In one of the departments of the University of Kansas some time ago the lecturer stood on a platform addressing a body of some hundred students. Suddenly the front door opened and the janitor of the building came rushing to the front, shouting angrily at the professor, who leaped from the rostrum and met his opponent in the middle of the room. There was a quick interchange of hot words, a struggle ensued which ended with the janitor drawing a revolver. A shot rang out and the two men were with difficulty separated.

When the case was tried all the witnesses swore that it was the janitor who fired the shot, some even testifying that they saw the smoke issuing from the weapon after its discharge.

Will it surprise the reader to be told that it was **not** the janitor who fired the shot but a man stationed outside the building at an open window? The whole affair was prearranged, an experiment in psychology to test the value of direct evidence before the law students of the University.

And there are many who, in the realm of the

spiritual, demand visible demonstration before believing. They ask for what they call tangible proofs; they will receive nothing "on trust," and refuse to believe anything that cannot be discerned by the senses—sight, hearing or touch—their deified trinity, the only god in whom they trust. And in doing this they consider themselves exceedingly astute, and look down with affected pity, and even scorn, on those who have not seen, yet have believed. "Yes," they answer, when it is demanded of them that they have faith in God, "when we *see* we will believe"; and wise in their own conceits they maintain the ground that they will believe nothing except that which can be demonstrated to the senses.

This they think is rational and safe ground. But is it? Is their attitude toward revealed truth really rational? In view of the above-cited incident, No. Our senses may deceive us, our reasonings are oftentimes faulty; and our deductions are frequently false as our premises are erroneous.

Law students are not, as a rule, easily gulled, nor are they more prone than others to jump at conclusions. Yet in the demonstration arranged for them by their professor they were every one of them deceived; and trusting to the sight of their eyes were ready to declare under oath to be fact that which they afterwards learned to be false.

Yet in view of this (and such mistakes are being

made constantly) men, and especially young men, say when spoken to of the verities of Scripture, "Give us proofs, produce for us some direct evidence; we are perfectly willing to believe, but we want to see, hear, touch, taste or handle something to which we may attach our faith." Stupendous folly, when it is every day being demonstrated to us that our natural senses are the very things that we cannot trust. Some are colour-blind, and to the sight of such red appears white, and green looks blue. Some have an impaired taste and to them every bitter thing is sweet, and the sweet bitter. To some the finest music is but discordant noise, while to others (as the heathen chief who heard a famous band play in London some years ago) the big drum is the acme of pleasurable sound. I have known of persons to whom the odour of kerosene oil seemed most delightful perfume! So much for the impaired and perverted senses of fallen man and any real dependence that may be placed upon them.

"Except ye see . . . ye will not believe," was the scathing denunciation of the divine Master, "the Author and Finisher of faith," to the unbelieving generation of His day.

Those hundred or more University students saw, or thought they saw, and were deceived and put to shame like gullible children at the trial of the case so cleverly staged for their undoing, as credible witnesses who were sure because they saw.

How then can you know the certainty of those things in which from a child, perhaps, you have been instructed: the great doctrines of the Bible, such as God's existence, the creation, man's fall, the personality of Satan, redemption from sin by Jesus Christ, eternal life for man, the soul's immortality, heaven, hell and other equally important truths? Yes, that is the question. How can you know? by what means may you be sure?

That you cannot implicitly trust your senses is evident. You may have insisted that to believe a thing it must be demonstrated; and it has been demonstrated, by a test as fair and full as could be desired, that not one but one hundred clear-headed young men, who were themselves preparing to sift, examine and weigh testimony could be ludicrously deceived by appearances.

How, then, we repeat, can we know the things of the Bible to be true? **Can** we know? or shall we take the banal ground of the agnostic and say, We cannot know, no one can tell, it is impossible to be sure? We Christians know; we "know we have passed from death unto life"; "we know we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"; "I know that my Redeemer liveth," the believer can say (1 John 3: 14; 2 Cor. 5: 1; Job 19: 25). All this and much more we know; and we know it beyond the shadow of a doubt. But how? Well, how was it known by the students finally that it was not the janitor who fired the shot but a man posted for

the purpose at a near-by window? It was **by credible verbal testimony**, the statement of trustworthy men, the word, the assurances of men who they knew would not, in this matter at least, deceive them.

And we believe, not because of visions, revelations, or feelings, nor because by a process of reasoning we have arrived at the conclusion that we may rationally believe, but because GOD, who cannot lie, has spoken! He has declared these things to be so, and not to believe them would be to make Him a liar—the extremity of human guilt.

Our faith rests on adequate testimony, the Word of the living God, unchangeable and eternal. And to this the doubter must come if ever he is to arrive at a satisfactory state of mind and heart in reference to the stupendous realities of eternity.

There **are** evidences, on every hand, many and varied and of the very best; evidences both direct and indirect. The world is full of them, and they may be seen every day; museums of antiquity contain them; evidences of the Bible's veracity are writ large on Egyptian and Assyrian monuments and temples; the ruins of buried cities and the tombs of forgotten kings abound with them, even mummies bearing mute testimony to what the "scripture of truth" declares; and the spade of the excavator brings to light fresh witnesses every year. The natural sciences, astronomy, geology, physiology, anatomy, including even that most exact of all sciences, mathematics, all bear united

and harmonious witness to the truth of Scripture, written with "the finger of God."

And in the realm of the moral we have evidence multiplied; at home thousands of men and women reclaimed by the Gospel from lives of degradation, crime and shame; we see saints suffering from incurable diseases, lying helpless year after year on beds of pain, yet rejoicing in hope and patient in tribulation; martyrs die triumphant, firm in their confession, preferring torture to deliverance purchased by a denial of their faith; while in the mission-field not only do we see the power and truth of the Gospel manifested in the regeneration of individual savages, but whole districts, islands and archipelagoes transformed as if by magic through the influences of the circulation and reception of that book called the Bible.

But all this, though wholly adequate as direct testimony to the truth of Christianity, is not presented for your faith. We have a more sure basis for our belief: God, His word, His testimony, as revealed in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. He speaks, and therefore we believe. It is impossible to be deceived here. It is not necessary to laboriously gather, sift and weigh testimony, or examine witnesses. By the Word of God we **know**.

"I know whom I have believed and am persuaded," wrote one who ranked with the foremost thinkers of his day: Paul of "much learning" and deepest intellect, yet not faithless, but

believing because he had the testimony of Him whose Word is "for ever settled in heaven," where shams, deceits and illusions cannot abide, for all there is light and truth and verity.

Yes, "we know." "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding" (1 John 5: 20). He is "the truth," as well as "the way" and "the life," and believing in Him we shall never be confounded or put to shame (Rom. 10: 11).

C.K.

Who can understand or describe the unspeakable compensations which Christ grants to those disciples from whom He seems to take away so much which we count worth having? In the economy of grace it is the bruised lives and the shattered plans and the broken health and the spilled spikenard which are peculiar objects of the Lord's blessing. His angels excel in strength; but His saints excel in weakness. His apostles conquer through infirmities and necessities and distresses. His little flock, when it is most minished and brought low, receives the kingdom unawares. When the Church is weak, then it is strong. What we call its hindrances are appointed as its helps. Suffering and impoverished and buffeted, it becomes once more the vessel and instrument of Omnipotence. When other helpers fail and comforts flee, Christians know, as they never knew before, that underneath are the Everlasting Arms.

“IT WAS BORROWED”

THE prophets were engaged in building themselves a dwelling by the river Jordan. One of them was felling a beam when the head of the axe he was using fell into the water. With a feeling of regret and disappointment he exclaimed to Elisha, **“Alas, master! for it was borrowed”** (2 Kings 6: 1—5).

Borrowed tools are rarely satisfactory. Skilled workmen will not use them if they can avoid it. The reason is they are strange and unwieldy in the hand of the user. Then there is always the possibility of an accident, as that which happened to the axe that the prophet was using, and this is undesirable for obvious reasons.

People like their own tools. A penman will carry his own pen and use no other if he can help it. A ploughman will use his own plough always in preference to another. A carpenter keeps his own kit of tools and is loath to lend them out. One can understand this, for people become accustomed to use certain things and know, by experience, just what they can do with them.

Applying this to the Christian, we would counsel him, since he is God's workman, always to use his own tools. He should avoid in every possible way borrowing things from others, such as sermons, addresses, phrases, sayings, words, etc. If he gets into the habit of borrowing, he may easily

incur the danger of losing every bit of originality and resource in himself, and become the slavish imitator, the servile dependent, of some one else.

Young Christians, who have their life before them, should cultivate the habit of studying Scripture for themselves. Knowledge of God, through communion with Him and study of His Word, is the great foundation of character, upon which the superstructure of virtue and usefulness in service may be raised. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3: 16, 17).

Now if Scripture can do this, surely it is desirable, above everything else, that it should be the constant occupation of our thoughts. We should learn to think of Scripture, meditate upon it, pray over it. We do not disparage the ministry of others, whether oral or in print; but this should turn us back to Scripture, and then the Spirit will reveal wonderful things to us of God, His love and grace. And when we have made something definitely our own, derived directly from God's Word through meditation therein, we can always use this with power and freshness for the blessing of others. Then others, who have the Spirit, the same as ourselves, readily perceive that what we give them is original; that is, derived directly from God's Word, something we have enjoyed ourselves

as from God. This, of course, is not borrowed from others.

Many Christians lead an easy-going and superficial life. They are content with a text from the calendar, a few lines of poetry, a passage from some book composed for daily guidance. But this may be, to a large extent, borrowed, in that it is **what others have gathered**, and not **what they have gleaned for themselves**. This makes all the difference. The manna was gathered every morning by those who lived by it. They had to gather it for themselves, appropriate it, and live by it. So it is to-day with the Christian; he should read Scripture daily and get his spiritual nourishment from that source.

And, if it is undesirable to borrow from others in the matter of reading, etc., it is also undesirable that we should confront the enemy in borrowed armour. David assayed to go in Saul's armour to meet Goliath. But it did not answer. It was borrowed armour. What was suitable and serviceable to Saul was cumbersome impediment to David. The ponderous brass helmet, the unwieldy coat of mail, the heavy sword, all of which were untried, could but place him before Goliath as a target, rather than equip him for victory. It was no wonder the shepherd lad, finding himself at great disadvantage with his borrowed outfit, said to Saul, "I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them" (1 Sam. 17: 38, 39).

The fact is, none of us as warriors can go in what we have not proved. Experience of God, such as David had when he tended his father's sheep, is the only thing that will equip us for victory. David could slay a lion and bear by the strength he received from God. We too get strength from God to meet temptations, surmount difficulties, overthrow spiritual foes, and triumph all along the path of faith. Secret dealing with God is the only equipment. We learn in this secret way how frail we are in ourselves, how strong God is; that His strength is made perfect in our weakness; that His Name is a strong tower into which we can run and be safe—all this is armour for conflict. But it is not borrowed, or second-hand; it is experimental, something gained by secret communion with God.

Parents would often arm their children as Saul armed David, but it will not answer. Each one must stand on his own feet in conflict; and in order to triumph, each one must know his God in secret help, just as David knew Him, while he was in this secret place of training. Without this public testimony will be a failure. A mother once said to her boy who was going into the world to earn his living: "If I could give you **my** experience of God, I would give it to you gladly; but you must get **your own** from God, for this alone will serve you in life's conflict." She was right.

J. HOUSTON.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(ACTS 10: 24 — 13: 8).

This outline of Acts is brief and condensed. Except the above passage of Scripture be read, it is hardly likely that these notes will prove to be of real interest or profit.

ARRIVED at Caesarea, all was ready in the house of Cornelius. He too was conscious the thing was of God, and so he had no doubt as to Peter coming, and he had called together a number of people who like himself were seekers after God. Verse 25 reveals to us the reverential and submissive frame of mind that marked Cornelius. He carried his reverence too far; still it was no small thing that the haughty Roman should fall at the feet of a humble Galilean fisherman.

Peter now found himself in the presence of a large number of Gentiles, and his opening words to Cornelius show how he had accepted the instruction conveyed to him by the vision. The reply of Cornelius reveals how simply he had believed the angel's message and promptly obeyed it. He had accepted Peter's gentle rebuke when he asserted, "I myself also am a **man**;" yet he knew that **God** was at work and that the meeting was to be held as in His presence. He therefore placed himself and the whole audience as "here present before God," ready to hear from the preacher "all things that are commanded thee of God." They were ready to hear ALL. Plenty of folk do not mind hearing pleasant and comforting

things, while objecting to the sterner announcements that the Gospel makes.

Peter opened his address with a further acknowledgment that he now perceived that God would have respect to every soul that sincerely sought Him, according to the light he might have, no matter to what nation he belonged. The grace of God was now about to flow richly beyond the boundaries of Israel, though the word which God had sent in connection with Jesus Christ, personally present amongst men, had been addressed to the children of Israel only. Still that word had been well published through Galilee and Judaea, and so Cornelius and his friends knew all about it, being resident in those parts. The things that happened in the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth were well known to them.

So Peter could say, "That word . . ye know." There were however, things that **they did not know**; and these all-essential matters he proceeded to unfold. The death of Jesus had been a public spectacle and everybody knew about it. His resurrection had been witnessed by only a few, and common report denied it, the denial having the backing of the religious authorities, as we learn from Matthew 28: 11—15. Hence Peter now announced the astonishing news that the crucified Jesus had been raised from the dead by an act of God, that he and his fellow Apostles had actually seen Him, eaten with Him, and received from Him a command what they were to preach

to others. In verses 42 and 43 Peter made the announcements he was commanded to make.

These verses give us the two themes of his preaching, two announcements which must have come with great power to his Gentile hearers. First, the Jesus, whom men crucified, is ordained of God to be the Judge both of the living and the dead. His crucifixion was the act of both Jew and Gentile. Cornelius must have been familiar with the details, and known some who participated in it, if not actually involved in it himself. He was acquainted with His shame and dishonour and apparent failure. Well, the despised Jesus is to come forth in due season as the universal Judge. The destinies of all men rest in His hands. What an astounding declaration! Calculated to overwhelm every adversary with terror!

But second, before this Judge seats Himself on the judgment throne, all the prophets bear witness that there is forgiveness offered in His Name. That forgiveness is received by "whosoever believeth in Him." Forgiveness through the Name of the Judge! Could anything be more stable and satisfactory than that? The Judge has become the Surety for sinful men, and hence the believer in Him receives the remission of sins, **before** the day dawns when will be held the great assizes for the living and for the dead.

Cornelius and his friends **did** believe. Faith was present in their hearts before ever they heard the

message. Hearing it, their faith instantly embraced it, and God signalized that fact by instantly bestowing on them the gift of the Holy Ghost. Their faith leapt forth like the lightning-flash, and was at once followed by the thunder-clap of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was poured upon these believing Gentiles just as He had been at the beginning upon believing Jews, with the sign of tongues following. The two cases were identical, and in this way "they of the circumcision" who had come with Peter had every doubt dispelled. There was nothing for it but to baptize these Gentiles. If God had baptized them by the Spirit into the one body, men could not deny them entrance among believers on earth by water baptism.

There is just this difference between Acts 2 and this chapter, that there the enquirers had to submit first to baptism by water, and then they were to receive the promise of the Spirit. They had to cut their links with the rebellious mass of their nation before they were blessed. Here God bestowed the Spirit first, for had He not done so Jewish prejudices would have raised a wall against their baptism and reception. So God forestalled them: indeed the whole chapter shows us how this opening of the door of faith to the Gentiles was the moving of God's hand in the fulfilment of His purpose. It shows us too that no rigid law can be laid down as to the reception of the Spirit. It is **always** the result of faith, but it may be **with** or **without** baptism, **with** or **without** the

laying on of apostolic hands—see chapter 19: 6.

Chapter 11 opens with the stir which was created in Jerusalem by these happenings in Caesarea. Those who had strong Jewish prejudices contended with Peter over his actions. This led Peter to rehearse the matter from the beginning and set it forth in order, so that all might see that the thing was distinctly of God. It is remarkable that the Spirit of God has thought it well to put on record Peter's own account, as well as that given us by Luke as a historian, in the previous chapter. This emphasizes the importance of what happened so obscurely in the house of the Roman officer. It was in truth an epoch-making event.

In Peter's account we naturally have his side of the story rather than that of Cornelius. Yet he does furnish us with one detail as to the angel's message to Cornelius, which is not mentioned in the previous chapter. Peter was to tell him "words," whereby he and all his house should be "saved." The law **demands works** from men: the Gospel **brings words** to men, and those words lead them to salvation, if believed. Note also that they were not "saved" until they had heard the Gospel, and believed it; although without a doubt there had been a work of God in the hearts of these people, which led them to seek after God.

In verses 15 and 16 we see that Peter recognized in the gift of the Spirit to Cornelius a baptism of the Spirit, supplementary to that which had been

realized in Jerusalem at the beginning. It was God doing for believing Gentiles what He had previously done for believing Jews. God put both on the same footing, and who was Peter or anyone else to withstand God?

This plain and straightforward account given by Peter silenced all opposition: indeed grace so wrought in the hearts of those who had objected, that they not only recognized that God had granted to the Gentiles "repentance unto life," but they glorified God for doing it. They attributed repentance to the gift of God, just as faith is attributed to His gift in Ephesians 2: 8.

With verse 19, we leave Peter and pick up the thread from verse 1 of chapter 8. In between, we have had Philip's evangelistic labours, the conversion of Saul, who is to be the Apostle to the Gentiles, and Peter's activities, culminating in his opening in a formal way the door of faith to the Gentiles. We now discover that while the mass of believers scattered by persecution carried the Gospel with them, but preached it only to the Jews, there were some from Cyprus and Cyrene who, arrived at Antioch, began to preach to Greeks, declaring Jesus as Lord, for indeed He is **Lord of ALL**. These men, then, began to evangelize Gentiles, which was exactly the special business which the Holy Ghost now had on hand. As a consequence surprising results followed. God's hand worked with them, though they were men of no particular note, and a great multitude believed and turned to the Lord.

Thus the first Gentile church was formed, and the work speedily reached such dimensions as to attract attention from the church in Jerusalem, and lead them to depute Barnabas to visit them. Barnabas came and instantly recognized a true work of the grace of God. Instead of being jealous that others than himself or the leaders in Jerusalem had been used of God for this, he was glad and he furthered the work by his exhortations. But then he was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith, and so he cared not for his own reputation but for the glory of Christ. His exhortation was that as they had begun with **faith in the Lord** so they should continue to **cleave to the Lord** with purpose of heart. The working of God's grace was the great thing with Barnabas, no matter through whom it was effected. How good it would have been had the spirit of Barnabas prevailed all through the church's history.

Another thing characterized this good man, Barnabas. He evidently recognised his own limitations. He felt that another than himself was the one to be specially used to instruct these Gentile converts, and so he went off to fetch Saul. Barnabas appears to have been the exhorter and Saul the teacher, and for a whole year they gave themselves to this work. And at Antioch, significantly enough, the name "Christian" first sprang up. It is to be noted how the Lordship of Christ is stressed in this account of the work at Antioch; and where Christ is heartily and consistently owned as Lord, there believers so behave them-

selves as to provoke the onlookers to name them Christians. By the time chapter 26 is reached we find that Agrippa knows the name. In 1 Peter 4: 16 we find the Spirit of God accepting the name as a satisfactory one.

At the end of this chapter we are permitted to see how freely servants of God, such as prophets, moved about between the various churches. Gifts, granted in the church, are to be used in a universal and not merely a local way. So it came to pass that through Agabus, a prophet from Jerusalem, the church at Antioch was apprized of a coming famine, and took steps in advance to meet the anticipated need of the saints in Judaea. Thus early did the Gentile believers have opportunity to express love towards their Jewish brethren.

Chapter 12 has somewhat the nature of a parenthesis. We are again carried back to Jerusalem, to hear of Herod's persecution of the saints, and of how God dealt with him. James the brother of John fell a victim. He was one of the three specially favoured on the mount of Transfiguration, in Gethsemane, and on other occasions. Why the Lord did not interfere on his behalf, as He did for Peter, who can tell? But He did not, and the first of the Apostolic band fell. Herod was cultivating the favour of the Jews, just as Pilate was when he crucified the Lord; and, seeing that the Jews were pleased, he proceeded to arrest Peter. So again we find the Jew playing the part which has brought upon

them "wrath . . . to the uttermost," according to 1 Thessalonians 2: 14-16.

Peter's arrest sent the church to its knees. Their appeal was to God and not to man. The last twelve words of verse 5 set forth in a remarkable way the essentials of effectual prayer. It was "to God," and therefore **real** prayer. It was "of the church," and therefore **united** prayer. It was "for him," and therefore **definite**—not wandering away over a hundred and one requests, but concentrated on a special object. It was "without ceasing," and therefore **fervent** and **importunate**—the kind of prayer that obtains answers, according to Luke 18: 1 and James 5: 16. The prayer of the church brought an angel from heaven to deliver.

Herod had his prisoner in the hands of sixteen soldiers, in chains and behind bars and bolts: rumours as to previous deliverances had possibly reached his ears. All these things were as nothing before the angel, and Peter was conducted forth to freedom. Many were still praying in the house of Mary, mother of Mark and sister of Barnabas. Thither Peter betook himself. While they were still beseeching God for Peter's deliverance the delivered man knocked at the door. Lo! the answer to their prayer was there. They could hardly credit it, and in this they were very like to ourselves. God's answer went beyond their faith.

The Jews were disappointed and Herod was balked of his prey. The only people who died

the next day were the unfortunate soldiers responsible for Peter's safe keeping.

But God had not finished with Herod, though Herod was finished with Peter. The wretched king glorified himself before the people of Tyre and Sidon with the throne and apparel of royalty and a public oration. It was a huge diplomatic success, and the people accorded to him, and he accepted, honours due to "a god." At that moment the angel of the Lord smote him. He, a mere mortal, accepted honours that were due to God. To-day powerful, yet mortal, men are coming very near to doing the same thing, and we may yet see them also disappear in miserable fashion from the stage of life.

Twice in this chapter do we get the angel of the Lord smiting. He "smote Peter on the side," and in result he "**raised him up.**" He smote Herod, and instantly **laid him low**; for he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost." Human flesh has often been eaten of worms after death, but in Herod's case it was before death. A more horrible end could hardly be conceived. With James, Herod was allowed to have his fling; with Peter, he was foiled; and then God made a fool of him, requiring his soul amid scenes of indescribable misery and anguish.

Verse 24 supplies us with a striking contrast. As the worms grew and multiplied in Herod's wretched body so did the Word of God grow and multi-

ply in the hearts of many. When it pleases God to overthrow an adversary He need not exert Himself: a few worms will suffice to accomplish His end. The Word of God is that which accomplishes His end of blessing in the souls of men.

Verse 25 picks up the thread from the last verse of the previous chapter. Barnabas and Saul had gone to Jerusalem with the gift from the Antioch saints, and having fulfilled this service they returned, taking Mark with them. So, as we open chapter 13, our thoughts are centred once more on Antioch and the work there.

This large church, composed mainly of Gentiles, had no less than five prophets and teachers in its midst. Their names are given and prove very instructive; for one had a surname which probably indicates that he was a black man (Niger = Black), one was sufficiently distinguished to have been a foster-brother of Herod, Barnabas was a Hellenistic Jew, Saul had been a Pharisee of the Pharisees, and Lucius may have been a Gentile. Thus it was quite early manifest that race and breeding are not the things that count most decisively in the church, but the gift which is bestowed from on high. These men not only ministered to the saints for their instruction, but also to the Lord in thanksgiving, intercession and fasting; and it was in one of these private seasons that the Holy Ghost gave definite instructions that Barnabas and Saul should be set apart specially to go forth with the Gospel into the Gentile world.

The first and last of the five were chosen for this mission. The others prayed for them and identified themselves with them in their coming service by the laying on of hands. This laying on of hands was not what is to-day called "ordination," for the two chosen men were already in the full exercise of their ministry. The laying on of hands does uniformly express identification. The others said in effect, "We are entirely with you in your mission;" so that in full fellowship, and without jealousy or rivalry, they sent them forth.

Even so, it was really the Holy Ghost who sent them forth, as verse 4 says; and to Cyprus, the old home of Barnabas, they went first of all, Mark his nephew accompanying them. Arrived at Paphos, they had the encouragement of finding the chief ruler of the island ready for the Word of God; but at the same time they ran into Satanic opposition. Opposition from the powers of darkness is an encouraging sign, rather than the reverse.

F. B. HOLE.

No man can grasp Christian theory except in so far as he translates it into Christian practice. Doubts and difficulties are not cured by brooding over them and debating them; but we can resolve them by patient obedience to what we know already of the will of God.

DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE.

A Bible reading on Romans 5: 1—11; 6: and 12.

In order to follow the apostle's line of argument in the Epistle to the Romans we should notice that the first section of the epistle, the **doctrinal**, comprises the first eight chapters. This section is sub-divided into two, the first part ending with verse 11 of chapter 5. The second section of the epistle, the **dispensational**, runs on from the end of chapter 8 to the beginning of chapter 12. The third section, the **practical**, beginning with chapter 12, runs on to the end.—Author's Note.

BEFORE we speak of what our practice should be like, it is very important that we should be established in the grace of God. Nothing seems to me more mischievous than for people who are not true Christians at all to be exhorted to lead a Christian life and practice Christian virtues, as if anybody could become a Christian by trying to lead the life of one, or by endeavouring to practice day by day what he believes to be Christian virtues. To live a Christian life you must first **be** a Christian. Hence the importance

of being established at the start in the grace of God.

Let us therefore look first at the opening verses of chapter 5. Notice how frequently God Himself is spoken of. First of all, we have peace with God; then in the second verse we rejoice in hope of the glory of God; in verse 5 we read about the love of God; in verse 10 we are reconciled to God; and in verse 11 we joy in God. The whole passage is big, so to speak, with God Himself in these various connections.

Perhaps it is not necessary for me to dwell on peace with God, the first great Christian blessing. It is the privilege of every believer in the Lord Jesus to be in the enjoyment of it. I do not mean that every believer **is** in the enjoyment of it, though he should be, as it is his undoubtedly through grace. Peace with God, let me say, has nothing whatever to do with the circumstances through which believers pass. Our circumstances differ. Sometimes they are of a pleasing nature; sometimes they are most trying.

It is the **peace of God** which passeth all understanding which is connected with our circumstances, but not so **peace with God**, of which our passage speaks. This is connected with the question of our acceptance with God. Having been justified on the principle of faith, what flows naturally from that is that we have peace with

God. Our consciences have been awakened to the fact that we deserve condemnation, but through the work of Christ we are in the very opposite of a state of condemnation. If God condemns the sinner, he is condemned indeed; if God justifies him, then is he justified indeed.

Now a justified person is a person whom God holds to be righteous, and against whom no charge can ever be successfully laid. If then we are justified on the principle of faith by the grace of God, on account of the precious blood of Jesus, the natural and inevitable result is that we are perfectly at peace with God. We know very well that if **God** has justified us, we have nought to fear.

There is a further thing in verse 5. We read here of the love of God shed abroad in the heart of the believer by the Holy Spirit given to him. We become sensible that we are loved by God. It is the love **of God** that is shed abroad in our hearts, not love **to God**. No doubt the Holy Spirit does lead us to love God. Christians are those that love God, but this passage speaks, not of the love that is begotten in our hearts Godward, but God's own love to us. God loved us when there was nothing lovable in us, and this love of God, immense, immeasurable, is shed abroad in the heart of the believer, so that it becomes a great and a grand reality.

Passing on to verse 9, we read that "much more

then, being now justified by His blood [the meritorious cause of it], **we shall be saved** from wrath through Him." Sometimes in the Bible salvation is spoken of as an accomplished thing; sometimes as a process going on, and sometimes as a thing that is still future. There is wrath coming, a day of wrath. We shall be saved from it. The One in the power of whose blood we have been justified, who is now living up there at the right hand of God, will take care that we shall be sheltered, and that the storms that are connected with the day of wrath shall never burst upon those who have been justified by His blood.

Moreover, as verse 10 teaches us, having been reconciled to God by the death of His Son, we shall be saved by His life. That is, by the life of the Lord Jesus in heaven. How little we think of it: His present ministry, saving us all along the road, a continuous salvation. He lives to bring us safely through.

We reach the highest point in verse 11. **We joy in God.** Beyond this we shall never go in heaven or on earth. How wonderful must that grace be that can so deal with us, put away our sins, overcome the natural enmity of our hearts, and set us at rest in God's presence, that we can joy in God, make our boast in God, triumph in God, exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ!

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Another line of teaching comes before us in chapter 6. Here we learn that we have died with Christ. We read of two masters, sin on one side and righteousness on the other. **Sin** is the master that we formerly served, says the apostle. We were bondmen to sin. But we have died to our old master, and we are to reckon ourselves always and everywhere to have died to him, in that we have died with Christ.

The apostle is led into this strain of argument to meet the objections that people raised in his day, and that many raise in our days, to the gospel of the grace of God. The apostle has shown in the end of chapter v. that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, and that if sin reigned unto death, grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. "Oh," says somebody, "if that is your doctrine, then a very just deduction to be drawn is that we may continue in sin that God's grace may abound yet more and more."

"No," replies the apostle, "no such deduction may be drawn." He does not weaken the doctrine of grace, but he brings in this other fact, the fact that we have died with Christ to our old master, sin, and it no longer has authority over us. We have come under the authority of God and of righteousness.

Just a final word on the practical section. In chapter 12 the apostle says, "I beseech you,

therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God." I think this part joins on to the doctrine of chapter 6. First of all, we are to **present**. The beseeching is based on the mercies of God, some of which I have been seeking to set before you. Now we are besought to present our body, that which we have used as a vehicle for the doing of our own will, to be used henceforth for purposes that will serve God's will and His glory. This is to be, on our part, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, our intelligent service. It is not to be a blind and unintelligent act the meaning of which we do not know. We are to own now God's claims over us, and day by day to glorify Him in our bodies. That is the first thing.

The second is: Do not be conformed to this world, the vast system of things that is around us, and in which God has no place, where man is the central and commanding figure, and where man's will is dominant. We know what it is. We are not to be conformed to it but to be transformed, not by a mere mechanical process, but by the renewing of our mind, the inward renewal connected with the Holy Ghost. The result of this will be that we shall prove in our daily lives what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. We shall work it out, no longer doing our own wills, but God's will being that which we seek to do; and all being based on **the mercies of God**.

W.B.

SALVATION.

A VERY delightful story is told of a certain lassie who had been recently converted and was in all the freshness and zeal of a new-found joy in the Lord. She went up to a grey-haired gentleman in a Co. Durham town, and enquired, "Are you saved?"

He looked at her with a kindly smile, and said, "My dear, do you mean **esotheren**, **sozomenos**, or **sothesomai**?" This was all Greek to her. She had in the warmth of her new found joy addressed her question to one of the greatest Greek scholars of his day, Bishop Westcott, a leading member of the revision of the Bible, published in 1881.

His enquiry put into plain English meant, Are you enquiring if I have been saved, or am being saved, or shall be saved? The Bishop then explained his meaning to the lassie, and she went on her way with a clearer understanding of what salvation meant than she had before

It might be put this way for clearness,
 Salvation past—from the **penalty** of sin.
 Salvation present—from the **power** of sin.
 Salvation future—from the **presence** of sin.

SALVATION PAST

What a mercy, what a wonderful privilege it is that every believer on the Lord Jesus Christ, however recently conversion has taken place, can say, "Thank God, I **am** saved, and saved for ever."

When the Saviour died on the cross, He died a sacrificial death. He endured the judgment of God that the believer might never come under it. So the believer can re-echo the words of Scripture, "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2: 24). How many of our sins did the Saviour bear on the cross? Surely **all**. Do we not read, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from **all** sin." (1 John 1: 7). And again, "By one offering He hath perfected **for ever** them that are sanctified." (Hebrews 10: 14). So we can say we, believers, are saved. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He **saved** us." (Titus 3: 5).

SALVATION PRESENT

Believers need a present salvation—not a question of the forgiveness of sins between God and the sinner, that is the happy portion of each the moment he or she believes on the Lord Jesus. But believers have three foes to contend with as they pass through this world. The **flesh**, that evil fallen nature we all inherit from Adam, the traitor within the gate; the **world**, that subtle appeal to the flesh through eye-gate and ear-gate; the **devil**, a real antagonist with mighty powers.

We certainly need present salvation or else we shall make shipwrecks of our Christian profession. More than half the battle is lost if we are not duly conscious of the nature of the flesh. Romans 8:

7 tells us the carnal or fleshly mind is not merely at enmity, but "is enmity against God." No wonder that to a man, in whom the flesh was dressed up in its most respectable habiliments, Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, the Lord said, "Ye must be born again." (John 3: 7). Salvation from the power of sin is given in the new birth and in the gift of the Holy Spirit, the power for true Christian life.

As the believer walks through this world in all the true and holy desires of the new life and in the power and joy of the Holy Spirit, the world does not attract him; the flesh is mortified and kept in the place of death; and the devil resisted will flee from him. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4: 7).

SALVATION FUTURE

God is not going to leave us in this world for ever. The flesh is not going to be present in the believer save for this life. The world is passing away, and the devil is to be cast into the lake of fire, no more to organize his mad, unavailing revolt against God and His people. "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." (Romans 13: 11). We are "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by [in—N. Trans.] hope." (Romans 8: 23, 24).

The bright day soon comes when the summoning shout of our victorious Lord will be heard in

the air, when He will call all His own, whether sleeping in the grave for long centuries, or alive on the earth when He comes, to be for ever with Himself.

In a moment believers will leave the flesh behind for ever; nothing but new creation will enter the paradise of God. In a moment the world with its lust and violence will be left behind, and we shall be beyond the reach of the devil. Nay, more, our very bodies shall be redeemed, for Romans 8: 23 speaks of "the **redemption** of our body." All trace of sin shall be removed. There will not be crooked limbs, or aching joints, or the weakness of old age yonder. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we shall be changed into the image of our Lord. He "shall change our vile body [**body of humiliation**—N. Trans.], that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body [**body of glory**—N. Trans.], according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." (Phil. 3: 21).

Thus we can say that, as believers on the Lord Jesus,

We ARE saved from the **penalty** of our sins.

We ARE BEING saved from the **power** of indwelling sin, and

We SHALL BE saved from the **presence** of sin.

What a salvation is ours! Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come

unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. 7: 25). The Lord has saved the believer from the penalty of sin by His all-sufficient, atoning death upon the cross; He saves or delivers His people through His priesthood and advocacy on high on His side, and in the power of life and of the Holy Spirit on our side; He will save our very bodies when He comes for His own at His second coming.

We may well rejoice to have such a salvation, such a Saviour, such a full and eternal provision for our blessing.

A. J. POLLOCK.

Christian character has always existed as the outcome and product of Christian belief. History points to an unmistakeable connection between practical goodness and definite faith. You cannot build noble careers out of vague speculation and emotion; you cannot get men to suffer and die for a peradventure. Confessors are made out of people who have something to tell, and martyrs out of people who have Someone to love. Whatever else may be true about the saints, one fact is quite obvious: they were saints because they possessed a real, positive faith. They knew Him, whom they trusted.

PERFECTION

WHEN Christians hear anything about perfection they are apt to jump to the hasty conclusion that it is very remote from them. They look around on what they have done and they see nothing of it there. Then they turn their eyes inwardly for introspection and they see nothing of it there. They conclude it can only be when they are glorified with Christ, and until then they must leave it. Though this seems a feasible conception of it, and a general one, we would like to show it is not a scriptural one.

God's standard for His people is always perfection. It may be understood in two ways: as the work of Christ for them; as the work of the Spirit in them. The former is usually termed objective, because it is something wrought in and by Christ as an Object outside ourselves and which faith lays hold of. The latter, subjective, because it is produced in us by a work of the Holy Spirit, of which we are the subjects.

With reference to the objective side, we read, "By one offering He [Christ] hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10: 14). Since it is something that He has done, and not what we have done, we must simply believe it. Can He make us perfect? Surely. He is the only One that could make us perfect. Then we must

accept in simple faith that He has done it. And there is another point: whatever He does is perfect. He transfers His perfection into the thing He does. So we can say, He is perfect; His work is perfect: perfection, then, in its fullest and most absolute sense is seen in Him and His work, **and both avail for His people before God.** "He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

As to the subjective side, we read, the Apostle Paul laboured that he might "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1: 28). Evidently every man had not reached it; hence his labour to accomplish it. It was God's standard for every man, and the Apostle aimed at it, and would have nothing less. Ministers of the Word of God, if they are sent by God, cannot set up a standard of their own, neither can they comply with one that others set up for them. Precisely in lowering the standard, we have all the corruption there is in so-called Christian ministry. The moment we seek to accommodate God's standard to man, instead of aiming at an answer in man to God's standard, we corrupt the Word of God by adulterating it. Reduction of the strength and nourishment of milk by the addition of water is adulteration. Reduction of the properties and value of food by any synthetic process is adulteration. Deceitful interference with the standard of weights and measures is fraudulent. All this is punishable by law. What shall we say of corrupting God's Word? Of lowering His standard? Now this was just what Paul avoided,

while on every hand he saw it practised by false apostles (2 Cor. 2: 17).

If it be contended that we never attain to perfection here, it is correct. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect," said the Apostle (Phil. 3: 12). But if, on that account, we fail to aim at it, then it is wrong. We must distinguish between attainment and object. A mariner steers his course at sea by the heavenly bodies. This does not mean he attains to their exalted sphere, but objectively he follows them, and must not lose sight of them. So we follow after Christ in glory (this is perfection), so that we may apprehend that for which we are apprehended of Him. He has laid hold of us for heavenly glory with Himself, and we lay hold of Him there by faith, and follow on till we reach Him there.

And when the Apostle had such an object before him, he was very determined to reach it himself, as well as encourage others to aim at it. He never thought of anything less for God's people than Christ in glory. It was his object in walk, and his subject in ministry. If he had to come down to the level of correction, warning and exhortation, he took it amiss. It was not his normal work. He viewed it as negative, and not positive. For instance, he had to correct the Galatians and Corinthians; the former for false doctrine, the latter for disorderly walk. He had to warn and exhort the Hebrews, because they clung

to their earthly religion and failed to answer to their heavenly calling. All this was so much hindrance in view of the positive ministry he had for them, had their state been such as to admit of it.

He had to go over his work again amongst the Galatians. "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 4: 19). He had to give the Corinthians milk and not meat, because their carnal state would not allow anything else. He justly complained too of the state of the Hebrews. They were old enough to be teachers, but they had need of one to teach them again "the first principles of the oracles of God" (Heb. 5: 12-14). As a contrast to this we have the state of the Ephesians. There is no corrective ministry to them; they were in a state to receive "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20: 27). This was what Paul longed to declare to all the saints. It was positive ministry. So too the Colossians were in a good state, though in danger of being ensnared. He could unfold to them the glories of Christ, the Head. This too was positive ministry.

Let it clearly be understood, we do not belittle corrective and hortative ministry. We need it. But let it be as clearly understood, we do not see hope of progress in such who do not move beyond it. Hence the fitting word: "Let us go on unto perfection." A teacher will make little headway in teaching if he spends most of his time in

correcting and warning. He will find this negative work very hindering and irksome. He will long for something positive and progressive. If this is the case in ordinary life, how much more in spiritual life? We would repeat the word, "Let us go on unto perfection."

J. HOUSTON.

In the margin of the English Revised Version we find an alternate rendering of John 13: 1—"Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the uttermost." Through our human fellowship one with another we come to understand by experience how often personal tenderness is checked and limited, partly in ourselves by a lack of capacity for loving, and partly in the objects of our affection by their lack of worthiness and their imperfect response. In a world like this, where most people appear shallow-hearted or narrow-hearted, where we feel ourselves secretly plagued and crippled by our own self-seeking, we take refuge in the Divine Love that loves to the uttermost. By virtue of this prerogative Christ is able also to save to the uttermost. This is why He shall receive the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. And does not this also explain why He claims us, even to the uttermost? For there is nothing in the universe so exacting as perfect Love.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(ACTS 13: 8 — 15: 12).

This outline of Acts is brief and condensed. Except the above passage of Scripture be read, it is hardly likely that these notes will prove to be of real interest or profit.

ELYMAS was an apostate Jew, who had sold himself to the service of the devil, and he became the chief opponent of the Gospel at Paphos. But just as Satan's power was expressed in him, so the power of the Holy Spirit energized Saul, and there was a very striking and drastic proof given that, "greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4: 4). The true character of the man was unmasked, and the hand of the Lord laid upon him in judgment. It is striking that Saul should now be used to bring upon another something similar to that which had fallen on himself. After three days the scales had fallen from the eyes of Saul. On Elymas there descended a mist and darkness, which fitly matched the misty darkness of his mind. The deputy believed, and it was the **teaching** of the Lord that impressed him rather than the miracle.

From this point in the narrative Luke gives Saul his new name of Paul (meaning, Little), and at the same time we see the Spirit thrusting him into the leading position in service and ministry, so that in verse 13, "Paul and his company," is the phrase used. There is a designed connection,

we think, between the change of name and the change of position. He who is **Little** becomes the **Leader**; and this illustrates the Lord's words in Matthew 18: 4. Did this have something to do with John Mark leaving the company at this juncture, we wonder? Barnabas, his uncle, was being somewhat overshadowed.

At Antioch in Pisidia the rulers of the synagogue invited a message from the visitors, and again Paul is the one to seize upon the opportunity and speak. The record of his preaching is given—verses 17 to 41—so here we have a valuable insight to his presentation of the Gospel to a mixed audience of Jews and proselytes.

He began with God's choice of their fathers in Egypt and His bringing them out of it, and from that point led them up to God's choice of David, and His promise of a Saviour from that man's seed. He then presented Jesus as being the promised Seed, as borne witness to by John the Baptist. Now the tidings of the salvation which is centred in that Saviour was sent to all his hearers, including, "whosoever among you feareth God;" that is, the Gentile proselytes among them.

He then proceeded to speak of the death and resurrection of Jesus: His death the wicked act of the Jerusalem Jews; His resurrection the act of God, and that resurrection amply verified by the testimony of credible witnesses. Hence he

brought them "glad tidings," in a twofold way. First there was the good news of God fulfilling His promise in raising up Jesus. The word, "again," should not occur in the middle of verse 33: that verse refers to our Lord's coming into the world, according to the second Psalm. Then, second, there was the good news that when men had consigned Jesus to death, God had raised Him up from the dead, never to die again. Paul found an allusion to resurrection in "the sure mercies of David" (Isa. 55: 3), as well as in the well-known words, he quotes from Psalm 16. The one was written **about** David, and the other written **by** David; but in neither case did the Spirit of God really refer **to** David, as verse 36 says. David having "in his own age served the will of God," (margin), did see corruption, and the words of his Psalm could only refer to Christ.

Having thus established the resurrection of Christ, Paul brought his address to a climax by the announcement of forgiveness of sins through "this Man," risen from the dead. The announcement was made in oracular fashion as a Divine proclamation. There was no quoting of Old Testament Scripture for this. "Be it known," he said. What he announced they were to know, for really it was God who was speaking through his lips. In 1 Corinthians 2: 13, we find Paul claiming the inspiration of the Holy Ghost for his spoken words; and this being so we have no hesitation in according the same inspiration to his writings, preserved for us in the New Testament. When

Paul said, "**Be it known,**" then those who believed might **know**. And in just the same way **we know**, when we believe the Holy Scriptures.

Paul not only made plain this general announcement of forgiveness; he also declared the positive result which would follow belief in the Gospel message. By Christ the believer **is justified** from all things. By the works of the law not one of us can be justified at all: by the faith of Christ we are justified from all. We are cleared from every charge that would have stood against us, and invested with "the righteousness which is of God by faith." All this hinges upon faith in Christ, risen from the dead. It is "through this Man," and "by Him."

Paul closed his address with a word of warning, and this was in keeping with what he states in Romans 1: 16-18. In the Gospel "righteousness of God" is revealed, as we have just seen in verse 39 of our chapter; but it is revealed against the dark background of the "wrath of God." Hence his solemn words in verses 40 and 41. The way he quotes from Habbakuk 1: 5 is very striking, for the allusion there is plainly to the Chaldeans. However though the Chaldeans were an immediate fulfilment of the prophecy, it evidently is going to have a larger, ultimate fulfilment in the judgment of the Day of the Lord. No prophecy of the Scripture is of any "private interpretation."

Verses 43-48 show that the Gospel is indeed the

“power of God” unto salvation to all who believe. Jews and proselytes were first reached; but when the mass of the Jews, filled with envy, began violent opposition, the Apostles definitely turned to the Gentiles with the offer of salvation, finding in Isaiah 49: 6 a plain command of the Lord to do so. Light and salvation for the Gentiles had been God’s purpose from the days of old. Many Gentiles did believe, and thereby it became manifest that they had been ordained to eternal life. **We do not know** who are ordained to eternal life, so we cannot foretell who will believe. When we find anyone really believing, **we know at once** that they are ordained to eternal life.

Not only in Antioch was the Word preached, but also in all the surrounding region; and the prosperity of the work stirred up such a persecution that Paul and Barnabas had to depart. We might have considered it disastrous that these new disciples should **get** persecution and **lose** the preachers. The work in their souls however was of so solid a character that instead of being depressed they were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost. Without a doubt disciples are more frequently damaged by prosperity than by persecution. In Iconium, the next place visited, the work was similar to that at Antioch. The synagogue was visited and the Word so preached that a multitude of both Jews and Gentiles believed. Again the Jews became the opposers and persecutors, and in view of riotous doings the Apostles fled to other cities.

At Lystra a remarkable miracle was wrought through Paul. A man lame from birth was healed; a miracle almost the exact counterpart of the one wrought by Peter, which we read of in chapter 3. That was done in the very heart of Judaism, and while it gave a great opening for testimony it also brought upon the Apostles the wrath of the Jewish leaders. This was done in the presence of the heathen, who interpreted the wonderful happening in the light of their false beliefs, and would have made an idolatrous festival, had not the Apostles protested, seizing the opportunity to declare to them the true and living God, who is the Creator. The Lycaonians would have done exactly what Paul charges the heathen with doing in Romans 1: 25, saying they "worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever."

The fickleness of men is illustrated in verse 19. The people who would have deified Paul are very easily persuaded against him by certain Jews who followed his footsteps, and they stone him, as they thought, to death. Paul now undergoes the very thing he had helped to bring upon Stephen. In the case of Stephen God did not intervene; in Paul's case He did. Whether Paul was really dead, or whether only battered nearly to the point of death, we have no means of knowing: whichever it was, his restoration, almost in an instant, to ordinary health and strength, was a miracle. The next day he journeyed forth to preach the Gospel in another city, just as though nothing

had happened to him.

Their outward journey terminated at Derbe, having been one of evangelistic labours and sufferings. On the return journey they gave themselves to pastoral work, so that the souls of the disciples might be confirmed and established in the faith. It is worthy of note that they did not hide from the disciples that suffering was before them, but rather they told them that it was inevitable. They did not say that we **may** through **some** tribulation enter the Kingdom, but that we **must** through **much** tribulation.

That saying stands true to-day. We may try to evade the tribulation, but we do not succeed. If through cowardice we shrink from conflict with the world, we get the trouble in our daily circumstances, or even in the bosom of the church of God. The Apostle Paul himself wrote, "Our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; **without** were **fightings**, **within** were **fears**" (2 Cor. 7: 5). To-day we have to say something similar, only we so often have to reverse the latter clause and say that we have too many fears as to the "without" to do much fighting, and consequently we are too often involved in fightings within the circle of the saints of God—it is, "**without** were **fears**, **within** were **fightings**." Either way however the tribulation is ours.

On the return journey they also found that amongst the older converts some were manifesting the character that marked them out as fit to exer-

cise spiritual supervision, and these men they ordained as elders. Apostolic discernment was needed in making the choice, and also a real spirit of dependence on God—hence, prayer,—and a refusal of the desires of the flesh—hence, fasting. And when the elders were chosen so that all might recognize them, they did not commit the rest of the believers into the hands of the elders. No, they “commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.” Each believer was set in direct connection and communion with the Lord by faith. Elders were instituted, not to **intercept** the faith of the saints, but to **incite** it to more reality and depth.

Cyprus was not touched on the return journey, and from Attalia they took ship for Antioch direct; and there, the church being gathered together, they told the story of their mission. They had not been sent by the church at Antioch but by the Holy Ghost, yet the church had a very deep interest in these servants who had gone forth from their midst. On their part the servants told what “God had done with them.” God was the worker, and they but the instruments He had been pleased to use; and it was God who had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. The first missionary journey had proved this beyond all dispute.

Yet, though this was so, the manner of their service was not beyond all dispute. No one challenged them in Antioch itself during their long stay there, but then most in that church were of

Gentile extraction. When certain men came down from the Jerusalem area, all was changed by the teaching that the observance of circumcision was absolutely necessary for salvation, and Paul and Barnabas had not practised this. When reading the early part of chapter II, we saw that the Judaizing party in Jerusalem had questioned Peter's action in evangelizing Gentiles, in the person of Cornelius and his friends. Their opposition was overruled, and it was accepted that the Gospel was to go to the Gentiles. The point now raised was that, even admitting that, they must submit to circumcision in order to be saved, and the circumcision must be "after the manner of Moses," thus definitely connecting it with the law system. This new demand was firmly resisted by Paul and Barnabas, and ultimately they and others went up to the Apostles and elders in Jerusalem about this question.

Fourteen years had passed since Paul's first brief visit to Jerusalem three years after his conversion, as recorded in Acts 9: 26-29, and in Galatians 1: 18. The whole of Galatians 2 furnishes us with remarkable insight to what was at stake in the discussion, which was started at Antioch and carried to its conclusion at Jerusalem; nothing short of **the truth and liberty of the Gospel**. We also discover that though in our chapter it says, "they determined" that Paul and others should go to Jerusalem, Paul himself went up "by revelation;" that is, the Lord distinctly revealed to him that he was to go. Also we find that Paul was led to take a

very firm line in the matter; giving place to those who opposed him, "by subjection, no, not for an hour;" taking Titus, who was a Greek, with him, and declining to have any compulsion laid upon him as to his being circumcised. The Galatian epistle clearly shows that Paul was fully assured what was the mind of God in this matter, but that it was revealed to him that he should consent to it being referred to Jerusalem for settlement there.

In this of course we see the wisdom and power of God. Had Paul attempted to settle the matter, and act on his own apostolic authority at Antioch, there might easily have been a breach between himself and the other Apostles. As it was, the decision in favour of liberty being accorded to the Gentile converts, was reached in the very place where, had not God controlled by His Spirit, the decision would have gone the other way. But in saying this we are anticipating.

On the journey to Jerusalem the tidings of God's grace to the Gentiles caused great joy to the brethren, but in Jerusalem itself the issue was soon raised. Those who contended for the observance of the law by the converts from among the Gentiles, were believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees. For the present they retained their Phariseism, though believers. This occasioned a formal coming together of the Apostles and elders to go into the question as before God.

There was much "disputing," or "discussion," and then Peter made a decisive pronouncement,

by referring to the case of Cornelius, in which he had himself been involved. He pointed out that the heart-knowing God had borne witness to these Gentile converts by giving to them the Holy Spirit, just as He had given Him to themselves on the Day of Pentecost. These Gentiles had been **cleansed**, as the vision of the great sheet indicated, and God had wrought the purification in their hearts **by faith**, and not as a matter of mere ceremonial cleansing. The fact was that God had already decided the point in principle by what He did in the case of Cornelius. We can now understand why so much space is devoted to that case in the Acts; for this is the third time that we have it brought before us.

The law was a yoke, which God had placed upon the neck of the Jew, and both they and their fathers had found its weight to be crushing. To endeavour to impose it upon necks, that had never been subjected to it by God, would be to tempt God Himself. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ was the only hope of salvation, whether to Jew or Gentile. The way verse 11 reads is quite remarkable. It is not, "they, Gentiles, shall be saved even as we, Jews," but, "we shall be saved even as they." The salvation of the Gentiles could not be on any other ground than grace; and the Jew must come in on this ground too.

Let us not miss the lovely contrast between Matthew 11: 29, and verse 10 of our chapter. The crushing yoke of the law is not to be laid upon

our Gentile necks, but because of that we are **not** left yokeless. We take upon us the light and easy yoke of the blessed Jesus, who has become to us the Revealer of the Father.

From Peter's words it is evident how thoroughly he had learned the lesson he was taught in connection with Cornelius. He pointed out how the thing had been settled there; and so the way was cleared for Barnabas and Paul to rehearse how God had worked in miraculous power among the Gentiles. Barnabas is now mentioned first, for evidently he, free, from any jealousy or envy, could speak more freely of the things done, mainly through Paul. Their testimony was that what God had done **in practice** through them agreed with what He established **in principle** through Peter.

F. B. HOLE.

To the saints on earth spiritual pride remains their subtlest temptation. Because humility, by its very nature, vanishes if it so much as becomes aware of itself. No man clothed with humility can grow conscious of the heavenly raiment he wears. Moreover the busiest and most successful Christians are often most sorely tempted into self-flattery and self-esteem. He, who knows what is in man, warns us sternly against the peril of this snare.

THE WORLD: OUR POSITION AND ATTITUDE WITH REGARD TO IT.

Read John 17: 1—20.

WHAT is the believer's position with regard to the world as it exists to-day? And what should be his attitude towards it? The answer to the second question must be dependent upon the answer to the first. Our attitude in present circumstances must be governed by our position. It is futile for me to assume to settle things if I am not in a position to do so. It is no use my writing with all the authority of the manager of a firm if I am only the office boy. So in considering what our **attitude** should be in regard to the remarkable and peculiar circumstances through which we pass, we must ask: What is my **position** in regard to them?

Let me point out that this group of chapters has one underlying thought; that is, that the believer is absolutely identified with Christ. Before God the Father is now our place. We are identified with Him in a new relationship, a new joy, and a new position which He takes up as risen from the dead.

But in chapter 16 we get another side of the

story. The Lord tells His disciples what treatment they are to expect from the world. He says, as it were, "Not only are you identified with Me in My position before the Father, in all the favour and blessing that attaches to that position, but you are identified with Me in My position of reproach and rejection before the world. If you have all the assets connected with My place before the Father, you must not be surprised to find you have got My liabilities in connection with the world." He intimated to them that they were to make up their minds to share His path of rejection even unto death. Does this sound strange to our ears? We have been so accustomed to a quiet peaceful life in this land, where Christianity has greatly modified the standards of behaviour, and have for generations past had such a time of ease, that we are apt to forget what the truth is as to the position we hold; a position of the greatest possible blessing before God, but a position of persecution and reproach, if we are true to our Master, in this world.

Now in John 17, we have the whole case presented with perfection. The Lord Himself lays down in the clearest possible way what our position is. Look first at verse 6. We have to remember that we are among those given to Christ by God the Father out of the world. Doubtless those words had special reference to the apostles, but verse 20 shows that they have every believer in view. The Lord prays for all His own right through the church's history, up to and includ-

ing ourselves. It is a very touching thought that when the Lord Jesus paused outside the walls of Jerusalem before crossing the brook that led to the garden, with His awestruck disciples about Him in the quiet night, He uttered this prayer. His eye swept the centuries, and He embraced us all in that for which He prayed on that never-to-be-forgotten occasion. We too have been given to Christ by God the Father out of this world. He foreknew us in the past eternity, for as we read elsewhere, we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. His thoughts for us antedate the establishment of this material earth on which we tread. We need not be surprised, then, to find that our ultimate destiny lies outside it.

When the Lord was here, His own were under His continual guidance and care, but the moment had now come when He was to leave them. He is in spirit here already beyond the cross. He says to the Father, "Now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee." He left the world, as we know, by way of death, and resurrection, and ascension. He left it because rejected. Let us never forget that.

There are people who say, "If there is a God in heaven, why does He not interfere? Why does He look down calmly on the atrocities that are being perpetrated?" Many answers might be given to these questions, but one very sufficient answer is, **Because Christ has been rejected.** The only

One who can put things right has been here, and has been rejected, and until He comes again you need not be surprised at anything that may happen. Nothing can be right until the only One who can put things right takes them in hand. But when He does, it means judgment, and that is why God waits. God is never partial. In our wrongs and disappointments we would like God to interfere on our own particular and special behalf, but why should He? When God intervenes, He will do so in a far-reaching manner, and it will mean the arrival of the day of judgment. When the time comes for wrongs to be righted, **all** wrongs will be righted. If God is going to interfere in judgment, we can only quote that saying of old which we find in the Psalms: "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant: for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified." It would mean an end of us all, apart from the provision that God's grace has made, so meantime He keeps silence. But the hour of His mercy is fast running to its close, and then He will intervene to put things right.

Here were a few fishermen, and some others of humble extraction. One of them, Judas Iscariot, has left, and is about to commit suicide. The other eleven will, in a moment of weakness, forsake Him and flee; yet they love Him, and He loves them. They are going to be left without Him in the world, and the next thing is what we get in verse 14: "I have given them Thy word, and the world hath hated them, because they are

not of the world, even as I am not of the world." We are left in the world on the distinct understanding that we are not of it. We are not part and parcel of the world-system by which we are surrounded, and for that reason the world hates the Christian. Notice the Lord here makes Himself the standard. We are identified with Him in this.

Now notice a further thing in verse 18: "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." We have been taken out of the great world-system. We speak of a man being a "man of the world." By this we do not intend to emphasize the fact that he lives on this planet in contrast to dwelling in the moon, or being an inhabitant of Mars. We mean that he is absolutely and in every sense a man of the world-system that is all around us. The Christian is taken out of the world in that sense. Notice here again that He, Christ Himself, is the standard. If it is a question of our separation from the world, it is even as Christ Himself is separated from it; if it is a question of being sent into the world, as in verse 18, that also is measured by the same standard. The Lord takes us out, breaks our links with this world, and then sends us back that we may be here for Him.

He Himself came into it with one great thought before Him. The supreme object that dominated the life of the Lord Jesus was the glory of God. Our benefit, great as it was, was not the primary

thought before Him. He came into this world which at the instigation of Satan had cast off Divine allegiance, always rightly representing God, always perfectly revealing Him, and ultimately working out redemption for sinners. In reading the Gospels, we see how again and again there was the temptation presented to Him to turn from the main line of God's purpose and run into a siding, but never did He do so. I mean such instances as when a man came up to Him and said in effect, "I have got a brother who is not straight; speak to him that he divide the inheritance with me." The Lord's answer was, "Who made Me a judge or a divider over you?" His business was not merely to right things, although, of course, had He been received He would have done so. His main business was not to deal with social matters and to remove those terrible inequalities which are so pronounced. Socialists are so blind and mistaken as actually to claim Jesus as one of themselves, even with a scripture like this staring them in the face. Here is a great social problem presented to the Lord, and He declines to touch it. It would have been leaving the main track of that for which He was here. There was also a national or political question raised, but the Pharisees did not get the answer they expected, for the Lord only used the occasion to throw into relief that which was the supreme question: the rights of God.

Now we Christians are left here on these lines. The Lord has sent us into the world that we may

represent Him rightly, and promote His interests. Remember what the Apostle said in 2 Corinthians 5: "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ." An ambassador is a gentleman of very considerable knowledge and skill, who is entrusted by the Government with the important task of representing king and country in a foreign land. He does not belong to that land. The British ambassador in Paris is not a Frenchman. His business is not to see that the streets of Paris are perfectly swept. He does not concern himself with the latest social improvements of the land. He may be invited to do some things here and there, but if so he does them as an outsider. He is there in Paris simply to represent his country. His thought is, what will best further the interests of my sovereign king, and of that great empire which I represent? What will be for the interests of Britain, for the furtherance of her commerce, and the prosperity of her people?

Now the apostles, in a very special way, were ambassadors for Christ. You and I may not be so, in quite the same sense, but we are **attached to the embassy**. In Paris there is the ambassador who appears on great state occasions. He is the man who holds British interests in his hands, but he has helpers. He has a gentleman who is left in charge of the embassy if he leaves, a considerable number of clerks and servants. The honour of the country is bound up with the behaviour of all, even the humblest. I hope when the house boy is brightening up the knocker on the front

door of the embassy in Paris that he does not indulge in behaviour that is not worthy of an English lad. Everyone from the ambassador down to the most insignificant person in the embassy will so act as to uphold the credit and further the interests of the country they represent.

Let us never forget that our place in this world is to be attached to the embassy of the absent King. We belong to His country. We have got His peace, His Spirit, His joys. We are here to represent Him. If we lay this well to heart, it will answer for us a hundred different questions as to what the Christian's attitude should be. I think, if I were attached to the embassy in Paris, as a Briton I should be very glad if I had an opportunity to care for an injured Parisian. (I use this as an illustration.) I should be glad to serve to any extent within my power the people by whom I am surrounded. I should like to treat everybody with kindness and consideration, especially at a time like this, but I should always bear in mind that I am not there just to do that. That is incidental. I am there to represent my King, and everything has to be gauged by that fact.

I may be asked: Does not the Scripture say, "As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially to those who are of the household of faith"? Yes, indeed, just as when I go through the streets of Paris, if I have an opportunity to do a good turn to anybody, I do it. Still, I should not spend the whole of my time hanging about the

streets on the chance of being able to stop a runaway horse. If it comes my way, how glad I am to be able to do it, but my business in that city is to represent my King. Yes, it says, "Let us do good unto all men, and especially to the household of faith." Do not let it be said in Paris that the cook in the embassy is starving. That would be a bad testimony. Always give special consideration to immediate surroundings, but consider **first** that you are there to rightly represent your King.

Is my little parable sufficiently plain? Our great business down here is to rightly represent our Lord. Let us seek grace to do it. We are not part and parcel of the world, in fact our interests are outside it. As Christians we have great interests, magnificent interests, though as yet invisible to mortal eyes, and with those interests we are identified.

GOOD CHEER FROM A GERMAN PRISON

"In many periods of my life I suffered from depression. Nothing of the kind now. I have had severe pains in my hips and my back caused by the hard bed. But even during the long nights I have been cheerful and thankful—a miracle to myself! I can but attribute it to God hearing my own prayers and the intercession of others—to God's mercy therefore. I thank everybody . . . from the bottom of my heart. I know now from blessed experience what intercession can do. Now, please, do not let us tire!"

WHAT SHALL I DO WITH MY LIFE?

IT is a thrilling experience to stand on the shore of the ocean of life, and look out on its uncharted waters, and wonder in what direction the barque of our destiny will travel, and what will be the port at which we shall eventually arrive.

Such is the present experience of many a Christian young man and woman. The question which serves as a title to this article, may well be asked by such again and again.

Yours is a matter of very serious and vital choice, and it is well to weigh pros and cons. Shall we live for this life, and take no account of the next? Shall we live for time, and forget eternity? Shall we eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die? Surely that would be a foolish, a suicidal choice. Look at the crowds that do this. Poor fools! We may for the moment take no notice of those who make early shipwrecks of life, and there are multitudes that do so. Let us fix our minds on those, who have been eminently successful in making the most of this life by their own efforts. Read the biographies of statesmen, successful generals, clever lawyers, men and women, who move with distinction in brilliant circles—men and women who have got the best, as men think, out of this life, and paid no heed to the life beyond. Such have been men

and women, who had vision, though bounded by time, purpose, will, ability that lifted them above the common crowd. We read of brilliant college days, achievements in various walks of life, of advancing step by step into positions of great power and influence. As we read on we mark all too soon the evening of life approaching, powers failing, power and prestige dropping out of enfeebled hands, then slowing down till DEATH comes, and then—? Sixty, seventy, eighty years, what are they?—a vapour, a smoke. And then unprepared to face ETERNITY—AGES OF AGES! Surely this is not a wise choice.

But, thank God, this is **not** the choice of Christian young men and women. Yet Christian as you may be there is a possibility of making a wrong use of your life, or not getting the best out of it. Christians, alas! may lead carnal lives, may live on a worldly respectable level, and yet fall very far short of what their life should be. You may succeed in your profession, in your business, in your work, in your family, and leave little in your life for God and eternity.

It would be well if young Christians measured themselves by the infallible standard of the Word of God. For instance: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7: 18), "We walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5: 7), "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17: 14 and 16), "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3: 14).

Let us put ourselves alongside such Scriptures and see how far we answer to them in our lives, and in the intentions of our lives.

We read a striking illustration of what we may make of our lives. "A bar of steel worth five dollars when wrought into horseshoes is worth ten dollars. If made into needles it is worth three hundred and fifty dollars; if into penknife blades it is worth thirty-two thousand dollars; if into springs for watches it is worth two hundred and fifty thousand dollars."

A bar of steel may be made to yield the varying values of 10; 350; 32,000, 250,000 dollars. It may be our lives as Christians may be like the ten dollars' result; in rare cases like the two hundred and fifty thousand dollars' result. If we live for God, for eternity, to serve our Lord Jesus Christ with a full purpose of heart, our lives will yield fruit for God. Note John 15: 8, does not say **fruit**, but **much** fruit: "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear **much** fruit; so shall ye be My disciples." How **ambitious** our Lord is for us!

Let the young Christian look at the future, and make it his aim, by God's grace, and in the power of the Spirit of God, that his life shall be lived for God's glory.

Take Scripture examples. See what Moses made of his life. He turned his back upon the palace of Pharaoh, and identified himself with God's despised and down-trodden people. He

might have moved in the highest circle, but was content to go into obscurity and do God's will.

See what a position and influence Moses had. The whole world knows of Moses, and his influence has made a deep mark on all time. Pharaoh's daughter is only known by her relation to Moses.

See what the Apostle Paul made of his life. He was ear-marked for great distinction in the Jewish polity. Yet he turned his back upon it all. He could say, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Phil. 3: 8).

Live for God, live for Christ, live to serve others, live for eternity, and you will never regret it.

What will you do with your life?

A. J. POLLOCK.

It is claimed that the great Westminster clock, striking on "Big Ben" in the clock tower of the Houses of Parliament is not only the largest striking, and most powerful public clock in the world, but also the most accurate, not being automatically controlled. Is it not significant that its chimes were set to the following lines:

"All through this hour, Lord, be my guide,
And by Thy power, no foot shall slide."?

PRACTICAL HOLINESS AND ITS TRUE BASIS.

OUGHT I not to be holy?

Yes, indeed; but do not mix up the question of your holiness with that of your acceptance with God. It is well that you have these desires after holiness, for if you had them not it might be doubted whether there was any quickening work of God in your soul at all. But were you from this day onward to be as holy as the angels in heaven, it would in no way settle the long account standing against you in God's book. Sin is not cancelled so.

Everything you could do in the way of prayer, repentance, good works, and diligent attendance on "the means of grace," is good for nothing so far as the settlement of the sin question goes. Never sin more, still the old sins remain; and what can you do to blot them out? Were you to become all at once perfectly holy, that would in no wise satisfy the claims of divine righteousness in respect of the sins of the past. A murderer might plead for mercy, on the ground that he would never murder again, but no judge could or would listen to his appeal. Sentence must be pronounced against him, on account of the crime already committed. The prisoner's intentions, however sincere would not be accepted by the court as an atonement for the dark deed of which he had been found guilty. So is it with us. No shedding of bitter tears, no promise of an altered life, no

striving to keep the law, no service rendered to God's cause, no visits paid to the poor, no money spent in doing them good; none of these things, nor all of them put together, can make amends for the past.

Let us then look away to Calvary and see our sins dealt with there. It was impossible that God should pass over our sins; but He has given His own Son to be the Bearer of them, such was His love to us. And He **has** borne them, the cup of wrath **has** been drunk, the meek and holy Sufferer **has** bowed His head to the storm, and **has** received the stripes by which we are healed. "It is finished" was His own triumphant cry.

Yes, all is done. Would we add aught to that finished work? Shall we endeavour to connect with it anything in the shape of holiness or good works? Our ignorant though well-meaning additions would be but a dishonour and an affront to that one all-sufficient ransom.

Why labour and toil to do what has been already done? Why strive to pay a debt already paid? **God is satisfied**, and surely the poor debtor should be.

But ought I not to be holy? Assuredly you ought; and in 1 Peter 1 three reasons are given why the believer should be.

1. Because He who has called him is holy (ver. 15).

2. Because he **knows** that he has been redeemed

with the precious blood of Christ (ver. 19).

3. Because he is "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (ver. 23).

Here are three powerful incentives to a holy walk. I must follow after holiness, **because** I am born again; I must follow after holiness, **because** I know that I am redeemed with the precious blood of Christ; I must follow after holiness, **because** God my Father is holy. If we seek after holiness **because we are saved**, and not in order to be saved, then do we put the saddle on the right horse, but not otherwise.

W.B.

There are two spirits, be it never forgotten, struggling for mastery in the world now: one is that of infidelity, the other that of superstition . . . But we must also remember that, although these powers be so opposed in appearance, there is between them a real link of connection and of kindred source under the surface. For in sober truth superstition is as really infidel in the sight of God as scepticism. The only difference is that scepticism is the infidelity of the mind, while superstition is that of the imagination. They are both veils which shut out and deny the truth of God, as they both have their spring in a real ignorance of the true God, substituting what is of the first man for the Second.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(ACTS 15: 13 — 17: 15).

This outline of Acts is brief and condensed. Except the above passage of Scripture be read, it is hardly likely that these notes will prove to be of real interest or profit.

PETER, Barnabas and Paul having had their say, James spoke. He seems to have had a place of special responsibility in Jerusalem, and Galatians 2: 12 indicates that he was noted as holding strict views as to the measure of association that was permissible in the church of God between Jews and Gentiles. Yet he endorsed Peter's declaration, and then pointed out that Old Testament scripture supported it. Amos had predicted how days would come when the Name of God would be called upon Gentiles. If we turn to his prophecy we can see that he had millennial conditions in view, so James did not quote his words as though they were being **fulfilled**, but as being **in agreement** with what they had just heard.

The words in which James summarized Peter's testimony are worthy of special note. "God . . . did **visit** the Gentiles, **to take out of them a people for His Name.**" This is God's programme for the present dispensation. The Gospel is not sent forth among the nations with the object of converting them as nations, and so making the earth a fit place for Christ to return to, but to convert individuals, who thereby are taken out from the nations

to be His special possession—"a people for His Name." This is a fact of a most fundamental nature. If we are wrong on this point we shall be wrong as to the whole character of the dispensation in which we live. The nations will only be subdued when **God's judgments** are in the earth, as Isaiah 26: 9 so plainly says. The Gospel goes forth in the earth in order that **an election** from both Jews and Gentiles may be called out; and **that election is the church of God.**

Having stated this, James gave what he judged to be the mind of God as to the question at issue. His "sentence," or "judgment," was that the yoke of the law should not be placed on the neck of Gentile Christians, but that they should merely be told to observe certain restrictions in matters as to which they had been notoriously careless. Idolatry and fornication were known as evil, even before the law was given, and so too was the eating of blood, as Genesis 9: 4 shows. God knows from the outset all that He will develop as time goes on. The calling and election from the Gentiles was new to them, but not to God. It was theirs to move on with God; and as for Moses, his words were well to the fore in every synagogue every sabbath day.

The judgment that James expressed carried the whole council with it. They had had before them first, Peter's testimony as to what God had done in connection with Cornelius: second, through Barnabas and Paul an account of God's actings

during their missionary journey: third, the voice of Scripture, as quoted by James. **What God had said agreed with what God had done.** They had come together to seek His mind, and by His word and His actions they plainly discerned it; and all were of one accord. Thus a difficult question, which might have divided the whole church, was settled, and ended by drawing them together. When Barnabas and Paul went up to Jerusalem, it was as men whose service was open to challenge and suspicion. When they left they were bearers of a letter in which they were spoken of as "our beloved Barnabas and Paul."

They were also spoken of as "men that have hazarded [or **delivered up**] their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." To hazard one's life is to risk it, as a gambler risks his money on a throw of the dice: to deliver up one's life is to accept death as a certainty rather than a risk. Anyone who delivers up his life in this fashion should be esteemed as beloved in the church of God. This letter from Jewish believers to Gentile believers breathes throughout a spirit of love and fellowship and unity. They were able to say, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us;" so sure were they that the Holy Spirit had governed their decision. To put the Gentiles under the law would have had the effect of "subverting" their souls.

All this is very much to the point for us to-day. The same kind of trouble cropped up amongst the

Galatians a little later, and the attempt to mix law and grace is often seen in our day. It cannot be done without destroying the fulness of grace and subverting the souls of those who imbibe such teaching. Verses 30—33 of our chapter show how the vindication of grace and the liberty that it brings, contributed to the establishment and joy of the Gentile believers at Antioch. Also Judas and Silas, the delegates from Jerusalem, exercised their prophetic ministry and strengthened the brethren. This shows how freely those who had gift were permitted to exercise it in any place, and in the presence of men whose gift might be in many ways superior to their own—for Paul and Barnabas were now back in Antioch.

Shortly after, Paul proposed to Barnabas that they take another journey with pastoral work in view. The words of verse 36 breathe the spirit of a true pastor, who desires to see how the believers are getting on. The welfare of their souls is the great point before him. The sad thing was that this excellent proposal became the occasion of a breach between these two devoted servants of the Lord. Barnabas proposed that Mark, his nephew, should again accompany them. Paul, remembering his early defection, was against it, and this difference of judgment generated such warm feeling that they parted company, as unable any longer to work together. Barnabas went to Cyprus, where their first journey had started, and Paul towards Asia Minor, where that journey had extended. Paul found a new companion in Silas,

and left after the brethren had committed them to the grace of God. It looks as if Barnabas left hurriedly, before the brethren had time to pray for him.

It ill becomes us to judge these eminent servants of our Lord, but the record certainly seems to infer that Barnabas was too much influenced by natural relationship, and that the sympathy of the brethren lay with Paul. Still the warm feeling and contention lay between them, and the Spirit of God does not hide it. We are not to conceive of Paul as other than a man of like passions to ourselves. He was not perfect, as was his Lord.

Chapter 16 opens with Paul back at Derbe and Lystra, back, that is, to the scenes where he had suffered the stoning. In those very places he now finds Timothy, who was to become in his latter years such a comfort to him. A happy illustration of how God's government acts in favour of the godly. We are apt to think of it only as acting against the ungodly. Out of the place of Paul's sufferings sprang one of his greatest comforts.

Now as Timothy's father was a Greek he had not been circumcised, and he would not have been acceptable in Jewish circles. Paul knew this and circumcised him; an action which on the surface seems totally at variance with his attitude in regard to Titus—see Galatians 2: 3—5. But there the whole truth of the Gospel had been made to hinge on the question, whereas here there was no

question at all involved. In Timothy's case it was just a matter of removing something which would have been a hindrance in his service for the Lord, and Paul was not concerned to maintain for himself an appearance of consistency which would have been only skin-deep. Here was a God-given helper in the work, and it was expedient to remove all that would hinder his labours.

Paul's somewhat lengthy sojourn in Asia Minor on this second journey is dismissed in five short verses (5—8). It comprised labours of a pastoral sort, for they went through regions where churches were already established through his earlier labours, and these they instructed to observe what had been settled at the conference in Jerusalem, and they were established and increased in number. Then they went into new regions, Phrygia, Galatia and Mysia, and in these of course they did the work of evangelists. This evidently was the occasion when he had so wonderful a reception from the Galatians, to which he alludes in Galatians 4: 13—15. It was also a time in which God exercised very strong control over his movements. When Mysia was reached, Bithynia lay to the north or north-east, and Asia to the south. In both directions he would have gone, if permitted. In the former case he was directly **forbidden** by the Holy Spirit, and in the latter the Spirit did **not suffer** him to go, which apparently indicates guidance of a less direct kind, and more by way of circumstances.

Troas was on the sea coast of Mysia, and here Paul was given positive guidance as to his movements by means of the vision of the man of Macedonia. So here within the compass of five verses we find Divine guidance conveyed to Paul in **three** different ways, twice of a negative sort and once of a positive sort. This should furnish some guidance to any who, very desirous of Divine direction, expect to receive it in some **one** way of their own choosing.

Accepting the vision as giving them God's direction, Paul and his helpers immediately obeyed, and verse 11 shows that God turned the winds in their favour and they had a very rapid passage; for we see, in chapter 20: 6, that when years after he took the journey in the reverse direction it occupied five days. At Troas Luke, the writer of the book, evidently joined Paul, for in verses 4, 6, 7, 8, it is uniformly "they," whereas in verse 10 the pronoun suddenly becomes "we," and that and "us" continue well into the account of the doings at Philippi.

Philippi had the status of a Roman colony, so the Roman element was strong there, and perhaps correspondingly the Jewish element was weak. No synagogue existed, and all that was to be found was a spot outside the city by a river where prayer to the true God was offered. That spot they sought out, and finding only some women assembled they sat down and spoke to them. That did not seem a very promising beginning,

but Paul was the kind of man that accepted and utilized small things. He attempted no formal preaching but just sat down and talked in an informal way. This humble beginning had a great ending. A church was established which above others was filled with grace and was a comfort to him.

The work began in the heart of Lydia, which was opened of God. The words, "which worshipped God," indicate that she was a seeker, and had become a proselyte, and now in the Gospel which Paul preached she found the full thing which she sought. The work was quiet but very real, for she was baptized and her household; and she at once identified herself with the Lord's servants by opening her house to them.

The next incident was the encounter with the female slave who had opened her heart to some dark agent of the devil. She made a pretence of approving Paul and his helpers, and this might have pleased some, who might have argued, "Well, we are servants of God, and if she likes to advertise us, let her!" Paul however was not short-sighted like this. He saw that the devil's patronage is no gain but a disaster, and he refused her testimony by commanding the evil spirit to come out of her. The spirit had to obey, and her masters knew that their money-making scheme was spoiled. This raised their ire, and Paul and Silas were dragged before the magistrates on a charge worded so as to raise Roman prejudice

against them. This stirred the crowd, and also moved the magistrates to excited and un-Roman-like action. No proper trial was held; they were flogged and cast into prison.

Under these circumstances even the jailor acted with extra severity, and night descended upon them in this sorry plight. Were they tempted to falter and doubt, thinking that the vision of the Macedonian man had been a little too visionary? Perhaps; for they were men of like weakness to ourselves. But, if they did, faith soon triumphed, and at the darkest hour they were not only praying but singing praises to God. Suddenly God intervened, and not only by the earthquake. Doors are more often jammed tight by earthquakes than opened; and no ordinary earthquake strikes the shackles from prisoners.

Knowing the severity of Roman law in regard to the custody of prisoners, the jailor was on the verge of suicide when Paul's shout reached his ears. The fact that "he called for a light," (verse 29), shows that they were all in the dark. How did Paul know what the jailor was about to do? Paul's sudden call was evidently inspired by the Spirit of God, and it came as a voice from God to the jailor. Here at last was the Macedonian man! He was trembling: he was on his face before his prisoners! Soon he was asking the great question, which since has been asked by millions of convicted sinners. He received the immortal answer, which has been used to the enlightenment and sal-

vation of countless souls.

We often quote Acts 16: 31, but too often we omit the last three words. God loves to identify a man's house with himself and include them in His offer of blessing. Why do we not more often embrace this fact in our faith? We have already had in the chapter the converted woman and her house: now we have the converted man and his house. This surely is most encouraging for all heads of houses who may be reached by the grace of God; since there is no respect of persons with God, and what He is to **one** He is to **all**.

The jailor believed, and showed his faith by his works without a moment's delay. Then, though it was still night, "he and all his" were baptized straightway. This is pretty clear evidence that baptism is not an ordinance which is **intended** to be a confession of one's faith, and therefore to be observed in public. Had it been that, what an opportunity was missed here! How effectively the thing might have been done the next day when public opinion had veered somewhat in favour of Paul! All must have been confusion in the city after the earthquake, yet the jailor and his house had the links cut with the old life without any delay: for baptism signifies **dissociation**, through the death of Christ.

When the magistrates relented the next day, Paul seized the opportunity to point out to them how they themselves had transgressed, seeing he

and Silas were Roman citizens. He did not push the point further, or in any way retaliate. Their way was smoothed however, and they had time to see the brethren and exhort them before taking their departure. From the Epistle to the Philippians we may see how well the work progressed after their departure.

Luke gives us no details as to what transpired in Amphipolis and Apollonia, but passes on to the happenings in Thessalonica. In chapter 17, we notice, the pronoun "we" is not used, so possibly Luke, not being as much involved as Paul and Silas were in the disturbances at Philippi, stayed on there to help the converts further.

Paul first addressed the Jews in their synagogue, as was his custom. Verse 3 gives us the line on which he approached them. He proved from their own Scriptures that the Messiah, when He came, must suffer death and rise from the dead. This established, it was simple to point to Jesus as unquestionably being the Messiah. So in one verse we are given the whole thing in a nut-shell. However long the discourses lasted, the whole point is summed up in these few words, and they stand as guidance for all who would approach the Jew to-day. Not all believed, but some did, and also many Greek proselytes, and some of the chief women.

At Philippi the riotous proceedings originated with disappointed, money-making Gentiles; at

Thessalonica unbelieving Jews were at the bottom of even worse opposition and disorder. In stigmatizing Paul and Silas as, "These that have turned the world upside down," they rendered involuntary tribute to the mighty power of the Gospel, preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. They might oppose, but they could not stop its advance.

Paul's service in Thessalonica was cut short by this riot, for he served in the spirit of the Lord's instruction recorded in Matthew 10: 23. Hence a move was now made to Berea, where the Jews showed a very different spirit. They had an openness of mind, that is characterized as "more noble," and when Paul showed them what the Scriptures had foretold, they searched them diligently, and thereby many believed. A mind that is ready and free from prejudice, and that gladly bows to Scripture, is indeed a **noble thing**.

Such hostility to the Word of God marked the Thessalonian Jews however that they pursued Paul to Berea, and in the face of further trouble, Paul slipped away to Athens, outwitting his pursuers by a simple ruse. Silas and Timothy remained at Berea, for evidently the animosity was now specially directed against Paul. Hence it came to pass that in his visit to Athens, the great centre of Greek culture and wisdom, Paul was solitary and alone, as far as his service was concerned.

GOD'S GREAT LOVE.

SOME years ago I was travelling from Northampton to Dublin, and on joining the Irish mail at Rugby took the only vacant seat in a compartment beside a Salvation Army officer. Everything about him indicated that he was not only an intelligent, but a spiritually-minded man; and I felt that a little conversation on the things of God would be mutually profitable. So I handed him a few verses of mine which had just been published. They ran thus:

A THREEFOLD CORD

(Eccles. 4: 12)

Sovereign mercy, grace and love,
Threefold cord from heaven above;
Cord which ne'er can broken be,
Now, nor through eternity.

Sovereign mercy saves us all,
Lost and ruined by the fall:
Yet our God in mercy still
Mercy has on "whom He will."

Sovereign grace which e'en could choose
Such as would that grace refuse;
Grace which follows till we yield,
Then becomes our sun and shield.

Sovereign LOVE! Oh why should He
Love such loveless things as we?
Search the heart of God above
For the answer—"God is LOVE."

Human love must find its rise
In its object, which supplies
Something which must correspond
To the love that doth respond.

God's great love, contrariwise,
In Himself doth find its rise;
Naught in us to call it forth;
Hateful, hating; nothing worth.

Yet He loved, we know not why:
Loved, and gave His Son to die.
Love which far exceeds our need;
Surely this is "love indeed."

"Very good! very sound!" was his comment, at the same time asking if he could keep the leaflet.

"Certainly," I replied. "I am very glad you appreciate it; for only yesterday I handed a copy to a religious gentleman at Northampton and he objected to it very strongly."

"Why?"

"Well, he said that I had a very poor estimate of man, especially in saying that there was nothing in him to merit the love of God."

"Well," said my friend, "now you mention it, I would be disposed to disagree with you on that point. It is tantamount to saying that there is nothing good in man; and I believe there is something good in everybody."

"Except the apostle Paul," I interjected quickly.

"What do you mean?" he asked in astonishment.

"Well," I replied apologetically, "I was only referring to his own words in Romans 7: 18. He there says, 'I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.'"

"Ah, but what did he mean by that?"

"What he said, I should think; for, apart from the fact that he was inspired by the Holy Ghost, and wrote at the commandment of the Lord" (see I Cor. 14: 37), "he was a very sober-minded man, and always said what he meant, and meant what he said."

"Well, I could understand his giving vent to such an expression about himself in a moment of depression; but he doesn't say it about everybody as you do."

"I should have thought that if it were true of the apostle Paul it would be true of everybody; but I know where he says three worse things about everybody in one verse."

"What verse is that?" he asked, in a challenging tone of voice.

"The seventh verse of the eighth chapter of the same epistle (Romans). Let me read it to you. 'The carnal mind is enmity against God.' That is, it hates God. Do you believe that?"

"Indeed, I don't," was his immediate and emphatic answer. "How could I believe it?"

"How could you disbelieve it? is what I ask. But if you don't believe the first thing in that verse it would be useless for me to proceed, for the other two are worse still."

"Then I couldn't believe them."

"Very well, I will close my Bible and say no

more except this, that it is a very sad thing to hear you—a preacher of the Gospel—say that you can't believe the Bible." So saying, I closed my Bible and put it in my pocket. Feeling, however, that he was a genuine soul, I closed my eyes and prayed to God to give him grace to believe His Word. When I opened my eyes he was looking at me, and in a tone that showed how much it cost him to say it, he said, "I can't stand that!"

"What?"

"I can't stand your saying that I don't believe the Bible. Why, I have always urged people to believe every word in it, even if it clashed with their feelings."

"Very good advice; but let me urge you to use your own prescription to cure your own disease. Believe God's Word in spite of your own feelings."

"I will: I believe that 'the carnal mind is enmity against God.' But what is the second thing?"

"That the carnal mind (which is enmity against God 'is not subject to the law of God.' Do you believe that?"

"Well, that seems to clash with facts; for I know people who are not converted who seem subject to the law of God."

"I am glad you use the word 'seem,' for the Scripture says they are not subject to the law of God. There are many in this country who seem

to be subject to the law of this land who hate it. They submit to it because they fear the consequences of disobeying it; but that is a very different thing from being subject to it, in the sense of voluntarily yielding to it because of one's delight in it" (see Romans 7: 22).

"I see the difference, and quite believe that the carnal mind of man is not subject to the law of God in that sense. But what is the third thing?"

"Well, you must be prepared for something stronger still. Let me read you the verse once more: 'The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, **neither indeed can be.**' Do you believe that?"

Throwing his head back as though to give the fullest possible emphasis to his reply, he said: "No, I don't, and I won't believe it."

"Then you won't believe God?"

"I won't believe that, no matter who says it."

"Very well. Now I must decline any further conversation with you. But let me quote one more text to you. The Word of God says: 'He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar' (1 John 5: 10). What a solemn thing for you—a professed servant of God—to make a liar of your Master in public."

Our fellow-passengers, who had dropped their newspapers, etc., and were apparently much interested in the conversation, looked to see what

reply he would make to this last text, but his chin sank down on his chest and he remained silent. I closed my eyes and looked to God in prayer again for him. The silence seemed longer and more painful this time, but at last he said: "It seems that I have been displaying all those three things myself this afternoon."

"Yes," I replied, "you have been allowing 'the mind of the flesh' to act: now let the other mind—'the mind of the Spirit'—act. Believe God in spite of your feelings and fancies."

Never have I seen such a complete change in a man in so short a time. Looking upwards, he exclaimed, "Lord, I believe! Help Thou mine unbelief!"

"But," continued he after a while, "if there is nothing in man to merit the love of God—which is true, I admit—how is it that God does love man? for it seems impossible to love an unlovely thing."

"It is impossible with man, but it is possible with God, for 'God is love' (1 John 4: 16). In fact, in the scripture which describes man in his most unlovely and unlovable condition by nature and practice, we find the greatest expression of God's great love towards him."

"Where is that?"

"In Ephesians 2. Let me read it to you: 'And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.' These Ephesians (and what

was true of them is true of man generally) were dead—morally dead in the sight of God: 'dead in trespasses and sins.' Moreover, the scripture continues, 'Wherein in time past [that is before conversion] ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.' And, lest we should deceive ourselves by thinking that this was true of the Ephesians only, and did not include us, it adds, 'Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.' To sum it all up, we were dead towards God as regards what was good; but alive against Him as regards evil by walking according to the world (the friendship of which is enmity against God—James 4: 4), indulging in the flesh (which hates God), being controlled by the devil (the greatest enemy of God). In fact, 'the world, the flesh, and the devil'—that awful trinity of evil aptly describes our place, our pleasure, and our power. Now do you think it possible for God to love us while we were in that state?"

"It seems impossible for God, who is holy and hates sin, to love such sinners."

"It does: but let us not forget that while God hates sin, He loves the sinner. So we read in the next verse, 'But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even

when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.' That is, God, who is rich in mercy, moved by the great love wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in sins, lifts us up from the worst place in which we could be by nature and practice, makes us live in Christ, and sets us in the best place (in the heavenly places) and in the best Person (in Christ). "He lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set him among princes, and to make him inherit the throne of glory" (1 Sam. 2: 8).

"Great love! Great love!" was all that my friend could say, while the tears flowed down his cheeks, which seemed aglow with God's great love.

"Yes," I continued, "and lest we should take some—if only a little—of the credit to ourselves, and imagine that it was because of something that we were or had done that made God act thus towards us, it adds: 'For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast.' "

It seemed as though the whole compartment radiated with the love of God that afternoon; and the few minutes which remained until we reached

Crewe, where my friend had to change, flew by all too fast as we conversed on the various aspects of that love. As he bade me farewell, he took both my hands in his and said, "Good-bye! I thank God from the bottom of my heart for having met you to-day; for you have put something in my soul that was never there before."

"And," I replied, "I venture to say that it will never be taken out: for 'whatsoever God doeth [and it is He who has done it, by His Spirit through His Word] it shall be for ever' (Eccles. 3: 14). But, above all, remember that it is by the blood of Christ. Before God could righteously take you up from those depths of sin and shame in which you were by nature and by practice, the question of your sins had to be settled to His satisfaction. This was done by Christ on the cross, where He bore your sins (1 Peter 2: 24), and suffered for your sins (1 Peter 3: 18).

Thus we parted—he, I trust, to pass on to others what he had learned that day—God's great love to great sinners.

T.C.M.

Often our trials act as a thorn-hedge to keep us in good pasture, and our prosperity as a gap through which we may go astray.

The spirit of the world to-day would have us believe that meekness spells weakness; how different is God's estimate!

“TOGETHER.”

WHAT a charm there is about the word “**together!**” The person has a strange make-up who likes to be solitary and alone. There is a family reunion when those who by reason of circumstances are scattered over the country are able to meet, and how delighted the fond parents are when, if only once a year and that for a comparatively short time, all are found **together**. So the Holy Spirit has been graciously pleased to choose a word that at once appeals to us when He indicates the joy that may be ours now, and that will be ours in a coming day.

In the New Testament we find that the Lord Jesus was the first to use it when He said:—

“For where two or three are gathered **together** in My Name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18: 20).

He stipulated the lowest possible number; He indicated that His Name would be the rallying point; and He pledged His Word that He would be there. People from different places; of different callings; with different temperaments are found **together** in response to His gracious invitation. They may be two or two hundred, but they are **together**, gathering to His Name. He is the point of attraction; He is the Centre; He is the Object that fills the vision; the One whose beauty ravishes the heart; and whose praise fills the lips. All are “**together**” with Him. Thank God

that is as possible in the twentieth century, as it was in the first century. Those who choose isolation miss this luxury, and rob the Lord of His joy for His desire is that we should here and now be **“together”** around Himself.

How sweet is the word to those who sorrow over the loss of loved ones who have fallen asleep through Jesus. We await the coming of our blessed Lord Jesus, and that seems to be very near at hand. When He comes with that shout of triumph we are told that:—

“The dead in Christ shall rise first, then we, the living who remain, shall be caught up **together** with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and thus shall we be always with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4: 16-18 N.Tr.).

Dry your eyes, sorrowing reader. The glad-some moment is near when your loved one will be raised, when you will be changed, and, think of it, you will rise **together** to meet the Lord in the air, and thus you will be “always with the Lord.”

Nor is that all. Our Lord Jesus Christ has “died for us, that whether we may be watching or sleep we may live **together** with Him” (1 Thessalonians 5: 9-10). What a prospect! Occupied not with each other but with Himself we shall for ever rejoice in His love and praise His Name.

Let us consider one more scripture which we will find in Isaiah 52: 8. We admit at once that it refers primarily to Jehovah's ancient people, and we are delighted, particularly as we think of their present sad circumstances, to look on to the happy time that awaits them. We are sure however that, without doing violence to the interpretation, we may get the benefit of its application to ourselves. Here it is:—

"Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice **together** shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion."

Alas! The Lord's people do not see eye to eye to-day, hence their scattered and divided condition so grievous to Him, and so damaging to the testimony. That is a state of matters that we cannot remedy, and those who by human means try to do so are more likely than not to make matters worse. We look on however with glad expectation to the day—and what a day it will be!—when we shall rise **together** to meet the Lord; when we shall live **together** with the Lord; and when we shall sing **together** to the Lord. "No jarring note shall there discordant sound." We "shall see eye to eye;" "we shall see His face."

"For ever our still wondering eyes
Shall o'er His beauties rove;
To endless ages we'll adore
The riches of His love!"

W. BRAMWELL DICK.

SOME DISCIPLES OF THE LORD.

THE disciples of the Lord of whom mention is made in John's Gospel do not appear there in their official capacity as apostles, as in the earlier Gospels. We have no account in it of their being chosen as Apostles, or being sent out to preach during the life of the Lord with them. They are there rather as individuals in whom the Lord wrought, and so illustrate for us His grace and its results.

It is generally believed that the unnamed disciple who with Andrew followed the Lord in chapter 1, was John, the writer of the Gospel, and in him the choicest results of grace are seen. He is introduced to us as following the Lord without a command to do so, and the last sight we have of him in the Gospel reveals him as still following without being told. Between this first and this last appearance he is "the disciple whom Jesus loved;" he leaned his head upon Jesus' breast at the Last Supper, and he stood by the cross.

There are other interesting features of the work of grace in his soul, recorded in the Gospel, but these will suffice to shew how real his contact with the Lord was, and how deep was the work of grace in him. He represents the chiefest work that the Lord is doing in souls in this present Christian period. What moved him first was John the Baptist's exclamation, "Behold the Lamb of God!" This is the basis of everything. No sin-

ner could come into relationship with the Lord apart from this. He is the Lamb of God who was sacrificed for our sins—wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. But it was not only the great work, that He had come to do, that arrested John and Andrew, but **Himself** who had come to do the work. We all have to learn, what we are sure John learnt truly and well, that we not only need a great sacrifice for the salvation of our souls, but a great and living Saviour for the satisfaction of our hearts, and that having died for us He has the right to command and control us. He is our Lord.

This is illustrated in these two men who followed the Lord without a command or invitation from Him; they were attracted. He took their hearts captive and the inevitable result of that was that their feet followed Him. Where the heart is there the feet will be. This was the secret of John's after life. He sought the Lord's company, and answered truly to the Lord's challenge "What seek ye?" "Master, where dwellest Thou?" That simply meant:—I want to be with Thee. And from that time onward he allowed no rival to the Lord in His affections, and consequently he was well qualified to say, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

In the company of the Lord he learnt not only His love to himself, that he had a place in the Lord's heart and was the disciple whom Jesus loved, but he could trust Him; he could lean upon

His breast in the most trying and darkened hour, with the result that he could stand by the cross bearing the reproach of Christ. Of all the disciples we feel that John, probably the youngest of them all, and not more than a youth, yielded the greatest pleasure to the heart of the Lord. In John we see appreciation of the Lord's love and communion with Him.

Andrew's contact with the Lord brings out another side of the christian life. He was the successful servant. Attracted equally with John, that day spent with the Lord filled him with desire that others should know Him too, and so every time we read of him in the gospel he is bringing someone to Jesus. "He first findeth his own brother Simon." Could anything be better than that? There must have been an earnestness about him that arrested his more robust and perhaps more worldly brother. And with what conviction and certainty he speaks "We have found the Messiah." "And he brought him to Jesus." He had found a new centre for his life, God's centre, and to that all-sufficient and all-satisfying centre he must bring others.

So in chapter 6, when the multitudes were likely to faint for want of food and Philip had no solution for the difficulty. Andrew brought the lad with the barley loaves and fishes to Jesus; and though he seemed to falter somewhat, probably because his brethren regarded him pityingly because of his apparent folly, he was the one who put the lad's supply of food within the reach of

the almighty, creative hands of the Lord.

Again in chapter 12, when the Greeks desired to see Jesus, Philip was in a quandary, which was strange seeing the Lord was so accessible. He had to seek Andrew's help, and Andrew and he tell Jesus. Happy is that servant of the Lord who has found such heart satisfaction in the Lord that He becomes the Centre of his service and his Object in it; the man who can truly say, "We have found." That is the sort of service that is acceptable to the Lord.

Simon Peter belongs to this same period of grace, and illustrates for us what the Lord can do with the most unlikely material. He who was by nature a profane and erratic man was transformed by the word and work of the Lord into a stone for the spiritual house that God is building, in which He is worshipped. He was made a stable witness for His Lord before the world, and an example of grace to the whole flock of God.

These three seem to cover the whole work that the Lord is doing in souls in these days; and illustrate Christian worship, work and witness as a result of following the Lord.

J. T. MAWSON.

Our prayers often resemble the mischievous tricks of town children, who knock at their neighbours' houses and then run away. We often knock at heaven's door and then run off into the spirit of the world.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(ACTS 17: 16 — 20: 6).

This outline of Acts is brief and condensed. Except the above passage of Scripture be read, it is hardly likely that these notes will prove to be of real interest or profit.

ATHENS was the great centre of Greek learning and philosophy; it was also full of idols.

The highest human culture and the grossest idolatry can exist quite amicably side by side. Into the midst of this state of things Paul stepped, and the sight of it painfully excited his spirit. Though still without his companions he could not rest in the presence of it, and so began to testify to both Jews and Gentiles. In this way certain philosophers had their attention drawn to him, and these men, though belonging to opposing schools and treating him with contempt, had their curiosity sufficiently aroused to desire to hear more. Thus it came to pass that the opportunity was given to him to speak before an assemblage of the most cultured intellects of that time.

We are given a glimpse, in verses 18-21, of the conditions that prevailed in Athens. There was immense mental activity, and an insatiable enquiry into new ideas. They spent their time either in telling or hearing "some new thing;" not, of course, just gossip or tittle-tattle but the newest philosophic notions. Hence Paul's preaching of "Jesus and the resurrection" struck them as a great novelty connected with some deities to which hitherto they had been strangers. The Epicureans

believed that the highest good was to be found in gratifying one's desires, and the Stoics that it was in repressing them, but what were these new ideas?

Paul opened his address on Mars' hill by telling them that they were too "superstitious" or "given up to demon worship." Amongst their many shrines they even had an altar dedicated to "The unknown god," lest there should be some demon, unknown to them, that needed to be propitiated. He seized upon this and made it the theme of his discourse, for it was perfectly true that the living God was utterly unknown to them. Paul announced to them the God that they knew not; and if we examine the brief report of his discourse we can see how he set God before them. As regards the things of God these cultured Athenians were simply pagans; so here we are instructed how the Gospel should be presented to the heathen.

Paul began by presenting Him as **the God of creation**. This lies at the foundation of everything. If we do not know Him thus, we do not know Him at all. That is why the evolutionary theory works so disastrously. Its chief attraction to so many is that it enables one to dispense with God altogether, or at least to push Him so far into a remote background as to make Him not worth thinking about. Paul brought Him right into the forefront of the picture he presented; He not only made the world but all things in it. He cannot be contained in men's **buildings**, nor worshipped as though He needed anything from men's hands.

He is Himself the Giver of Life and all things. All men are His creatures, made of one blood, and their times and boundaries determined by Him.

There had remained some glimmerings of light as to this amongst them, and Paul was able to quote some of their own poets as having spoken of mankind as being the offspring of God. In this they were right. Only by faith in Christ Jesus do we become **children** of God, but all men are His **offspring** as His creatures. This being so we ought not to conceive of God as something less than ourselves or as the work of our own hands; and we should be those who seek after Him. His **immanence** is recognized in the words that "In Him we live, and move, and have our being;" yet Paul preached Him as the **transcendent** One, who is Lord of heaven and earth.

But this God of creation is also a **God of forbearance**. Men had not liked to retain God in their knowledge, and so the nations had fallen into ignorance of God. For some centuries the Athenians had been priding themselves on their culture and learning, yet all through they had been in "the times of this **ignorance**,"—this ignorance of God—and Paul told them so plainly. Yet God had "winked at," or "overlooked" this ignorance, acting in forbearance, in view of that which He was going to do through Christ.

But now Christ is come, and God proclaims Himself as a **God of righteous judgment**. He has

appointed the day when He will take up the reins of government by the Man of His choice, and the whole earth shall be judged and administered in righteousness. In view of this repentance is the only seemly thing for unrighteous men wherever they may be. It is the only right thing, and God commands it.

The pledge of the coming of this day of righteous judgment has been given in the resurrection of the Man of God's choice. Thus finally Paul set God forth as **the God of resurrection**. Something entirely outside all human calculations had taken place. Jesus had been raised from the death into which man consigned Him! Paul started his work in Athens by announcing Jesus and the resurrection amongst the **workers** in the market place; he ended on the same theme when speaking to the **thinkers** on Mars' hill.

Their busy brains were revolving in man's world, and hence resurrection lay right outside their field of view. To many of them it seemed an absurdity, and they mocked. Others manifested some interest yet deferred further consideration, as seeing no urgency in the matter. Some however believed, both men and women, and these threw in their lot with Paul. These three classes usually appear when the Gospel reaches any given place: there are the mockers, the procrastinators and the believers.

Paul's stay in Athens was a short one: he did

not wait longer there for his companions but went on to Corinth. So it is probable that those who said, "We will hear thee again of this matter," had no opportunity of doing so.

Chapter 18, then opens with Paul at Corinth, and there he met Aquila and Priscilla. The harsh decree of Claudias worked to throw them across Paul's path, and this led to their conversion and then their subsequent service, which earned the high praise of Romans 16: 3, 4. God overruled the decree of expulsion, for good, making the wrath of man to praise Him; and we may hope and pray that He will work in just the same way in regard to modern decrees against the Jews. With this couple Paul abode, and began his work in the synagogue. Here Silas and Timothy joined him, and Paul's testimony became stronger and more direct. Then, the Jews opposing, he turned to the Gentiles.

"He departed thence" (verse 7); that is, from the synagogue; and carried on his testimony in the house of one, Justus, that was close by. Yet a very definite and large work of God took place, even the ruler of the synagogue being converted. By a vision the Lord encouraged him to boldly speak, with the assurance that he should not be molested there, as he had been elsewhere. So for eighteen months he laboured on. There was an attempt made against him, but under God's hand this was frustrated by the cool indifference of Gallio, the Roman proconsul, who treated the whole

matter as one of contentions about words and names, and cared for none of these things. So God can utilize the temperament of a governor, as well as the decree of a Caesar, to serve His ends, and Paul did not leave Corinth till some time after.

With this long stay in Corinth Paul's second journey drew to its end, and he left for Jerusalem and Antioch via Ephesus, where his stay was but short; he promised to return, "if God will." That God did so will, we see in the next chapter. Verse 18 shows us that Paul still observed Jewish customs, as in the matter of a vow.

At Antioch he now spent "some time," an expression which indicates not a very long period: then he was off on his third journey, and first to scenes of former labours in order to strengthen the disciples. This is always a much needed work since there are so many influences which make for the weakening of disciples. We pick up Paul's story in the first verse of the next chapter, and verses 24-28 are a parenthesis dealing with the full enlightenment of Apollos and his happy service, in which we discover that, though Paul had passed so quickly from Ephesus, Aquila and Priscilla had remained there, and through them the Lord furnished Apollos with exactly what he needed.

Apollos possessed the natural endowment of eloquence—he was a master of words. By diligent study he had become "mighty in the Scriptures." Yet, when he came to Ephesus he was not well-informed as to God's intervention in Christ. He

only knew of things up to the introduction of Jesus by John's baptism. What he knew, he diligently taught in the synagogue. Aquila and Priscilla, hearing him, at once perceived his lack, and performed the delightful service of showing him hospitality, in order to instruct him more fully in what had come to pass through Christ. Thus God used these saints, of no particular public gift, to fairly launch a very gifted vessel on his career of service. From Ephesus he went to Corinth, and not only did he convince many Jews as to Christ, but also he much helped on the believers. How much of the reward of his effective service will go to the credit of Aquila and Priscilla, who shall say?

As we open chapter 19, we find Paul arriving at Ephesus after Apollos had left, and there finding certain disciples, who were in a similar state of ignorance as to the full gospel message. They were truly "disciples," and they had believed as much of the facts concerning Christ as they had heard. The Holy Ghost is given to those who believe "the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation" (Eph. 1: 13). They had not believed it, because they had not heard it, and consequently they had not received the Spirit. Like Apollos, they had only heard the earliest beginnings of things, connected with John the Baptist, and had been baptised with his baptism. When Paul had instructed them further, and they had been baptised as owning the Lordship of Jesus, and Paul had laid his hands on them, the Spirit came on them and they both spoke with tongues and prophesied. Thus im-

pressive evidence was granted that they had now entered into the full Christian state.

Paul did not in any way blame these twelve men. The transition to the full light of the Gospel was gradual in those days of slow communications. In the beginning of Hebrews 6, we do get things said which imply reproach. There were those amongst the Jewish believers who were blame-worthy for not "leaving the word of the beginning of Christ" (margin), and going on to the perfection of the full Gospel. John's ministry had a great deal to say as to "repentance from dead works," and of "baptisms," and of "eternal judgment," but by the time that Epistle was written the full truth of Christ had been sounded abroad, and they ought to have embraced it, even if it cut across many of their Jewish thoughts. There is **no excuse for us**, if we do not go on to perfection.

These men being blessed, Paul turned his attention to the synagogue, where he had briefly testified on his earlier visit, and for three months he reasoned with the Jews, persuading them of the Gospel. At the end of that time he perceived that his work there was finished. The remnant according to the election of grace was manifest, and the rest were hardened, so he made the cleavage complete by leaving the synagogue and carrying the disciples with him, to continue his service in the school of Tyrannus—just as at Corinth he had left the synagogue for the house of Justus.

Thereby it was made quite manifest that what God was establishing was not a fresh group of enlightened believers amongst the Jews, but a new thing altogether, embracing both Jews and Gentiles.

So distinct and powerful a work was wrought there that Paul spent two years of labour in that city. God supported him by miraculous manifestations of a special nature, and the whole province was evangelised. As is ever the case, a powerful working of God unmasks the working of Satan, and excites his opposition. The rest of chapter 19, shows how this came about at Ephesus.

The first move was to oppose by way of imitation. The seven sons of Sceva thought that they too might cast out demons by using the name of the Lord Jesus. But they did not know Him. He was not really Lord to them, and so they could only speak of Him as "Jesus whom Paul preacheth," omitting His title as Lord. The demon at once showed that he did not know them, and he was not deceived by their second-hand use of the name of Jesus. The seven men were utterly discomfited, and their disgrace was known to all. In result the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

This led to a great and public triumph over Satan and the dark arts, by which men sought to maintain contact with him. Many that had believed were moved to confess how formerly they had been entangled, and the evil things they had done. Many others moved away from this dread-

ful evil and publicly burned the books that dealt with these things, in spite of their monetary value. The Word of God grew and prevailed, and this Satanic evil grew less and suffered defeat. It is a sorrowful reflection for us that in our day less attention than formerly is being paid to the Word, and spiritist practices are on the increase.

In these practices Satan approaches men with all the wiles of the serpent. Defeated thus, on this occasion, he had recourse to action in which he revealed himself as the roaring lion. He worked through the cupidity of men. The success of the Gospel had imperilled the trade of the silversmiths, and it was not difficult to attempt to revive their trade under cover of zeal for the reputation of their goddess Diana. Was her greatness to be despised and her magnificence to be destroyed? Here was excellent camouflage for their real concern as to their own money-making prospects!

Their cry of "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" was a spark that set the whole city alight, for Satan had been at work manufacturing the inflammable material. There ensued the alarming riot, to which the Apostle alludes in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, when he and his friends "were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life" (I: 8). The excited Ephesians were ready to put the sentence of death **upon** Paul, but as he goes on to tell us, "we had the sentence of death **in ourselves**, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which

raiseth the dead." God did deliver him "from so great a death," but evidently the danger was so overwhelming that Paul likens his deliverance to a resurrection from the dead.

From the account in Acts we can see how God made use of one and another in working the deliverance—certain of the chiefs of Asia; Alexander, who distracted attention from Paul; the town clerk with his diplomatic talk. The majority of the wild demonstrators had no idea exactly why they were demonstrating, and the town clerk reminded them that the Roman authorities might turn the tables on them and accuse them of sedition. It is worthy of note that he was able to say of Paul and his companions, they are "neither temple-plunderers, nor speak injuriously of your goddess" (New Trans.); which shows that they had carefully avoided all that might have given offence. They went in for the **positive** preaching of the Gospel rather than the **negative** work of exposing the follies of idolatry.

This great uproar ended Paul's service in Ephesus, and he departed for Macedonia, as the first verse of chapter 20 records. It is of interest at this point to turn again to 2 Corinthians, and read verses 12 and 13 of chapter 2, and then 5-7 of chapter 7. From these verses we gather that Paul made a short stay at Troas on his outward journey to Macedonia, but owing to his anxiety to meet Titus and hear news of the Corinthian saints, he left for Macedonia, in spite of the open door for

service. Arrived in Macedonia, he was still in great disquietude and trouble, yet there Titus did appear and he was comforted. So, evidently the trouble in Ephesus was followed by further trouble both at Troas and in Macedonia. Yet all this side of things is passed over in silence as far as Acts is concerned. Luke could hardly put on record these more intimate details of the Apostle's experiences: we learn of them from his own pen.

In Acts we are simply told that Paul gave much exhortation to the saints in Macedonia, that he visited Greece, and that to avoid the persecuting Jews he returned through Macedonia on his way back to Asia. Verse 4 gives us the names of his travelling companions on this return journey, though they went ahead across the sea and waited for him at Troas. In verse 5 Luke again uses the pronoun "us," which shows that at this point he again made one of the party. Paul, Luke and others had a voyage of five days, which brought them again to Troas, where not long before "a door was opened . . . of the Lord." The following verses of our chapter show that a great interest in the things of God still was found in that place.

F. B. HOLE.

A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing;
Our Helper He, amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing.

WHO GLORIES IN TRIBULATION?

"We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us" (Rom. 5: 3—5).

WHO glories in tribulation? Most of us would run miles to escape it; yet if we know the grace in which we stand, and if the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given to us, and if we know the end to be secured by the tribulation, we shall glory in it. The One who loves us has supreme control of all things; and if so, what then? Well, we reason, if He permits tribulation it must be for our good and blessing and in view of what is to come. Therefore we will go through it with Him.

R. C. Trench in his "Study of Words" has a very interesting explanation of the word tribulation. He says, "The word is derived from the Latin 'tribulum', which was the threshing instrument or roller whereby the husbandmen separated the corn from the husks; and the 'tribulatio' in its primary significance was the act of separation. But some Latin writer of the Christian church appropriated the word and image for the setting forth of a higher truth; sorrow, distress and ad-

versity being the appointed means for separating in men of whatever in them is light, trivial and poor from the solid and the true; the chaff from the wheat."

No figure could be more striking and nothing could be more encouraging for us than the thought that tribulation is to get rid of the chaff that is in us that the wheat may remain. It is evidently necessary, and we need not fear. We shall not be the losers in any way for we are assured that if we are in God's hands, "yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth" (Amos 9: 9).

Tribulation tests the metal of the soul, it does more, it tempers it, as steel is tempered, and it works endurance in us, and "Blessed is the man that **endureth** temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him" (James 1: 12).

Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope. As we endure in tribulation we come to an experimental knowledge of ourselves, and of God's way with us, and in subjection to His holy will we have the compensating grace that He pours into our souls. Moreover we begin to see the end He has in view. We are not like Job was, for he, poor man, went through his tribulation without knowing the "why" of it; but we, who have heard of his

patience, have also seen the end of the Lord. He has not kept us in ignorance as to our destiny. He has predestined us to be "conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the First-born among many brethren" (Rom. 8: 29).

Tribulation purges the soul from earthly-mindedness; and unseen, eternal things become more real to us; hope becomes strong. Our hope will not disappoint us, for we know the love that has promised and prepared the glory yet to come. We are assured of this by the indwelling Spirit, who is the Earnest of the glory, and who makes the love of God real to us now in the midst of tribulation.

Really hope lies behind this rejoicing in tribulation: the ultimate, the goal, becomes great before our eyes and we measure the immediate in the light of it. It was this that Paul meant when he wrote, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4: 17, 18). If the hope that faith awakens in the heart were not in a man he could not rejoice in tribulation; to be in tribulation without hope would be a miserable experience. Faith and hope and love go together and they grow and develop in the soul as we go through tribulation with God.

This hope that makes not ashamed and carries the Christian triumphantly through all his tribulation is not like the "hope that springs eternal in the human breast" and that withers and perishes at the breath of death; it is directed towards God and His Word, it is sure and certain, with a sure anchorage. The word has taken on the meaning of uncertainty in human language, for as likely as not, the best hopes in this life end in disappointment. But the Christian hope is something guaranteed to him by the immutable Word of God, which he does not yet possess. He is a child of God, an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ Jesus, and the heirs **must** come into the inheritance; meanwhile, **he knows** that all things—every stroke of the tribulum—works together in God's ways with him for good. Just as surely as he will be conformed to the image of God's Son, so now all these things, while he waits for that glorious consummation, are working to a moral conformity to Christ now, they are removing the chaff that the pure grain may abide. Or to use the figure from the sculptor's studio, "As the stone wastes the image appears."

Let us dwell more upon the coming glories, and sing about them more, and turn the attention of our brethren in the Lord towards them, and more continually "look sunward, and with faces golden, speak to each other softly of our hope."

J. T. MAWSON.

CHRIST, THE CENTRE AND POWER.

Notes of an Address on John 10: 1—16; 1 John 1: 1—4; 1 Corinthians 1: 9; Philippians 3: 3.

IT is always a very delightful thing to speak of Christ. Speaking of church government, very divergent views and feelings are expressed; but speaking of Christ a chord is touched in every Christian's heart. In the things of which I speak, I want to bring out as clearly as I can the great place which Christ has.

Christ is the Centre and Power for worship, and in John 10 we get the first beginnings of the truth as to this. The Lord came into the Jewish fold, which in His day was a system dominated by **position** without any regard to **condition**, and thus was brought about the condemnation of the Lord. It was the system which crucified Christ and cast Him out. The great onus of the crucifixion lies not upon the godless and indifferent; but upon the leaders of religion and the chief shepherds in the fold of Israel.

But when Christ came there was a new beginning. It was in God's mind that it should be so, for we are told in Romans 3 that the great test of the Law was to the end that every mouth might be stopped, and the whole world be brought in guilty before God. The Law was given to Israel, but they could not keep it and this failure

embraces the whole of mankind. Just like a chemist, who analyses a sample. When the sample turns out to be in a certain condition, the whole bulk is proved to be in the same condition.

It is a very delightful thing to see how the Lord begins, and I think this is the keynote. How did the Lord begin? You remember how He went to Galilee by the lakeside, and called Andrew and Peter, and James and John, and others, and His word was "Follow Me." Such was the attraction of Christ that they followed Him. We can understand this attraction because this blessed Person has touched every one of our hearts. He has engaged our affections, and His word to us is just the same.

We may well ask, Do we follow Him? Or are we drifting? Which sheep does the lion seize? The one furthest away from the shepherd. And you remember, when the children of Israel were passing through the wilderness, Amalek came up against them, and whom did they seize? The stragglers. There is a voice in this for ourselves as to how far we are following the Lord. We read, "Them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one flock, and one Shepherd." Observe! Not one fold, but one **flock**. This is doctrinally spoken of in Ephesians 2, where we read of the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile being broken down, because they discover such excellence in

Christ and His work that they are drawn together in Him.

If we turn now to 1 John 1, we find the spiritual and moral side of this emphasized. It leads to the fact that God is seeking worshippers, who shall worship Him in spirit and in truth. What a wonderful time it was in the history of this world when the Lord came—God and Man in one blessed Person. The shining forth of His Manhood and the shining forth of His Godhead were so natural that one did not clash with the other—there was a beautiful harmony. There came in His Person the light from another world—the light of God—in a very remarkable way, so that we may say the revelation of God in Christ, i.e. Christianity, really begins with Him. You cannot think of Christianity without Christ. At the beginning of the word is His own blessed Name.

Now the Apostles were not enlisted from the ranks of the scholarly and intellectual, nor from the Temple at Jerusalem; they were simple, unlearned, ignorant fishermen. If ever there was an education they got it! It was an education which can only be got by being in the company of the Son of God. You cannot get it in the schools or colleges of theology. There is an education, which can only be had by a heart-knowledge of Christ. These disciples for three-and-a-half years had the inestimable privilege of being with the Lord night and day. They heard His words,

and they saw works done in a way which no other person had ever done. They beheld the communion between the Father and the Son so that they could say, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." As their hearts were moved towards Christ, they were moved towards each other. The closer they got to Christ, the more they were drawn to each other.

The Apostles little by little were drawn to understand the Person of Christ. A little later on in the Epistle we read these words, "If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye shall continue in the Son and in the Father", and surely there is no better abiding place than that.

What a rebuke this is to the present-day spirit, which is always itching for fresh developments. In Christianity there can be no fresh development. When you fix your eyes upon Christ there can be no further development in Him. There is no room for philosophy and vain deceit. There is no room for ritualism, which is a clear declaration that those who desire it have not found the **Substance**, or else they would not be seeking after types and shadows. The Apostles declare of the Lord, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life. For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and

bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." And then it goes on to say—and it is so beautiful—"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that **ye also** may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." These four little books—the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—are indeed surpassingly wonderful! This is where we glean what Christ is, His power, His attraction, His beauty; and as we earnestly contemplate Christ as seen in the four Gospels then we get to know somewhat of this fellowship which the apostles enjoyed.

And they were anxious to pass on that fellowship to us. When we think of the length of time which has elapsed since the Epistle of John was written, and think of Christians to-day enjoying these eternal verities, it is a wonderful tribute to Christ, and to the Holy Spirit sent from the Father and the Son into this world to witness for Christ. Our fellowship is truly with the Father and with His Son, and that is what I call the moral side of it. The **moral** side is the **vital** side, and it is the side which lasts.

If now we turn to I Corinthians I, we read, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." If we are called to the fellowship of God's Son, you may be quite sure that we have fellowship

with the Father; since the Son and the Father are so completely one. I Corinthians presents the truth of fellowship from the side of **responsibility**. It is a blessed thing to have it from the side of privilege; we have been considering it from that side in John's Epistle, but I should like to show you one or two things in regard to Corinthians.

The Lord Jesus Christ **brooks no rival**. Do you want to give Him the first place? If you want to have Christ before you, you must give Him not the first place, but a **unique** place. It is not the first, second or third place, it is the **UNIQUE** place. He supersedes all. It is not a question of honouring the Lord first, and then say, honouring the Apostle Paul next. Ah, no! Christ stands by Himself. It is a very great thing to get hold of that, and everything of a practical nature in the way of help down here flows from Him. There is alas! that which hinders. So the Apostle begins to talk of **divisions** in their midst.

It is a wonderful thing that God has set His people in association with Christ and with each other, and there is such a thing as a **Christian assembly**. In the end of chapter 5 it speaks about judging within and without. The "without" consisted in those days of the system which rejected Christ (Judaism), and the pagan world of the Gentiles. In the "without" God judges, but "**within**" there is a responsibility resting upon us

to carry out the Word of God in all its blessed fulness, and preserve it in its purity.

Now 1 Corinthians is a corrective epistle. What was the mistake at Corinth? We must not be censorious, but remember that they had been converted from paganism.

We have great advantages over them to-day. If I were to ask all in this company, who had Christian parents to stand up, I am sure the majority of you would stand up. And even if I were to ask all who had Christian grandparents to stand up, I am sure a goodly number would rise. But if I had gone into the Christian assembly at Corinth, and asked the same question, I doubt if any at all would rise to their feet. It takes time to form soul-history.

But Scripture tells us that they were advanced in all utterance, and in knowledge, and they came behind in no gift, yet there was a danger. There were certain brethren whose names are withheld from us for a very good reason. In chapter 4 Paul transfers the rebuke to himself and Cephas and Apollos, the object being to make it more effectual. If he had used the names of the actual leaders they might have retorted, "It's all very well for you Paul to put us right, but you are seeking to make yourself Pope." But when Paul rebuked this danger in his own person, he took such a retort right out of their mouths. They were saying as it were, "I am of

Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas." Paul asks pertinent questions: "Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" They had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, why should they take upon themselves Paul's name, and the names of the other apostles in this peculiar fashion? Paul says, "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life or death, or things present or things to come; all are yours."

We know that the risen Lord has given gifts—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, but they all are gifted by the Head of the body, the Lord Jesus Christ, and we must take them as His gifts. There have been cases where saints have got their eyes upon a prominent brother and everything had to be framed after his pattern if ministry was to be acceptable. All gifts come from the ascended Lord, and we ought to be prepared to enjoy and profit by every kind of ministry. It is not for us to pick and choose. We should thank God for all, and trace all up to Christ.

Turning now to Philippians 3, we find the verse so framed that it begins at the top and works down to the bottom. If you rejoice in Christ Jesus, you have no confidence in the flesh. If you have no confidence in the flesh, you walk in self-judgment.

I want to emphasise that no one gets into the

presence of God for worship unless there is right **condition**. I believe it is possible for people, less instructed, to be in a better **condition** than many of us here to-night. Some of us criticise too much, and it would be better if we paid more attention to ourselves. Then there would be more power for worship. Scripture says, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine" (John 7: 17). I do not underrate position, but the Father is seeking worshippers, who shall worship Him in spirit and in truth. "We are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

When we look at ourselves we feel we are poor wretched things. If we do not feel this, then we have not got very far. If we look at ourselves in a true light, we can afford to look at our brethren. Someone has said that one finds that censorious folks are those who are the most indulgent as to themselves! The one who practises self-judgment, as to the flesh, is the one who is gracious towards the failure he sees in others: because he knows just how far he himself has failed.

The Scripture says, "We are the circumcision." Before this it speaks of certain people as being the **concision**. The word **concision** is a term of reproach for circumcision, when people were relying upon an outward ordinance without the least understanding its spiritual meaning. Here where the apostle speaks of the circumcision he is

talking of the **spiritual** and **moral** meaning of it. Circumcision was a "cutting-off" of the flesh. We begin by rejoicing in Christ Jesus. We rejoice in our Saviour as Lord, as High Priest and as Advocate, and we rejoice in the hope of His coming again. He is our Alpha and Omega, our Beginning and our End.

Let us be honest with ourselves, not by being constantly occupied with our weaknesses and failure; but by being occupied with ourselves to profit in self-judgment in order that we may be bowed in spirit before God and before our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our High Priest in the presence of God for us, and rise to the height of true worship in the presence of the Father and the Son.

A. J. POLLOCK.

LETTER FROM A VETERAN EVANGELIST.

The following extract from a letter, written by the late Dr. W. T. P. Wolston, in 1907, to a young preacher, may prove useful to some who seek to serve the Lord now.

"My dear —,

Let me give you a word of counsel. You will have to **read** more, both God's Word, and what Spirit-guided servants have written thereon. But you must winnow your reading, i.e. read what will open and furnish your mind with positive truth, not kickshaws or platform fireworks, a danger all young preachers are exposed to.

“To **pray** more we could all well afford.

“Then too you will have to be **very separate** in your religious associations—a snare you will be specially liable to fall under in these latitudinarian days.

“Many an otherwise useful brother has quite lost his power and influence among the saints by failing to truly walk in the separation he **has professed with them**.

“I shall regret to hear that you have got tripped up by this snare.

“A man with the gospel in his heart is laid open to this very easily, and of course loses the confidence of those who know and walk in the truth of the Church.

“God has given you a gift, use it in dependence on Him humbly and constantly and keep yourself out of sight.

“Imitate no man, be yourself, and use what you have gotten from God in prayer and communion.

“Never preach to please men, while always showing the spirit of grace to saint and sinner alike.

“Get your orders from God and carry them out faithfully while cultivating fellowship with your brethren in every possible way.

“ ‘Serve all, say little, and pass on,’ were J.N.D.’s words. They form a good motto, and I give them to you for your life’s work.”

Numbers of Christians dissipate and fritter away their souls among a multitude of religious activities and interests. They are careful and troubled about many things. Whereas one supreme secret of inward repose is to withdraw from the circumference of faith and to dwell steadily at its Centre—according to the promise, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee.” Moreover the common snare which besets believers to-day is to toil and strain in breathless, feverish fashion at what they call “Christian work”—as though either they themselves or the world around them had to be redeemed by human efforts and sacrifices. No real success in spiritual service is achieved except by those workers in whose hearts rests the covenant of peace.

LET US PRAY

When a single prayer
Of a single soul
Speeds to God’s heart
Can it miss its mark?
And when we all
Before Him stand
And pray as one,
What may be won?

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(Acts 20: 7 — 21: 40)

This outline of Acts is brief and condensed. Except the above passage of Scripture be read, it is hardly likely that these notes will prove to be of real interest or profit.

PAUL only spent a week in Troas, yet during that time there occurred the memorable meeting recorded in verses 7—12, and we are furnished with a very delightful picture of the simplicity and zeal which characterized those days. It had become the custom of the disciples there to meet for the breaking of bread — the Lord's supper—on the first day of the week. Not the sabbath, but the following day, when the Lord rose from the dead, was selected for this, though it was not a day of leisure, such as the day before would have been for those who were Jews. Hence the Christians met in the evening when the work of the day was done. An upper chamber was their meeting place, "church buildings" being unknown. Paul, with so few days at his disposal, seized the opportunity to discourse to them; and they were so full of interest that they remained all night listening to his words.

It is easy to picture the scene. The crowded chamber; the youth perched in the window opening; the many lights adding to the hot oppression of the drowsy air floating out of the window; the sudden interruption as Eutychus collapses and falls. However the power of God was so mani-

fested through Paul that instead of this episode breaking up the meeting and distracting everyone from Paul's message, their hearts were comforted and confirmed, to settle down and listen till day-break. The Apostle was now starting his final journey to Jerusalem, the rightness of which may be open to question, but there can be no doubt that the Spirit of God was working through him just as of old. No more remarkable miracle than this was wrought through Paul. The story is marked by the absence of what is ceremonial and official, but it pulsates with power. In popular Christianity to-day the ceremonial holds the field and the power is absent. Alas, that so it should be!

The day having come, Paul left Troas afoot; Luke and his other companions putting to sea and picking him up at Assos. Arrived at Miletus, he called to him the elders of the church at Ephesus that he might deliver a charge to them, under the conviction that he would not see them again. His touching address seems to fall naturally into three parts.

In the first part he reviews his own ministry among them; this extends over verses 18—27. His first words were, "Ye know, from the first . . . after what manner I have been with you at all seasons." Then, after speaking of **the manner** of his work, he proceeds to **the matter** that characterized it. In both manner and matter we may take him as a model for ourselves.

In the first place his work was **service**. He was not a great ecclesiastical dignitary lording it over the flock of God, but a servant; serving the saints indeed, yet primarily serving the Lord in serving them, and doing it always from the earliest days to the last. Serving moreover with **all humility of mind**, as has been so evident in earlier chapters. He was not a man who expected everyone to give way to him or serve him: he was the helper of others, working with his own hands in order to do so. Again it was with **tears**, and in the midst of many **temptations** which came from the Jews. Tears speak of deep feeling and exercise of heart; whilst the temptations show that he was continually confronted by difficulties and opposition.

He was also marked by **faithfulness** in the declaration of the truth and in its application to the saints. He did not court that cheap popularity which comes from withholding things which may not be palatable, but always aimed at their profit. And further, he did not confine **himself** to **public** preaching, which often means a good bit of notice and approbation, but gave himself to that **house to house** work, which is much less noticed but often far more effectual. All this shows "what manner" he had been amongst them. But there is also that of which he speaks in verse 24; his utter **devotion** to the ministry committed to him, and to the One from whom he received it. He had delivered up his life for this purpose, and so no anticipation of trouble or even death itself was

going to move him. When a servant of God adds to his faithfulness a devotion that does not flinch at death, there is bound to be power in his ministry.

Then as to the matter that characterized his ministry, he mentions three themes. First the Gospel, which had been entrusted to him, and which involved his testifying everywhere and to all, "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." The Gospel announces "the grace of God," which has been made known in Christ, in His death for our sins, His resurrection for our justification; it leads on our side to repentance and faith. That had been consistently the theme of his preaching.

He had also preached "the kingdom of God," but this had been among, not "all," but "ye all." That is, he had everywhere preached the kingdom **amongst the disciples**. This evidently has a present bearing. No doubt he spoke of the kingdom which is to be publicly established, when he spoke of the things to come; but he also kept before them that they had been already brought under the authority of God in receiving Christ as Lord, and he showed them what it meant practically to be subject to God's holy will. It is noticeable for instance that in his epistles Paul is never content with setting forth truth in the abstract; he always proceeded to enforce the conduct which the truth indicated as being the will of God for them.

Then, thirdly, he declared to them "all the counsel of God." He brought them into the light of all that God has counselled for Christ and the church and the world to come. This gave them the knowledge of what hitherto had been kept secret, and showed them that God had higher thoughts than His previously revealed purposes in regard to Israel. This third theme of his ministry was the one that stirred up such furious opposition on the part of many of his Jewish hearers and finally led to his imprisonment. Hence his saying, "I have **not shunned** to declare." If only he had shunned this part of his ministry, he might have had a far more peaceful time in his service and avoided many troubles; for God's counsel involved the bringing in of the Gentiles, according to the truth of the church. He knew this, yet he did not flinch.

An all-round ministry of the Word of God today must include these three themes—the Gospel of God, the kingdom of God, the counsel of God.

In verses 28—31, we find the second part of his address, in which he exhorts and warns them. The Holy Ghost had made them overseers amongst the flock which is the church of God. That flock was not theirs but God's by right of purchase, and they were to feed or shepherd it. But first they were to take heed to themselves, for if a man does not first take heed to himself how can he care for the flock? Moreover they were to watch and be on their guard against the adver-

saries, remembering how Paul himself had warned them with deep feeling for three years. Is it not a fact that this ministry of warning has almost lapsed through disuse?

Here Paul warns the elders of two main sources of mischief: first, the grievous wolves entering from without; second, the rising up of perverting men within. By "wolves" he meant without a doubt men who were real agents of the devil; the sort that Peter speaks of as bringing in "damnable heresies." How this prediction has been fulfilled church history bears witness; as it also witnesses to the mischief wrought by men who have risen up from the midst of the elders themselves, speaking "perverse" or "**perverted**" things. These are men who very possibly are true believers but they give a **twist** to their teachings which perverts the truth. Thus they make themselves leaders of parties and centres of attraction to those whom they mislead. They attract to themselves instead of leading to Christ. In these words Paul sketched the future of what we know as Christendom.

It is for this reason perhaps that we do not find in the Scripture any instruction as to the perpetuating of the elderhood in an official way beyond the lifetime of the Apostle. If out of the elders are to come these workers of mischief it is as well that we are left to thankfully recognize and accept those whom God may raise up, without their having an official appointment. In the case of men speaking perverted things, their of-

ficial appointment would only be used to sanction what is wrong.

In the third part of his address Paul indicated the resources that would remain in spite of all that would happen. His **words** were brief and comprised in one verse, but his **matter** of the utmost weight and importance. Our great resource is in God and not in man. He did not commend them to the other apostles: he certainly could not to the elderhood, for he was addressing elders, and out of their midst workers of mischief were to come. God, and God alone, is the resource of His people. But then He has given His Word, which reveals Himself. Formerly He spoke through Moses, as recorded in the Old Testament: that was the Word of **His demand** upon men. Now He has spoken in Christ, as recorded in the New Testament; and that is the Word of **His grace**. To this Word we are specially commended, for it is able to build us up in the faith, and to give us in spiritual power and enjoyment that inheritance along with all the sanctified, which is ours. The inheritance is ours by faith in Christ (see Acts 26: 18), but it is ministered to us in present power by the Word of His grace.

The importance of this thirty-second verse for us to-day can hardly be exaggerated. God and His Word remain for us, whatever may betide. No power of evil can touch God. He remains, and we may keep in touch with Him in prayer, in communion, in thanksgiving and worship. His

Word remains, for He has watched over it in His providence and preserved it to us. Yet, of course, it is the object of ceaseless attacks by the enemy. All too soon it was nearly smothered by the traditions of the Fathers; then it was buried in an unknown tongue and withdrawn from the people; now that it is freely available it is violently criticised, and every attempt is made to destroy its authority. Following in the steps of Judas, great men greet it with a kiss, saying, "Hail, master of beautiful language!" but only to betray it to those who would tear from it every vestige of Divine authority. And, in spite of all, it remains as the resource of the believing and obedient heart.

Paul closed his address by again referring to the uprightness and sincerity that had marked him. Far from desiring to acquire, he had been a giver to others. He put on record a word of the Lord Jesus which is not recorded in the Gospels, and that word he had exemplified. He had earlier spoken of having shewed them as well as having taught them (verse 20), and he repeats that he had shewed them all things. He practised before them what he preached to them. And it is the shewing that tells so effectively.

Paul was called to be a pattern to us both as saint and servant, hence we are given this inspired record of his review of his service, and measuring ourselves against it we are deeply humbled. His words to men over, he went to his

knees in prayer with them all, amidst their tears. It must have been an affecting scene. The word used for "kissed" is one which means to kiss ardently, the word which is used for the kisses bestowed by the father on the prodigal in Luke 15. Yet perhaps we detect an element of weakness in the fact that they sorrowed most of all that they could not hope to see him again. Might they not have sorrowed even more that God's fair church was to be ravaged by wolves and damaged by perverting men?

As we start chapter 21, we see that Luke was still with Paul and his company, and we trace their journey up to Jerusalem. Arrived at Tyre, they evidently sought for disciples, if any were there, and found some. Through these unnamed men the Spirit gave a message to Paul to the effect that he should go on to Jerusalem. To the Ephesians he had spoken of being bound in his own spirit to go up. Evidently his own inward conviction was so strong that he did not accept the word through the humble men of Tyre. It seems to be a case of his allowing powerful convictions to override the voice of the Spirit reaching him from without. There we must leave it, only observing that if so, we are permitted to see in the succeeding history how God overruled the mistake for ultimate good, though it meant much trouble for Paul.

Leaving Tyre there was another of these beautiful impromptu prayer meetings, just as, arrived

at Caesarea, we have a glimpse of the Christian hospitality of those days. Philip, the evangelist of chapter 8, was their host. His daughters furnish us with examples of women having prophetic gifts, which they exercised doubtless in accord with Scriptural instructions for the service of women.

In that city further testimony was rendered through the prophet Agabus as to what lay before Paul at Jerusalem. Again we see a touching display of affection for Paul, on the part both of his companions and the saints at Caesarea: a display also of Paul's readiness to lay down his life for the name of the Lord Jesus. Incidentally we see indicated the wise course when a difference of opinion exists which cannot be removed. We all have **to hold our peace**, only desiring that in the matter **the will of the Lord**, whatever it is, may be done.

Having reached Jerusalem, Paul reported to James and the elders what God had wrought through him among the Gentiles. They glorified the Lord in this, for they were prepared to acknowledge them in Christ, in keeping with what had been decided at the conference, of which we read in chapter 15. The Gentiles were not to be put under the yoke of the law. But whether believing Jews should observe their old customs was another question. The Jerusalem brethren urged upon Paul that he should take the opportunity of four men having a vow to associate

himself with them, especially as it was alleged against him that he had been teaching Jews to forsake their customs. They felt it was expedient that he should contradict these rumours in this fashion.

Another thing that lay behind the suggestion was that there were now thousands of Jews believing in Christ, but they were all zealous of the law. We should have thought that they would have been zealous of the Gospel and its heavenly hopes, but evidently they had as yet failed to apprehend the true character of that into which they had been brought. It was to such Jewish Christians as these that the Epistle to the Hebrews was written. They were indeed "dull of hearing," and had "need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God," needing "milk and not strong meat." They were consequently exhorted to "go on unto perfection" (Heb. 5: 11—6: 2).

The action recommended to Paul, and which he took, was hardly calculated to lead them on to perfection. It was an act of expediency, done to avoid trouble, and as is so often the case entirely failed of its object. It took Paul into the temple where his adversaries were most likely to be found. He ran into trouble instead of avoiding it. The riot against him was fomented by Jews of Asia, men who doubtless had been implicated in the riot at Ephesus. They acted under the supposition that Paul had desecrated the

temple by taking into it an Ephesian Gentile. The supposition was evidently mistaken. He had not done this, but he had gone in himself, supposing that thereby he might disarm their prejudice, and this supposition also proved to be mistaken.

Nevertheless the hand of God was over all that happened. The prophecy of Agabus was fulfilled. Paul lost his liberty. Yet by the action of the Roman chief captain he was rescued from the violence of the people. The days of his free evangelistic labours were over—save perhaps for a short time just before the end. Now began the period in which he was to bear powerful witness to the populace in Jerusalem, to be followed by witness before governors and kings, and even before Nero himself. God knows how to make the wrath of man to praise Him, and to restrain the remainder of wrath. He knows also how to overrule any mistakes which His servants may make, and while closing before them certain lines of service to open out other lines, which ultimately may prove to be of even greater importance. It was Paul's imprisonment which led to his writing those inspired epistles which have edified the church for nineteen centuries.

F. B. HOLE.

In prayer it is better to have a heart without words, than words without a heart.—BUNYAN.

SATISFIED AND OVERFLOWING.

Notes of an Address on

John 4: 13, 14; 7: 37—39.

WE have to keep continually in remembrance the fact that we are living in the day of the Holy Spirit's presence on earth. Jesus who suffered has been glorified, and almost His first act, as a glorified Man in the presence of God, was to send forth the Holy Spirit upon His disciples, baptizing them into His body and giving them the power they needed for the walk and service which pleases God. All that I may do in walk or worship—all those things of which we have often heard—must be in the energy of the Spirit who has been given to us, if we are to please God.

Now in both these striking statements of our Lord Jesus, which we have just read, we have Him referring to the Holy Spirit. This is explicitly stated in the second passage—"This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him

should receive''; and I trust that each one of us here, being a believer on the once crucified and now risen Christ, has received the Holy Spirit. But clearly in chapter 4, under the figure of the "living water," Jesus was referring to that same Spirit, though in a slightly different aspect. In chapter 4, the Lord speaks of this well or fountain of living water which, He says, is to be in us. In chapter 7, it is not a **fountain** but a **river**, and it is not **in** but **out**—out of our inward parts are to flow the rivers of living water. I need hardly tell you that the "in" must come before the "out." You cannot get out what is not in. First the fountain within, and then rivers flowing to the without.

It will be well for us to note how things are brought before us in chapters 3 and 4 of John's Gospel, in an order which is Divine. John does not call our attention to it, but an examination of the chapters reveals it. At the beginning of chapter 3, we have the Lord's conversation with Nicodemus, and He spoke of the new birth, which is a mighty work of God **in us**. This work wrought in us is absolutely necessary; but He did not stop there, He went on to speak of the work that He was about to accomplish for us: that "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." By His death the work was wrought **for us** and then towards the end of the chapter you get a third thing—the testimony that is borne **to us**. "He that hath received His testimony hath set to his

seal that God is true."

So in chapter 3 we have three things—the work wrought in us, the work wrought for us, the testimony rendered to us. Then in chapter 4 comes the Lord's revelation to the woman concerning **the gift of the Holy Spirit** to those who receive His testimony—the Spirit as an internal fountain of life and satisfaction.

How true it is that if we drink of the waters of this world we thirst again. Turn in any direction you like on earth, to seek satisfaction, whether to pleasures of a grosser sort or to those that are more refined, to things of the mind and intellect; no matter in what direction you turn, you thirst again. You cannot find anything which supremely and finally satisfies the heart. It is very evident that **satisfaction** was before the mind of the Lord when He said, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst."

This living water, of which the Lord speaks, symbolically represents the Holy Spirit, who now is given to believers. We have to drink of that water given to us, and as we do so we are transported into a region of satisfied desire. That water we have as a well-spring within us, and this explains why the Spirit-filled Christian is so happily independent of outside circumstances, as is illustrated for us by the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Philippians. The fountain however springs up "into everlasting life," and I

must remind you that the One who was the Speaker here is presented to us in the Epistle of John as "that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." Natural water, as we know, has the property of **rising** to the level of its source, and the "living water" not only does this, but actually **returns** to its living Source. The Holy Spirit has come to us from Christ, and He lifts our souls to Christ where He is, thus putting us into touch with the things that abide and that really matter. There is the world where abiding satisfaction is to be found.

Now, I am not going to attempt any further exposition of this scripture, but I am going to tell you how this verse searches me. At once it raises in my heart a question as to whether I am **experiencing** that of which the Lord speaks. The Fountain has been given to me, and drinking of it I may find abiding satisfaction. Well, is that satisfaction mine? It is quite possible for me to stand here and give you some kind of an unfolding of these words, even a very clear unfolding, and yet know very little of the blessed experience of which they speak. I may be describing the thing theoretically without experiencing it practically—though God forbid that it should be so!

Here is something which should be known by all who have received the Spirit of God, so let me ask each of you how much this is worked out in the general experience of Christians, and how much you know of it in your own hearts?

Are we content to get a mental understanding of these verses, and then leave these excellent details of the truth lying on the pages of John's Gospel? Why, the thing is to be translated into your life and mine! We are living in a very discontented world. Many nations are full of unrest and grievances. Inside the nations people band themselves into societies, unions, parties, clubs; all pulling in different directions, all discontented, everybody crying out at once. The world is like a nursery of babies; all squealing, nobody satisfied, grievances everywhere.

To us Christians all these troubles are very real, perhaps rather more real than to the people of the world; yet we are privileged to live, as to our spirits, in another world altogether. We have the Holy Spirit within, and we are put into touch with all that is comprised in those wonderful words, "eternal life." We are upon earth, but we have heavenly interests. Let us seek grace to rise to it, and so be not like the earth-worm feeding on the cabbage, but like the creature with wings which flies in the heaven. Thank God! we are children of light and of the day, and though left on earth for a little we are put into touch with Christ where He sits at the right hand of God. Our interests may now be centred in His interests, and these are the things that satisfy. Is business bad; trouble and strife everywhere? Yes, but drinking of that living Fountain, our hearts are lifted to Christ where He is, and perfect satisfaction is there.

This is gloriously possible. Go in for it. Do not be content with anything less. Then as you walk through a world, where most are grumbling and agitating with their grievances, you will stand out in contrast. Men will look at you and say, There goes a satisfied man or woman; satisfied themselves, and filled with benevolence toward all. In such a life there is a great weight of testimony.

But this, of course, leads us to the truth which the Lord stated in chapter 7. The Fountain being within us there are the rivers which may flow out. The Lord's words, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink", show how close the connection is. In both John 4 and 7, there must be this drinking, this personal appropriation. Christ is the Fountain-Head, for from Him the Spirit has proceeded, and if we drink of Him there is power both for the inward satisfaction and the outward flow of life and blessing. The drinking is a matter of faith, as is shown here by Jesus immediately adding, "He that **believeth** on Me" As we appropriate in faith, the rivers will flow.

This kind of thing had been indicated in Old Testament days, for the rivers are to flow, "as the Scripture hath said." There is no Scripture, that I know of, speaking of rivers from the inward parts of the believer, nor indeed as flowing from **any man** in any way whatever. But there are scriptures which speak of rivers which bring

life and gladness. Psalm 46 says, "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." Ezekiel 47 tells us of a river which shall divide into two streams, "and it shall come to pass, that everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live." What the Scripture had said was to the effect that the rivers of living water were **from God**, and that they testified of **His presence**, for Ezekiel shows that they proceed from the city, the name of which is, "The Lord is there."

When the millennial age is established there will be a splendid Jerusalem, far outshining any Jerusalem that yet has been on earth. Israel then will be born again, redeemed, restored and set in order before the Lord, and the nations will be grouped around her, all blessed beneath the glorious sway of Jesus. Then at last the Divine presence will be manifested in righteous government amongst men, and from His presence the rivers of life will flow forth, and everything will live.

Now we have not got to-day the Divine presence on earth, as it will be known in the millennial age, but **we have got it** in the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus is virtually telling us here that if we drink of Him and receive His Spirit we may each be a tiny, miniature edition of the Jerusalem that is to be. The indwelling Spirit may so flow out in His gracious influences, that looking upon the saint, men may

be constrained to say, "The Lord is there." We see in 1 Corinthians 14: 25, how this may be when saints are together in assembly with the Spirit moving in their midst; but the Lord is speaking of that which may be known by the individual.

This is very, very wonderful. We may say, Is such a thing possible? It is actually possible for us each as believers in Christ, whoever we may be. Do not be content with reading these great words of our Lord in the scripture, and being able to explain them with some measure of plainness. Do not rest content with being able to say, I am a believer in Christ, and have received from Him the gift of the Holy Spirit. Why should we not know in real power something of this mighty energy of the Spirit? He has come to indwell us, not as a kind of nonentity, but in power so as to make His presence felt in blessing.

How important it is then that we should ever bear in mind that great exhortation, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." It is only by Him that you and I may know the satisfaction and joy of Divine love, and become little channels wherein may run the rivers that may bring life and blessing to others. Short of heaven itself, what could we desire better than that? The Holy Spirit has been given to us that such things may be.

God give us grace not to grieve the Spirit, but to seek with all our hearts that Christ, who is ever the Object of the Spirit's ministry, may fill our spiritual vision. The Spirit is given to us, not to occupy us with ourselves, but to fill us with Christ and with the satisfying things that centre in Him. Then we may become true witnesses to Him, and out of us flow those rivers of living water for others, while we wait for our absent Lord.

THE WAY OF DELIVERANCE.

WE were talking together, a young Christian and I, and he was telling of his spiritual experiences, of his struggles after holiness of life, and of all his terrible failures and disappointments. He had been plumbing the depths of the iniquity within him, and had come to his wits' end. His past life and his present condition overwhelmed him and he finished the recital of it all with what sounded like a despairing cry, "**I tell you, its terrible, AWFUL, HORRIBLE.**"

"Yes," I said, "and you have not discovered yet **all** the evil that is in you, but at the same time it is **wonderful, AMAZING, MAGNIFICENT.**"

"What is?" he asked.

"**The grace that much more abounds where sin abounds.** You," I said, "have **looked down long**

enough, you have searched within yourself for good and found only evil. Now LOOK UP; cease to be occupied with the corrupting cancer of your own evil nature, and turn your thoughts to our Lord Jesus Christ. All the evil that has been giving you so much trouble was fully judged and condemned when God's own Son came in the likeness of sinful flesh and made His great sacrifice for sin on the cross. And now the grace of God has reached you, and He has saved you, though He knew the worst about you, knew more than ever you will find out. And He has His way of deliverance for you from it all through our Lord Jesus Christ. Consider Him and you will begin to seek for the grace that is in Him.

"It is wonderful, amazing, magnificent!"

So we talked together, and at last, with the clouds lifting, my young friend left me.

A few days afterwards he wrote: "Yes, it is wonderful, amazing, magnificent; and everything is changed for me now, for I see JESUS who tasted death for me crowned with glory and honour."

This is indeed the way of deliverance, and the way in which we are maintained in liberty from sin's power. For a greater power than sin reaches down to us from our exalted Saviour and is effectual towards us and in us as we look in complete dependence to Him.

J. T. MAWSON.

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR OBSCURE WORKERS.

MANY of the readers of this magazine can doubtless point to some human instrument by whom they were led to the Saviour. The immediate occasion of their decision for Christ may have been the preaching of a sermon, the reading of a tract, or personal intercourse with a believer. And they always couple their conversion with the name of the speaker or the writer who got them into saving touch with the Lord. But were there no other agents at work? Had they not received earlier impressions of divine truths which prepared the way for the act of saving faith? In the great day when sowers and reapers will rejoice together it is most likely that those who stand out in our minds as having led us to Christ will share their reward with others whose influence on us was none the less real because largely unrecognized by us at the time of our conversion. The fact is, **God divides up the work of the conversion of a soul**, using more than one human agent.

It is rare, indeed, that only one person is instrumental in bringing a soul to the Saviour. It may happen that a godly mother, whose teaching of her child in early years is backed up by a holy life at home, is the means, in later years, of leading him to a personal trust in the Redeemer without any other Christian influence having been

brought to bear upon him. But such cases are exceptional.

The great Apostle to the Gentiles affirms that while he had **planted**, Apollos had **watered**. And our Lord reminded His disciples that one sows and another reaps. Let not the Sunday-school worker be discouraged if, while faithfully and lovingly commending the gospel to his class, he sees no apparent fruit to his labours. It may be that the Lord of the harvest has made him a sower, and that to another will fall the happy privilege of reaping the golden grain.

Let us attempt to briefly describe a case of conversion which might, at least in some respects, serve as a type of what has occurred in countless instances in the past, and which is being repeated to-day in the history of many a soul that is won for the Master.

A godly, praying mother brings up her child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. She not only instructs him in Biblical and gospel truths, but makes his salvation a subject of earnest and believing prayer. In course of time he attends a Sunday-school where the same or kindred truths are week by week instilled into his ever-growing mind as he passes from class to class. At the age when a boy begins to think himself too old for the Sunday-school, he leaves, and goes out into the world to earn his living, still unsaved. His mind has been stored with gospel texts, but he

has never yielded to Christ, in spite of an earnest appeal on the part of his teacher to do so. Being now out of touch with spiritual associations, and finding himself at an age when we like to test everything by our own reason and to challenge all authority, he learns to question the truth of what he all along has been brought up to believe. He breathes a new air of liberty; he means to see life and have his fling. He finds it very convenient to doubt. And so a few years later we find our young man liking to call himself an agnostic and the gospel old-fashioned nonsense. But his mother's prayers hang around his neck, and he cannot entirely shake off the impressions of early years. At the same time his conscience is often smitten when he contemplates the godly lives of one or two of his workmates, and he finds himself doubting his doubts and saying to himself, "After all, there must be something in the old gospel; I wonder if it is true after all." The evidence of a holy life is beginning to have its effect and he commences to say less and think more.

A book on Christian evidences which has been given him silences some of his mental difficulties and stimulates his interest in the things of God. One evening he enters a meeting where the gospel is being proclaimed, and the preacher's message reaches his conscience. He is now thoroughly awakened, his sins press upon his heart, and he longs for peace. Passing by an open-air meeting he is arrested by the singing of a hymn which

comes back to him with painful familiarity, for he had often sung it in his childhood days; and as he drinks in the words of the speaker he realizes that as a lost sinner his only hope is in Christ. After the meeting is over he lingers behind, and is approached by one of the workers.* Our young man is in dead earnest and that night he is led to the Saviour, to the great joy of the worker who was on the watch for souls. His address is taken, and a letter from the leader of the meeting, with the booklet it encloses, are the means of bringing him peace and assurance.

Now, in this case, who was the instrument that God used to that young man's conversion? Was it only the personal worker who pointed him to the Saviour? All **he** did was to put the finishing touch to a work in which, as we have seen, **several** individuals were concerned.

A large piece of stone is being struck with a hammer. Blow after blow descends, without any apparent effect. The stone seems made of adamant; nine blows of the heavy hammer have fallen, and still no result. But at the tenth blow the stone is shattered piecemeal. Was it only the tenth blow that broke the stone? Were all the

*What a pity it is that those who attend open-air meetings do not look out for personal dealing with any strangers who may be lingering behind. Instead of being on the alert to seize an opportunity for speaking to any anxious souls, how often do they gather together among themselves, and then walk off to spend the rest of the evening in social pleasure.

previous nine useless? We think not. Their work was to render the shattering of the stone at the tenth blow possible. And so it is in the work of saving the lost. **God divides the work of conversion, that no flesh should boast in His presence.**

As far as the work of building up the soul of the believer is concerned, it is even more obvious that God divides it among many labourers. Many indeed are the human instruments employed in moulding the lives and characters of those who are the heirs of eternal glory; and every one is necessary. What an honour belongs to even the most obscure of God's servants!

Fellow-workers, have we not here a grand encouragement to do **what we can** in the Lord's service? We hear that well-known exhortation come to us with fresh meaning and power, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, **forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.**"

E.A.

May His beauty rest upon us
 As we seek the lost to win,
 And may they forget the channel,
 Seeing only Him.

“GRASPED OPPORTUNITIES.”

A CERTAIN admiral in high command in the British navy is noted for his apt replies to questions. Noting the ribbons on his breast, he was once asked what they meant. His succinct reply was, “Grasped Opportunities.” They spoke of activity, courage, perseverance in his naval career.

There are such things as Lost Opportunities. We can all bewail these. We fear they are more numerous than “grasped opportunities.” There are opportunities all around us any day and every day. Shall they be labelled “grasped” or “lost”? Possibly one reason why many an opportunity has to be labelled “lost,” is because we lack courage. Another reason alas! is that we lack devotedness.

The opportunities are there, pressing upon us on every side, every day of our lives: may we have grace to seize them. We are exhorted, “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5: 16). “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time” (Col. 4: 5).

Young Christians with their physical vigour have wonderful chances of “grasped opportunities.” Some serve the Lord in homelands, some in heathen lands, some in their own house, their next street. Our Lord said, “Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest” (John 4: 35). The opportunities are

not far off. They are within reach of our eyes. Never was there a day when it was more urgent that opportunities should be grasped.

A. J. POLLOCK.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(Acts 22: 1 — 24: 15)

This outline of Acts is brief and condensed. Except the above passage of Scripture be read, it is hardly likely that these notes will prove to be of real interest or profit.

IN all that happened to Paul in Jerusalem it is not difficult to discern the hand of God controlling behind the scenes. Though the city was in an uproar no one struck a fatal blow until sufficient time had elapsed for the chief captain to intervene. Then the fact of Paul addressing him in Greek created the favourable impression which led to the permission to address the riotous crowds from the stairs of the castle. Then Paul's choice of Hebrew for his speech led to a complete silence and attention for what he had to say.

It is rather remarkable that we have two full accounts of the conversion of Cornelius in the Acts. In chapter 10, Luke records it as an historian; then in chapter 11, he records how Peter related it. In chapter 15, we have a very short third account of how Peter referred to it in the council of Jerusalem. Again we have three ac-

counts of Paul's conversion. In chapter 9, Luke records it as an historian; in chapter 22, he records how Paul himself related it to his own people, and in chapter 26, how he related it to Gentile potentates. Both conversions were epoch-making and of the greatest significance. In the one case it was the definite and formal calling of Gentiles by the Gospel to the same blessings as Jews and on the same terms; in the other it was the calling of the arch-persecutor to be the chief instrument for the carrying of the Gospel to the Gentile world.

As we read the account in chapter 22, we cannot but see the Divinely-given skill with which Paul spoke. He began by stating what he had been in his early days, when his manner of life was altogether in accordance with their thoughts. He was perfect as to his pedigree, his education, his zeal, and his hatred of the Christians. Then came an intervention from heaven which was clearly an act of God. Now every true conversion is the result of an act of God, yet it usually comes to pass through some human instrument and the Divine act is only recognized by faith. In Paul's case there was no human instrument, but rather something quite supernatural, which appealed to both eye and ear—a great light and a voice of power—so as to cast him prostrate to the ground. He tells the story in such a way as to impress his hearers with the fact that the change in him, which so offended them, had been wrought by God.

The voice that arrested him was the voice of Jesus, and here it is that we discover that the full sentence uttered from heaven was, "I am Jesus OF NAZARETH, whom thou persecutest." The two words are not inserted in chapter 9, nor do they appear when he speaks to Gentiles in chapter 26, but here speaking to Jews, they were full of tremendous significance. They had tacked those words on to His name as a slur and a reproach; and now Jesus **of Nazareth** is in heaven!

From this let us accept the warning not to divide up the names and titles of our Lord in any hard and fast way, though it is very helpful to discern the significance of each. We might have expected Him to say, "I am the One who **was** Jesus of Nazareth in the days of My flesh"; thus relegating that name to His sojourn on earth exclusively. But He did not say, "I was", He said, "I **am**." He does not shed His names, for He is one and indivisible.

Though Paul presents his conversion as being a pure act of God, he relates how Ananias was used of God for the restoration of his sight, and to convey to him the call to be a witness, and to be baptized: also he emphasizes the fact that the said Ananias was a devout and well respected member of the Jewish community in Damascus. Notice that Paul was both to see the glorified Saviour and to hear His voice; and of what he saw and heard he was to bear witness. Hence his speaking of the Gospel he preached as "the

Gospel of the glory of the Christ."

Notice too how baptism and the washing away of sins are connected here, just as they are in chapter 2: 38, and as they were in John's baptism. Ananias added, "calling on the name of the Lord," which shows that he pointed to Christian baptism and not John's. Baptism is specially significant in the case of the Jew, which accounts for the prominent place it had on the day of Pentecost and in the case of Paul. These rejectors of Christ must bow their proud heads, and go down symbolically into death, as acknowledging His Name. It was the token of their submission to the One whom they had refused, and only thus could their sins be washed away.

Paul then passed on to relate what happened on his first brief visit to Jerusalem, which is mentioned in chapter 9: 26. No mention is made of this vision in chapter 9, nor in Galatians 1: we only read of it here. It is remarkable that both the Apostles Peter and Paul should have passed into a trance and seen a vision as to their service in regard to Gentiles—Peter, in order that he might break through Jewish custom and open the kingdom to Gentiles; Paul, in order that he should accept the evangelization of Gentiles as his life-work. In this way it was doubly emphasized that the bringing in of the Gentiles was the deliberate will and purpose of God.

Owing to his past, Paul felt that he was pre-

eminently fitted to evangelize his own nation, and ventured to tell the Lord this, only to be told that the Jews would not accept testimony from his lips, and that he was to be sent far hence unto the Gentiles. All this he told to the people, and as one reads the record one feels the convincing power of his words. Did he feel that at least **some** of his people must be convinced? Yet there stood that word of the Lord, spoken twenty or more years before, "They **will not** receive thy testimony concerning Me;" and this had been supported by the special message from the Holy Spirit that he should not go to Jerusalem. At that moment the Lord's words were verified. His mention of the Gentiles becoming objects of the Divine mercy stirred his hearers to frenzy. They **would not** receive his words. They demanded his death with almost uncontrollable violence. When Paul pursued his God-given mission to the Gentiles he was granted the joy of being used to reach the "remnant according to the election of grace" from his own people; when he turned aside, concentrating his attention upon his own people, his words bore no fruit in blessing.

The unreasoning fury of the people coupled with the use of the Hebrew language evidently baffled the chief captain, and examination under the lash was the recognised way of extorting evidence in those days. The mention by Paul of his Roman citizenship checked this, and under God's hand it became the occasion of Paul's further testimony before the leading men of his nation. The Sanhe-

drim was convoked the next day by the chief captain's orders.

As we open chapter 23, we find Paul standing before this august body, and we might have expected him to give the most striking and convincing address of his life. In result however there was a minimum of testimony and a maximum of confusion. Paul's opening remark was bitterly resented, though we can see that it was true. A "good" conscience is acquired and maintained as we sincerely and rigidly carry out all that conscience directs. The zealot with unenlightened or perverted conscience does the most outrageous things in order to preserve his "good" conscience. Thus had Paul acted in his unconverted days, and since his conversion he had with sincerity observed the warnings of his conscience, now enlightened and rectified. How clearly this shows us that conscience is **of itself** no safe guide: it must be enlightened by the Word of God. Its value depends entirely upon the measure in which it is controlled by the Word.

Angry at this opening statement, the high priest ordered that Paul should be smitten on the mouth, thus breaking the law which stipulated that an offender should only be beaten after a proper trial, and then only in a proper way (Deuteronomy 25: 1—3). This manifest injustice moved Paul to a sharp retort; most appropriate, yet not admissible as addressed to the high priest. The council having been summoned in this hurried

and informal way, probably there was nothing in his attire to distinguish him; yet, when the error was pointed out, Paul at once acknowledged his fault and quoted the passage which forbade what he had done. He was unable to ask with all assurance, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" as his Lord had done.

There immediately followed an exceedingly astute move on Paul's part. He presented himself as a Pharisee, and as being called in question concerning the hope of resurrection. Without a doubt he was a Pharisee by birth and early training, and without a doubt resurrection lies at the very foundation of the Gospel. His cry had the effect he anticipated. It rallied the Pharisees to his aid, while violently antagonizing the Sadducees. They were all true party men, viewing everything from a party standpoint. Assuming him to be of their party, the Pharisees swung round in his favour. Truth and righteousness did not count with them, but party did. The same kind of thing is very common to-day, and Christians are not immune from it; so let us accept the warning which is conveyed to us here.

All through the Acts the Sadducean party appear as the chief opponents of the Gospel. Their materialistic outlook, denying the resurrection, accounted for this. Here we have our last glimpse of them as they furiously protest against the sudden change of front with the Pharisees, and use such physical vigour that Paul might have been

pulled in pieces. Their violence defeated their purpose, for it forced the chief captain to intervene, and Paul was for the second time rescued from the hands of his own people.

How very beautiful verse 11 is! We are not told anything as to Paul's feelings, but the Lord's message to him of good cheer certainly infers that he was depressed. We cannot help thinking that the whole of this Jerusalem episode had fallen below the high standard that had characterised all his earlier service; yet he certainly had testified of his Lord. His gracious Master fixed upon that fact, acknowledged it, and told him he was yet to bear witness in Rome—Jerusalem the religious centre, Rome the imperial and governmental centre of the earth of those days. What a refreshment for Paul's spirit!

The next day there was hatched the conspiracy on the part of more than forty men to kill Paul. The nature of the curse under which they bound themselves testifies to the ferocity of their hatred, so it looks as if they were of the Sadducean party who had been baulked of their prey the day before. The chief priests also were of that party, and so were nothing loth to implicate themselves in the business. They were to pretend that they wished to examine him further, and the forty men were ready to kill him.

Again we find the hand of God frustrating their devices. The story—as ever in Scripture—is told

with brevity and restraint. We discover that Paul had a sister and a nephew in Jerusalem, but how the young man got information of the plot we are not told. God saw however that it reached his ears, though only concocted a few hours before, and also gave him the courage to reveal it. That he had such easy access to his uncle, and that Paul's request for his nephew to have access to the chief captain should have met with so courteous a response, we trace to God's overruling; though very probably the outrageous behaviour of the Jews had provoked a reaction in the mind of the chief captain in favour of Paul. In result he not only listened to the young man but took him at his word without any hesitation, and immediately took steps to frustrate the plot.

The remainder of the chapter gives us a glimpse of the efficiency that marked the Roman military system. The chief captain acted with the utmost promptness in his decision to remit Paul to the civil governor at Caesarea. He took care also to run no risks. He knew the vindictive fury of the Jews when matters of a religious sort were at stake; so he did not make the common mistake of underestimating the danger. The force that took charge of Paul must have numbered practically five hundred men, a ratio of twelve to one against the would-be assassins. Every consideration was given to the prisoner, even to the extent of providing beasts for him to ride.

The letter written by Claudius Lysias is quite

a typical document, in which he presented his own actions in the most favourable light; but on the other hand it entirely exonerated Paul of anything really evil or worthy of death. The only accusations against him were as to "questions of their law." Thus it is made clear that the first Roman official into whose hands he fell was quickly convinced that the charges against him were as to his faith, and there was no fault in him as to matters of conduct. God evidently took care that this should be made abundantly plain.

Thus it was ordered that the forty men failed in their purpose in spite of their vow and curse. Paul was safely in the strong hands of Rome, and in due time would be able to state his case in a calmer atmosphere, and bear the Name of his Master before "the Gentiles, and kings," as well as the children of Israel, as had been predicted to Ananias. First of all he had to appear before Felix, the governor.

The arraignment of Paul before him bears all the marks of bitter animus and prejudice. That not only elders but even Ananias the high priest should have thought it necessary to go down to appear against him, shows the importance they gave to his case. Then they employed an advocate who, to judge by his name, was a Roman and not a Jew. Tertullus, they doubtless felt, would know better than themselves what would appeal to the Roman mind, and so be more likely to secure a conviction. Tertullus **did** know, and

began with fulsome flattery, for the account given of Felix's administration in secular history is in flat denial of what he stated. This he followed by a fourfold charge against Paul. All four charges were vague, particularly the first, that he was a pest, and the second that he was a mover of sedition. Vague charges were preferred, for he knew they could not be easily disproved as plain definite charges often can be.

The third and fourth charges were a little more definite. The fourth, as to profaning the temple was false, as the previous chapter showed: the third was the only one with some semblance of truth. He had proved himself a leader amongst the Christians, who were known by the Jews as the sect of the Nazarenes. They were indeed followers of the despised Nazarene, but they were emphatically not just a new sect amongst the Jews. The book of Acts was written to show us they were not this but rather something entirely new. The world never understands any genuine work of God.

Tertullus took care to present the action of Lysias in an unfavourable light, since he had baulked the violence of the Jews; and the Jews supported the assertions of their advocate. The Jews supplied the animus and used the Gentile as their tool, as they did in the case of the Lord.

Paul's answer was in every way a contrast to the oration of Tertullus. He acknowledged that

Felix had had many years experience as judge among the Jews, but he refrained from flattery. He avoided vague assertions, denying explicitly any disputations and sedition, and pointing out that only twelve days had elapsed from the moment he had set foot in Jerusalem. He showed that while they had made plenty of accusations they had furnished no proofs, and could not do so. Then by making a plain and simple confession of what had characterized him, and what lay really at the bottom of their hostility, he threw into relief that which lay at the foundation of the Gospel that he preached. They called it heresy, but it was the very foundation of the truth.

In this skilful way did Paul announce his belief in all that had been written in the Old Testament, and show that all Christian hopes are based upon the resurrection, which of course has been verified in Christ. And it is just as certain that there shall be a resurrection for the unjust. That was evidently a shot directed at the conscience of Felix, as well as all others present. No one shall remain buried in the grave to escape the mighty hand of God in judgment.

F. B. HOLE.

May the mind of Christ our Saviour
Live in us from day to day,
By His love and power controlling
All we do and say.

"BE OF GOOD CHEER!"

(MATTHEW 14: 27; JOHN 16: 33; ACTS 27: 22)

IN these days of distress when war has again broken out; when there is grave apprehension in many homes and in many hearts; how happy it is to hear from the lips of our blessed Lord Jesus the heartening words:

"BE OF GOOD CHEER!"

It is this that makes the true believer in Him superior to that which may come upon him, and that enables him to realize what an unfailing resource he has in Him who thus seeks to encourage him.

Let us read the beautiful story in Matthew 14: 22-33. The disciples were, as directed by the Lord, in a ship crossing to the other side; it was evening and a storm arose. "The ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary" (v. 24). The storm seemed to rage more fiercely, and the Lord Jesus was not with them. Where was He? He had gone up

"into a mountain apart" (verse 23). What was He doing? He was praying. For whom? Surely for them, for the corresponding account in Mark 6: 48, tells us that "He saw them toiling in rowing." It was "in the fourth watch," the darkest hour of the night, when, it may be, hope had fled, "Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea" (v. 25.) So great was their distress they failed to recognise their Lord and "they cried out for fear" (v. 26). Then they heard His well known voice saying: "**Be of good cheer**, it is I, be not afraid" (v. 27). He showed His power over wind and waves and when He got into the ship the wind ceased (v. 32), for there can be no storm where the Lord Jesus is.

Is this being read by someone who is in a storm at present, whose circumstances are known only to himself, or herself, and the Lord? Listen, dear friend. He has gone on high, and from where He is in the presence of God, **He** sees, **He** knows, **He** loves, **He** cares, **He** prays for **you**. He is now making intercession for you. He may not change your circumstances but He will whisper in your ear, "**Be of good cheer**, it is I, be not afraid."

"Yes," says someone, "I know all that, but I **am** afraid." Ah! you may be like Peter. He asked the Lord to bid him to come unto Him on the water, and He did so. Peter actually "walked on the water to go to Jesus" (v. 29), but presently, "when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid"

(v. 30). Not more boisterous than when he left the ship, but getting his eye off the Lord he saw the wind, trusting to his own resource, he left the Lord out, with what might have been serious result. How tender was the blessed Lord's rebuke, how powerful was His hand; "and when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth Thou art the Son of God" (v. 33).

We feel sure they would not have missed that experience for anything, for they got to know their Lord in an altogether new way. We cannot chide Peter, can we? because we are so like him. If the Lord has to rebuke us, how lovingly He does it! and we find His heart goes out to us; His power is at all times available for us, His priestly service is ceaselessly exercised on our behalf, and as we are of good cheer, we find ourselves as worshippers at His feet.

We pass to another scene, and oh how touching it is! It was the night on which the Lord was betrayed, the hour of His deep sorrow. Yet with that self-forgetting love that ever marked Him, He thought not of Himself but of His sorrowing disciples. He told them how much He loved them (John 13: 34); of the Father's House (John 14: 2); of His coming for them (v. 3); of His company with them (v. 18); of the Holy Spirit coming to indwell them (v. 16); of the Father's love (vv. 21, 23); of the privilege that would be theirs dur-

ing His absence of bearing fruit for God (chapter 15); and of coming out in testimony for Him here (chapter 16). Now we come to the last words He spoke to them before He entered the Garden. How we treasure the last words of those who love us and whom we love, and we treasure these last words of our blessed Lord Jesus. Let us read 16: 33. "These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but

BE OF GOOD CHEER:

I have overcome the world."

The fiercest storm that ever raged was just about to break over Him and yet He spoke of **peace**. He had already spoken of "**My peace**." It was on that night of nights that He spoke of "**My peace, and My joy**" (14: 27; 15: 11); and His desire was that in the storms through which they would be called to pass, they might have His peace and His joy. Tribulation they would have, and they did have, as long as they were in the world, but in it all He would have them recall His last word to them: "**Be of good cheer**, I have overcome the world."

What a remarkable word! In a few hours He would be hanging dead upon a cross, and immediately after would lie in a sealed sepulchre, and He said, "**I have overcome the world**." That which appeared like absolute defeat would be

the greatest victory that has ever been known. If they were called upon to suffer, and they were—If they were called upon to lay down their life, and they were—If it seemed as if the enemy had triumphed, and it did; they would be overcomers in His power, who said, "**Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.**" In this favoured land we are not called upon to suffer as they were; yet the Word tells us that "**We must** through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14: 22).

It may be there are some reading these pages who, particularly in this present upheaval, are having experience of this. Some because they have to take up National Service of some kind, and it means leaving loved ones and engaging in that which is by no means congenial. Parents and sons, husbands and wives, fathers and children are separated; gloom will rest upon many homes, and dark forebodings will fill many hearts. We desire, however, to point out to our readers that just here is the opportunity to show what the grace of Christ can do. We belong to One who knows all about it; who offers us His peace and His joy; who tells us that in the world we shall have tribulation; but who bids us "**Be of good cheer!**" and to be overcomers in His Name, who has overcome the world.

Now we pass to another scene, which we find in Acts 23: 11. The Apostle Paul was passing through much tribulation. He was a prisoner,

and it may be he was asking himself, "Have I made a mistake? Have I taken my own way, and is this the result?" In the silence of the night he heard a well-known voice, the voice that he had heard when on the road to Damascus. The same voice that the disciples heard on earth, Paul heard from the glory, and it said, "**Be of good cheer**, Paul!" Yet another proof that "Jesus Christ [is] the Same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever" (Hebrews 13: 8). Take out Paul's name, anxious reader, put in your own, and hear Him say to you, "**Be of good cheer——**"

Now let us see how Paul was able to pass on that cheer to others. Shall we just here read Acts 27? He was a prisoner on his way to Rome. A storm of great severity threatened the safety of the ship and all aboard. In fact we read that "all hope that we should be saved was taken away" (v. 20). At that moment Paul stood forth and with a ring of absolute confidence he said:

"BE OF GOOD CHEER!"

and he added, "**I believe God.**" He told the ship's company how in the night an Angelic Messenger brought him a message; it was, "**FEAR NOT, PAUL.**" He was assured that he would reach Rome; and, said he, "God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." He assured them of his faith in God as he said, "**I believe God,**" and once again he bid them "**Be of good cheer!**" They still had a rough time, but Paul was master

of the situation, and became virtually master of the ship. He assured them of their safety, impossible though it appeared to be; he "gave thanks to God in the presence of them all" (v. 35). Calmly he began to eat. "Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat" (v. 36).

We would not like anyone to suggest to us, nor to admit to ourselves that we do not believe God, but could we honestly say at this time of pressure, in that through which we are, just at this moment, passing, "I believe God that it shall be"? It is a challenging question, let us face it; tell the Lord our many doubts and fears; and hear Him say to us, "**Be of good cheer!**" Then let us say, "**I believe God**"; and having proved Him for ourselves, go to our many weary, anxious, doubting fellow-believers and say to them: "**Be of good cheer . . . for I believe God** that it shall be even as it was told me."

W. BRAMWELL DICK.

ONE THING I DESIRE.

(PSALM 27)

"**T**HE Lord is my light and my salvation." Is not that beautiful? "The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" Why does the Apostle Paul tell us to rejoice? Things were going badly with him when

he wrote Philippians, but he is not afraid. If he is not afraid, we are not to be afraid. The Psalmist was not afraid, though there was the wicked one, enemies, war. Because the Lord was light, the Lord was salvation, the Lord was strength, why should he be afraid?

But if there is anything else in which your confidence is placed, failure will follow. Your confidence should be in the Lord. If in the Lord, He will prove sufficient no matter what the circumstances may be; we are only a poor feeble people, so our joy and strength and confidence must be in the Lord alone. He will prove sufficient whatever happens, and if we tell Him our troubles He will give us the peace that passes understanding. "One thing" engaged Paul, "One thing" the Psalmist desired. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the **beauty of the Lord**, and to enquire in His temple." Is that what we desire? Is that what we seek after? We may be very nice Christians, speaking after the manner of men, and know very little, or nothing, of "beholding the beauty of the Lord."

It is everything to have the Lord before us. You need not isolate yourself; if you are in a tramcar, or anywhere else, you can get alone with the Lord. The great lack to-day is we so little dwell in the presence of God, so as to see the beauty of the Lord.

Then we are to "enquire in His temple." It is the place of light where we get guidance. Why is it that one Christian says a thing is right, and another says it is wrong? It is just this, one or the other of them is not in the light of the temple. It is not enough to have Scripture at our finger-ends. We may be well up in our Bibles, may know our Bible wonderfully, and still know nothing about guidance in a difficulty. We must get into the presence of God if we are to get real understanding of the Scriptures and light from God as to our path. Differences of judgment are because we dwell so little in the presence of God, and we are so much formed by one another. We run to one another and say, "What do you think about this?" and "What do you think about that?" We must get alone, the door shut—the door of our hearts, these poor foolish hearts of ours that go out here and there—that God may speak to us, like Mary sitting at the feet of Christ, and hearing His word, that God may make His mind clear to us. That is what the Apostle Paul did. He dwelt so in the presence of God that he had the mind of God in a wonderful way when many were otherwise minded. He was in a time of trouble, but nothing troubled him, nothing made him afraid.

The Psalmist said, I will offer in Thy tabernacle sacrifices of joy. Why? Because he was in the presence of God. In spite of the difficulties, in spite of the enemies he could rejoice and sing. In myself I am a poor thing, and I need the Lord

every day and every moment of my life, and I cannot get on without Him. Glorious as my position is in Christ, glorious as the prospect is before me, yet in myself I am a poor thing; so feeling my weakness and the condition of things I turn to God, not being able to bear them alone, and I pray, "Teach me Thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path because of mine enemies." We are such poor things, and we need Him every moment. Whoever forsakes us—and the dearest may forsake — yet the Lord will be sufficient. "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." If we get into the secret of God, if we get alone with Him, so that He can speak to us and we can hear His whisper, then He comforts our hearts with His complete superiority to everything, and then we can turn to others and say, Be of good courage. Do not fear. If you trust in man be afraid. If you are trusting in circumstances, be afraid. If you are trusting in some grand things that are going to happen, be afraid; but if you have got the Lord before you, you need not fear. Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thy heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord, be much with Him, and know what it is to be shut in with Him, and hear His voice, in that region, so to speak, where the voice of man does not penetrate, and then we can be strong for God in this scene, and invite others to be of good courage, because the Lord is the Lord, and nothing can disturb Him.

POVERTY, PATIENCE, POWER

IN the book of Psalms Christ is seen in three ways in **poverty**, in **patience**, and in **power**.

In the latter part of Psalm 109, He is mentioned as being poor. "I am poor and needy" (v. 22). Then follows a very touching description of His poverty. For the Messiah to be in such circumstances of need must have been to the Jews a matter of great astonishment. It was there precisely where unbelievers of the nation sadly stumbled. He had no form nor comeliness, that is, He had no "lordly form." He was a poor Man!

But does it not show us where grace brought Him? "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8: 9). Nothing so touches the heart of the believer as this precious grace. He came down to the poor of His people. He entered into all their circumstances of need. He went lower than the lowest. He had nowhere to lay His head. On earth He moved as a lonely and homeless stranger. He ministered by day amongst the poor of Israel, and retired by night into the Mount of Olives.

But the condition of His people required this. They were poor, that is, the faithful remnant. And only could he reach **them** by coming into **their poverty**. In doing this we see His wondrous

grace. When we look at Him at Sychar's well, He is poor and needy, tired and thirsty. Yet He was the Lord of glory, the Giver of eternal life! When He is asked for money to pay tribute, He does not possess it. He has to perform a miracle in order to get it. When He wishes to minister to the needy of the multitude, He has only a few fishes and loaves. How the Christian's heart is touched by the Lord's poverty!

In the beginning of Psalm 110, God raises Christ to His right hand, and tells Him to sit there until He makes His enemies His footstool. This has been fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Now He is alive, and sits upon His Father's throne until such time as He will get His own throne. This is His patience. John in the first chapter of Revelation calls this waiting time "the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ" (v. 9). So that now Christ is waiting in patience to take up His kingdom.

We share in this patience. We have no kingdom in this world, but wait for the world to come. How important it is for us to see just where we are in this respect. We are rejected out of the world, as He was; and we wait for His kingdom, as He waits. It is an interval, when as yet we have no kingdom. But the day of this waiting will end for the Lord Jesus, and so it will end for us. He will enter into His kingdom and we will enter in with Him. Patience then will have ceased. In the same Psalm a day is spoken of called **the day**

of **His power**. This, of course, stands in contrast to the **day of His poverty** and also the **day of His patience**. All His enemies will be put under His feet, His kingdom will be established in righteousness, His people will be willing then to hail Him and serve Him. The introduction of His power will end everything of rebellion, remove from earth all oppression, bring down the proud and lift up the poor of His people. It will bring in the great day of Israel's deliverance, of which so much has been written in prophetic scriptures.

We shall have our place with Him in His kingdom and glory, a place higher than that of Israel, for we are the Church, His body, the fulness of Him that fills all in all (Ephes. 1: 23). So that if we are poor now, may we remember Him who was poor; if we have to suffer, may we be patient as He is patient; and when He comes in power, we shall share His kingdom.

A TIMELY WORD.

THE Holy Ghost does not gather saints around mere views, however true they may be, upon that which the church is, upon that which it has been, or that which it may be, on the earth, but He always gathers them around that blessed Person, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of

them" (Matt. 18: 20).

We need to be watchful against boasting, as people do in these days; need to be still in the presence of God. There is much independence and self-will almost everywhere.

If any one speaks of separation from evil, without being humiliated, let him take care lest his position becomes simply only that which at all times has constituted sects, and produced doctrinal heresy. Nearness to Christ would keep us from sectarianism, the most natural weed of the human heart. Sectarianism is getting an interest in a little circle round ourselves.

Now I know, at the present time, of no service which is worthy of Him, if it is not done in humiliation. This is not the time to speak of a place for ourselves. If the church of God, so dear to Christ, is dishonoured in this world; if it is scattered, ignorant, afflicted, he who has the mind of Christ will always take the lowest place. True service of love will seek to give according to the need, and because of their need, he will never think of slighting the objects of the Master's love.

There is great instruction in the conduct of Zerubbabel, recounted in the book of Ezra.

Heir of the place which Solomon had occupied in days of prosperity and glory, he spoke not of

his birth, nor of his rights. However, he is faithful in all the path of separation, or sorrow, and of conflict he is obliged to pass through.

If we speak of our testimony upon the earth, it will soon be evident that all is but weakness, and, like the seed lost upon the wayside, the testimony will likewise end to our shame.

Neither the anger, nor the prudence, nor the pretensions of man can do anything, in the state of confusion in which the church is now. I freely own that I have no hope in the efforts many make to assure themselves an ecclesiastical position. When the house is ruined in its foundations by an earthquake, it matters little how one tries to make it an agreeable dwelling-place. We shall do better to remain where the first discovery of the ruin of things by man's deed has placed us—with our faces in the dust. Such is the place which belongs to us by right, and, after all, it is the place of blessing.

I have read of a time when several were gathered together in such sorrow of heart, that for a long time they could not utter a single word; but the floor of the meeting room was wet with their tears. If the Lord would grant us such meetings again, it would be our wisdom to frequent these houses of tears. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy" (Psam 126: 5). It is not only for the earthly remnant that this is true, it is also written for us. I would willingly take a long

journey to join these afflicted ones; but I would not go a step with the object of receiving from the hands of most excellent men power to overturn all to-day and reconstruct to-morrow.

We need to watch over ourselves, lest, after having been preserved from the corruption of the age by the very precious truths revealed to us in our weakness, we should be taken in the net of presumption, or thrown into insubordination. These are things which God can never recognize or tolerate, since we are called to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

J.N.D.

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(ACTS 24: 16 — 26: 32)

This outline of Acts is brief and condensed. Except the above passage of Scripture be read, it is hardly likely that these notes will prove to be of real interest or profit.

HAVING proclaimed his faith in the Scriptures and in the resurrection, Paul went on to affirm that his conduct had been in keeping with what he believed. His conscience was clear, and he had only come up to Jerusalem on a mission of mercy, and when in the temple his behaviour had been perfectly orderly and correct. It was the Jews from Asia who stirred up the tumult, not he; and now that there was opportunity for them to present their charges against him in an orderly way, they were not there to do so.

But there were Jews present who had seen him appear before the council, and he knew that they found no fault in him, save that he avowed his belief in the resurrection. Paul knew no doubt that it was the Sadducean faction who were pursuing him so relentlessly and appearing against him, and he took care to make it very plain to Felix that his belief in the resurrection of the dead, as verified in the resurrection of Christ, was the real matter at issue. It may be also that Paul wished to acknowledge that the way in which he had cried out in the council had not been quite free from blame.

Felix, as we learn from verse 24, had a Jewess as wife, and so was well informed as to things, and realized at once that there was nothing evil in Paul. He adjourned the court under pretext of waiting for Lysias the chief captain, so once more the accusers were foiled, especially as the adjournment was *sine die*, as our courts put it. Meanwhile Paul was given an extraordinary measure of liberty, in which again we may see the overruling hand of God.

There is no record of Lysias coming down, but we are told how Felix, with Drusilla his wife, sent for Paul and gave him a private audience while he testified of the faith in Christ. This was a great opportunity, and Paul evidently knew the weak and crooked character of the governor, and so he emphasized righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. We may take **righteousness** as

summing up the Gospel message, as Romans 1: 16, 17, shows so clearly. Temperance or **self-restraint** is the result of the Gospel in the life of the one who receives it; and **judgment to come** is what awaits those who refuse it. So though the summary given of Paul's address is exceedingly brief, we can see that the three words are such as cover the salient facts of the Gospel.

There was great power with the message and Felix trembled, yet he deferred the matter to that "convenient season", which so often never comes. It was so in this case. Though two years passed before Felix was superseded by Festus, and during that time there were a number of interviews, nothing came of them, and Felix left Paul bound in the effort to curry favour with the Jews. The real canker at the heart of Felix was the love of money. His case strikingly illustrates how there may be a powerful working of the Spirit through the Gospel **from without** upon a man, but how any working upon heart and conscience **within** may be smothered by some active lust, such as the love of money. True conversion takes place when the Spirit's work from without is supplemented and answered by the Spirit's work within.

Festus having arrived, he went up to Jerusalem after three days, and such was the animosity against Paul that at once the high priest and other leaders accused him, and asked Festus to have him brought to Jerusalem. Though years had passed they would still fulfil their vow and wreak their

vengeance. Such is religious rancour! Festus however declined this, so once more his accusers had to journey to Caesarea. This second hearing was practically a repetition of the first, as is shown in verses 7 and 8 of chapter 25. Paul had merely to rebut a large number of unproved assertions. Now Festus, as the next chapter shows, had not got any intimate knowledge of Jewish things; still, knowing them to be a people difficult to handle, he wished to gain their favour, and so suggested that after all Paul might go up to Jerusalem for his final trial.

In this sudden change on the part of Festus we may see the hand of God. During the night that followed the uproar in the council the Lord had appeared to Paul and told him that he must bear witness to Him in Rome, and now He controls circumstances to bring this to pass. The suggestion from Festus led Paul to appeal to Caesar, a privilege that belonged to him as a Roman citizen. Paul knew that the proposed change of place was the prelude to his being handed over to his enemies, though Festus knew very well that he had done no wrong. If Festus began yielding to the clamour in order to placate the Jews, he would end by yielding everything. Paul's appeal settled everything. Having appealed to Caesar, to Rome he must go. This is the third occasion on which we find Paul taking his stand on his Roman citizenship, and here most evidently it was made to serve and work out the purpose of his Lord.

The coming of Agrippa and Bernice to salute

Festus became the occasion for Paul to bear a third testimony before governors and kings, and we are now given a much fuller insight into the mighty way in which he presented the truth. He had not failed previously to convey even to Festus that which lay at the heart of the whole matter, for in speaking to Agrippa of his case, Festus stated the controversy to rage around, "one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." This shows that, pagan though he was with no real understanding, he had grasped the central fact of the Gospel. The death and resurrection of Christ are at the basis of all blessing, and the full declaration of the love of God. We know something of this, while he knew nothing of it. Still, Paul had made it plain.

That it was all a mystery to Festus, in spite of his having rightly seized the point at issue, is evident from his address to Agrippa, when the court had assembled and, Paul being brought forth, the proceedings commenced. He had no certain thing to write to his lord, the emperor in Rome. He hoped that Agrippa with his superior acquaintance with Jewish religion, might be able to help him to understand more clearly what was at stake, and know what to say. On this occasion there were no tedious preliminary proceedings. Agrippa immediately gave Paul permission to speak for himself. Thus set free, he was able to dispense with all mere details of self-defence, and come straight to the message with which God had entrusted him, after acknowledging Agrippa's ex-

pert knowledge, and beseeching for a patient hearing.

He began by stating that he had been brought up in the strictest form of Judaism amongst the Pharisees, and that what was now charged against him was in connection with the hope that all Israel had entertained from the days when God gave His promise. That hope they still held, but Paul maintained there had been a fulfilment of it in Christ, and particularly in His resurrection. So from the outset of his address he kept the resurrection well to the fore, as being the main point at issue. Yet resurrection lay beyond men's thoughts, whether Jewish or pagan; hence his question, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" It would be **utterly incredible** if only men were in question: bring God in—the real, true, living God—and **it is incredible that it should not be.**

In this third account of his conversion we find the Apostle greatly emphasizing the determined and furious opposition to Christ which characterized him at the beginning. He was indeed "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious," as he told Timothy: he carried it to the point of being "exceedingly mad" against the disciples, and persecuting them even to distant cities. This was the way in which he did the many things "contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." It

was at midday, when the sun shines most strongly, that another light brighter than the sun arrested him on the road to Damascus, and the voice of the Lord was heard. The uncreated light threw the created light into the shade.

Several interesting features, not mentioned in the earlier accounts, appear here. The light from heaven brought the whole company down into the dust, and not Paul only. Further, the voice was in the Hebrew tongue. This is remarkable, for we have been told earlier that though his companions heard the voice it conveyed nothing to them. It was in their own language, yet they did not understand. They were affected **physically**, but only Paul was affected **spiritually**. The essential element in conversion is not great sights, nor wonderful sounds, but the life-giving work of the Holy Ghost. Jesus was manifested only to Paul, and that in such a way that he discovered Him to be his Lord.

When he owned Jesus to be his Lord, he was told plainly what he was to do as regards his own personal salvation. That we learned from the earlier accounts. Here only are we told that at the same time the Lord told him with equal plainness, that He was apprehending him to make him the servant of His will in a very special way. He was to be a witness to others of that which had just been revealed to him, and of further things that yet were to be made known to him by the Lord. Here only do we learn of the way in which

the Lord commissioned him from the outset, and what the terms of that commission were. They are very striking, and they account very fully for the remarkable career which we have been tracing in the earlier chapters.

The Lord's purpose was that he should be "delivered", or "**taken out**" from among the people, and the Gentiles; that is, he was to be separated both from his own people, the Jews, and from the Gentiles, so as to stand in a place distinct from both. It has often been said that the Lord's words, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," were the first intimation that the saints were His body: we may perhaps say that the words we are now considering were the first intimation of the distinct place the church occupies, called out from both Jew and Gentile. Paul started by himself being put in the place into which were brought all those who believed the Gospel that he was commissioned to preach.

But, as the end of verse 17 says, he was specially sent to the Gentiles. As we have before noticed, he was blessed to many Jews as long as he followed his commission in the Gentile world; it was only when he turned aside from this to address himself specially to his Jewish brethren, that he failed to reach them. How fully this warns us that our Master must be supreme, and that our wisdom is to abide by His plan for our lives and service. To the Gentiles he was to go, that he might "open their eyes." This was a new de-

parture in God's ways, for hitherto they had been left to go their own way. They had been in darkness and ignorance, but now their eyes were to be opened.

If, through Paul's labours, their eyes were effectually opened, they would turn from darkness and the power of Satan to light and God. This is what we mean by conversion. It must of course involve conviction of sin, for none of us can come into the light of God without that conviction being wrought in us. But then as the result of turning there is the reception of forgiveness. There is the Divine act of forgiveness in which we may rejoice, and not only so, but we also enter into an inheritance which we share in common with all those who are set apart for God. Forgiveness is what we may call the **negative** blessing of the Gospel and the inheritance is the **positive**. Forgiveness is a loss rather than a gain—the loss of our sins; of the love of them as well as of the penalty they entail. The inheritance is what we gain.

And all this is "by faith that is in Me." Here we have the way in which the blessing is reached. Not by works, but by faith; and of that faith Christ is the Object. The virtue is not in the faith but in the Object in whom faith rests. Thus from the very moment of his conversion Paul's future course and ministry was marked out for him, and by revelation from the Lord he was given the message that he was to preach. We have then in verse 18, a complete summary of the blessings

that the Gospel brings to the one who receives it in faith. The eyes of his heart and mind are opened to the truth; he is brought out of darkness into light, and from Satan's power unto God; his sins are forgiven and he knows it; he shares in the inheritance common to those who with himself are set apart for God.

Having received these instructions, Paul had been faithful to his commission, and beginning where he was and widening out to the nations, he had showed to men everywhere what their response to the Gospel should be. They should repent; they should turn to God; they should do works in keeping with the repentance they professed. Repentance involves that coming into the light which enables one to see and judge one's own sinfulness, and then the confession of it before God. Now the more we see our own sin, the more we distrust ourselves; the more we distrust ourselves, the more we learn to trust in God: consequently turning to God follows this turning from ourselves. All this is an inward process of mind and heart of a more or less secret nature, but if it is real it soon produces actions and works in keeping with it. If there be no "works meet for repentance," we may be sure that the repentance professed is not the genuine article. Paul insisted on all three things, and he knew of course that not only are they God's appointed way in which the blessings of the Gospel are received, but they are themselves produced by the Gospel, where it is received in faith.

Now it was just this which had so stirred up the animosity of the Jews, for if this was the way of entrance into God's favour, it was as much open to the Gentile as to the Jew. But he made very plain to Agrippa that what had been predicted by Moses and the prophets lay at the foundation of all that he had preached. He announced the suffering of Christ; His resurrection; and that as risen He should bring the light of God to all mankind—not only Jews, but Gentiles also. How clearly this last point is stated in Isaiah 49, just as the death and resurrection of Christ are predicted in Isaiah 53.

In verse 23 then we have a plain testimony rendered to Agrippa, Festus, and all others present, as to **the glorious basis of fact on which the Gospel rests**. Indeed we may say that primarily the preaching of the Gospel is the declaration of those facts, and we need to keep them in the forefront of our preaching to-day as much as in Paul's day. Then, as we have seen, verse 18 gives us **the blessings that the Gospel confers**; and verse 20 **the way in which the Gospel blessings are received**.

To the pagan mind of the Roman the idea of resurrection was simply incredible, as Paul had anticipated at the opening of his address, so the mention of Christ risen from the dead moved Festus to a loud exclamation. How often through the centuries has the Christian been charged with madness! Here is the first recorded instance of the taunt being flung by the man of the world.

Yet it was not vulgar abuse, for Festus was a polished Roman. He did at least attribute Paul's "madness" to an excess of study and learning. But mad he thought him nevertheless!

Paul's reply was moving in its dignified simplicity. He addressed Festus in a way that became his high estate, and then asserted that on the contrary what he had said were "words of truth and soberness." To Festus it was all the romance of an intoxicated mind, for the gods that he venerated wielded no powers beyond the grave. Feeble man can kill and bring down to the grave—that is an easy thing: only of the living God can it be said, "The Lord killeth, **and maketh alive**: He bringeth down to the grave, **and bringeth up**" (1 Sam. 2: 6). Let us all aim so to declare the Gospel that our hearers may recognize that we are speaking **the sober truth**.

Having answered Festus, Paul launched an appeal to Agrippa, knowing that he professed to believe the prophetic Scriptures, and would therefore know that what he preached as fact had been foretold there. The appeal evidently went home. Agrippa's answer, we fear, was not a confession that he was very nearly convinced of the truth of the Gospel, but rather an attempt in a semi-jocular way to throw off the effect of the appeal. He said in effect, "In a little you will be making a Christian of me!" From his words it is evident that the term "Christian", first coined at Antioch, had by now obtained wide currency. By it the

disciples were very accurately described.

About Paul's rejoinder there is a moral elevation which is not easily surpassed. A poor prisoner stands in the midst of great pomp and magnificence and desires for his august judges that they might be just as he himself is, save for his bonds! As the angels looked down on that sight they saw an heir of everlasting and supernal glory standing before potsherds of the earth robed for a brief moment in tawdry display. Paul knew that, and that there was nothing better for any man than to be almost and altogether such as he was.

This closed the session. Paul had the last word; and we rejoice to note how, filled with the Holy Ghost, he is standing in the full height of the great calling that had reached him—the calling that has reached us too.

Once more also is his innocence declared by competent authority. Had he not appealed to Caesar he might have been free.

F. B. HOLE.

What though to-day
Thou canst not trace at all the hidden reason
For His strange dealing through the trial season,
Trust and obey!
Though God's cloud-mystery enfold thee here,
In after life and light all shall be plain and clear.

GETTING AND GIVING.

Read 2 COR. 8: 1—9; 9: 5—15; HEB. 13: 16.

OUR practical Christian life may be divided into two chapters, entitled, "Getting" and "Giving." We begin by coming to the Saviour with empty hands, as needy recipients of His grace. But, though that is the initial attitude, it is not the only one that should mark the Christian through life. We have to think also of **giving**.

Many times during past years have I heard this question raised: "How is it that we do not make more progress in our Christian life?" Do not scriptures like those cited at the head of this article supply us with an answer? They show us that one great reason why we do not get on is that we do not **give out**. We are too much like the Dead Sea, into which water continually runs, but out of which it never flows.

First of all let us notice that giving is not a matter of charity. In the passage from the Old Testament, quoted in 2 Corinthians 9: 9, we read,

"He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor; his righteousness [not his charity, **his righteousness**] remaineth for ever." That expression clearly shows that for a Christian to **give** is not in any sense a matter of charity, but of common and ordinary righteousness. The fact is that God has poured in so much upon us, that it is only righteous that we should be dispensers of blessing to others. Further, in verse 10, the apostle speaks, not of increasing the fruits of their benevolence, charity, or largeness of heart, but of their righteousness. We must learn to regard the matter of giving as something that we are responsible to do, so that if we neglect it, we neglect that which is a matter of plain righteousness.

Taking the eighth and ninth chapters of 2 Corinthians in their context, they have reference to money. It had become notorious throughout the Gentile-speaking Churches that the believers in Judea were in great affliction. Famine had struck that portion of the earth's surface, as had been predicted (see Acts 11: 27, 28). The apostle Paul stirred up the believers in the Gentile assemblies, who had received so much spiritual blessing through the ministry of those who were nationally Jews, to minister temporal relief to their afflicted brethren in Judea. The whole of these two chapters is taken up with that matter. But the principle of it applies to much beside.

Now the Macedonian Christians, amongst whom were the Philippians, had become shining ex-

amples of Christian giving, and the apostle makes use of that fact to stir up the Corinthians. The Corinthians had gifts of a more showy order, but Christians of this sort are not always those who wear best. Apparently the Philippians, of whom we read no such striking things in regard to their richness of utterance, or the way in which they spoke with unknown tongues, were men who, when the test came, answered to it. Judging from the epistle written to them, things were very bright in the assembly, but there was persecution from without. To the Corinthians the apostle says in effect, "Now I want you to stop these senseless wranglings, this setting up of one man against another, and turning your teachers, pastors, and evangelists into leaders of parties." To the Philippians he says, "I want you to be encouraged, to strive together with one heart for the faith of the gospel, boldly confronting your enemies, knowing this, that the very fact that they are your enemies means that they will ultimately be destroyed, and you vindicated." Thus they were Christians who, though persecuted and having but little of earth, had a great grasp of the realities of eternity, and the result was that in the joy of the Father's love, the Saviour's grace, the Spirit's presence, and the imminent return of the Lord, they put their money into the collection in a most astonishing way. The apostle says, "Beyond their power, they were willing of themselves." Nobody had to refresh their memories. They were praying with much entreaty that Paul would receive the gift. It was as though Paul

said to them, "My dear brethren, I really think you are giving too much. Are you prepared to give all this?" Yet the Philippians insisted and pressed their gift on him. "This they did, not as we hoped." That means they did it in the way he hoped, and far beyond it.

It says, "They first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." This is very important: there is such a thing—or this verse would not be in Holy Scripture—as **giving your own self to the Lord**. You may say, "How?" By the true, the prayerful, the honest recognition of the claim that has been established over you by the Lord Himself. That claim has been established and it is a great thing to recognize it. If I confess that I myself am the Lord's, that necessarily carries with it all the rest. You see these Philippians did not give a tenth of their income, and leave the remaining nine-tenths to themselves, nor did they even say, "I will give nine-tenths," but they said, "I will give myself to the Lord. I am His bondman. I am under His directions." Then it follows that all I possess is the Lord's. Here we get the true beginning. "They first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." They recognised they were wholly at the Lord's disposal, and therefore their money, their time, their opportunities, their gifts were all at the Lord's disposal.

Now I would like us to challenge ourselves as to whether that is the way we look at things. You

may say, "What will help us to look at things like that?" Well in chapter 8 we have a well-known verse: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." That beautiful verse, sparkling like a diamond, is set in what at first might appear dull and uninteresting surroundings. These two chapters deal with a prosaic subject, a subject that sometimes we conveniently forget.

"Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." This seems to me a tremendous lever. It is wonderful what can be done with a lever in mechanical matters; so also in grace. It would do everyone of us good to meditate much on the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Though He was rich." When was He rich? Not when He ministered among men. Not when He was brought up in the quiet home at Nazareth, not when He was born at Bethlehem, and cradled in a manger. When was He rich? For an answer we must travel back into the depths of the Godhead. "Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor." Just as it is impossible to measure the wealth of His riches, so it is impossible to measure the depth of His poverty. And He became poor that we through His poverty might be enriched with blessings that are infinite. We read the Bible with its wonderful statements, but we often fail to see the marvellous meaning there is in them. But it is in the power of these things that

we can give ourselves to the Lord. No wonder that the apostle says in the end of the next chapter, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."

That is what we have **received**. Now we have to be givers. To do good and to communicate forget not. That is to hand on to others that which you have, to communicate a little money to a poor brother, or a little cheer to one who is downcast, or a little bit of gospel to a sinner. With such sacrifices God is well pleased. Have we forgotten it? I believe we have. You may ask, "In what way?" Well, one thing I believe is that we Christians in Britain and America suffer from fullness of bread, from over-feeding. When one goes to places abroad, somehow these things seem to be borne upon one's spirit. These favoured lands are looked upon by the Christians in other countries almost with reverence. In their eyes they are wonderful places, places from which so many missionaries have gone out, but when one thinks of the actual condition of these countries religiously, with their vast number of factions warring against each other, one can only blush! One asks one's self, What has been the matter with us? I verily believe that the matter is that we have thought too much of getting, and too little of giving.

Mark this, as you **give**, you **reap**. The apostle seems to say to the Corinthians, "You have said fine things about the great collection you are going to make, and while the Philippians have done it,

you are still in the talking stage. I have thought it wise to send some of my brethren in advance. Don't you think it is time the thing crystallized into something definite?" The apostle sent on some brethren, so that all might be ready. He says, "I want it ready as a matter of bounty, not as of covetousness. I do not want to come down and drag the money out of your pockets. I want you to present it cheerfully and bountifully to the Lord. If you sow bountifully, you will reap bountifully." It does not mean that if a man puts a pound into the collection box, he will necessarily reap five pounds, or indeed reap any pounds at all. It means that when we are prepared to sacrifice ourselves for the welfare of the people of God, for the progress of the work of God, for the help of the service of God, **God is prepared to allow us to reap blessing in our own souls.**

A great many Christians to-day are starving spiritually. They attend meetings, they listen to beautiful expositions of Scripture, they enjoy Bible talks, and when they go home all evaporates. Like the mirage of the desert, their impressions disappear, and they go on year by year without growing. I believe it is because they have not been exercised about this. "He that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly." He who is of a stingy spirit, who does not open his heart and hand, will reap in small measure. God always takes into account what a man has, and not what he has not; but let him give something, and out of his sowing there shall be a harvest.

Would to God that by all of us there might be some very rich sowing. We live surrounded by privileges unknown in other lands. What would they not give for some of you to go and live out there in the lands of pagan or Romish darkness! I mean going out and living there for Christ, and using the little bit you have for Him. When we think of what the gospel really is and its wealth, and when we consider the appalling need, we ought everyone of us to be on our faces before God, remembering that the Christian is not only a great receiver of all heaven's bounty, but he is the transmitter of it. He is not only the getter, but the giver.

HANNAH'S PRAYER

THE first book of Samuel opens with the brief history of a godly man called Elkanah, who lived in the time of the Judges. His lot was cast in a day of ruin as to God's people generally, and the priesthood particularly. But this did not deter him from fulfilling the Word of God. He "went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the Lord of hosts in Shiloh." Mention is made of his family; he had two wives, Hannah and Penninah. The latter had children; the former none. These details are noticed to bring before us the peculiar circumstances of Samuel's birth.

God had been pleased to deny Hannah the blessing of motherhood, to show her, we doubt not, that His intervention on behalf of His people, at a moment of crisis, would not be **by way of the flesh**, but **by the exercise of faith**. She had to learn that God would perfect His strength in her weakness. Hence she said, "by strength shall no man prevail." This she learned in the fiery trial of faith.

But, in the trial, she had recourse to God in prayer. "She was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore." "She spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard." It was an unexpressed prayer, like that described by Montgomery:

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed,
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast."

With her it was not a matter of simply **saying a prayer**, but of **genuinely praying**. There is all the difference. It is possible to express a desire and not feel it; on the other hand, to feel a desire and not express it. It is possible to pray "out of the abundance of words;" on the other hand, "out of the abundance of grief." She said, "out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken." This was genuine prayer that reached God's ear and brought His answer.

Another mark of its genuineness was her con-

tinuance in it. She was importunate before God. She knew He would answer, and waited on Him for the answer. How different is this from mere formal prayer. One may formally ask God for something, without feeling any particular and pressing need of the thing that one asks; and when God remain silent, and withholds the answer, then one makes **no further petition to Him**. This is not faith; it is mere formality. When one asks God for anything in faith, one waits for the answer, **and continues asking till one gets it**. God has pledged Himself to answer such as pray to Him **in this way**. He will answer them that "cry **day and night** unto Him" (Luke 18: 7). We may be sure God will always test our sincerity when we pray.

Hannah's faith was tested; after that God gave His answer. And after she received His answer, her prayer gave place to praise. Her bitterness of soul was gone; the weight upon her spirit removed, her tongue set free; and an outflow of praise ascended from her heart to God. Then she spoke to Him in easy-flowing strains: "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord; mine horn is exalted in the Lord; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in Thy salvation." In normal Christian experience praise follows prayer. We may be sure, therefore, that if we begin with prayer, we shall end with praise. In the prayer we may be grieved and sorrowful, but in the praise we shall be exultant with joy. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the

morning. God gives His people "the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

But God did not allow Hannah to pass through trial, in order that she might simply get an answer to her prayer in the gift of children; He intended her to learn important lessons of Himself, such as she could never have learned in any other way. What we get by experience is ever our own. It is never forgotten.

She learned that **He was holy**. Hence He was far from the evil that brought dishonour to His name. The state of the people, and particularly that of the priesthood, was appalling. One could scarcely conceive a state of things more unholy, than that depicted in the closing chapters of the book of Judges, and that witnessed in the conduct of Eli's sons, the Lord's priests. Evidently the sense of God's holiness was totally lost. And Hannah, living when all this was enacted, witnessing it in all its shame, learned the true character of God.

She learned too that **He was a rock**. So that in her trial she found in Him all her support. Her lot was cast in trying circumstances: in the home her adversary sorely tempted her; in the temple, the appointed place of worship, the priests caused God's people to stumble by reason of their wickedness; in the nation at large, evil was rampant. She had nothing in which she could place confidence, save in **God, her rock**.

Moreover she learned that He was a **God of knowledge**, and **by Him actions are weighed**. The general feeling in her day was just the opposite. It looked as if God did not take notice of the happenings; that man, therefore, bent on evil, could sin with impunity. Under this mistaken conception, as to God's attitude towards evil, sin assumes a loose rein. If God takes no notice of evil, and requires no account thereof, why exercise restraint? This is the plausible argument by which the devil deceives evildoers. But faith knows, and Hannah knew, God does take cognizance of all that is going on in the world, and will require an account of it all in due time.

Now it is such a God that acts in **power**, not only killing—man can do that easily enough—but raising from the dead. He also acts in **grace** keeping the feet of His saints in all generations, acting on behalf of the poor who are down-trodden on earth. Yea, "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust." They are His special care, for they have all their hope in Him. His strong arm acts on their behalf. Hannah experienced it, and so may we.

Her song of praise reaches its climax when she makes mention of God's Anointed. "He shall give strength unto His King, and exalt the horn of His Anointed." In point of fact, there was no king in Israel in Hannah's day. Her faith, however, looked on to the time when there

would be one. Then God's suffering and afflicted people would be finally delivered from all their enemies, and reign in glory with Him. This is the first mention of God's Anointed in Scripture and His exaltation is the hope of His people. Hannah, a striking representative of the spared remnant, when nothing remained as to national testimony, had this experience of God, in delivering power, as to her circumstances of trial, and this sure hope in Him as to the establishment of His kingdom in power and glory. May we have the same.

(Notes of an address.)

OUR SCRIPTURE PORTION

(ACTS 27: 1 — 28: 31).

This outline of Acts is brief and condensed. Except the above passage of Scripture be read, it is hardly likely that these notes will prove to be of real interest or profit.

WHILE at Ephesus Paul had "purposed in the spirit" saying, "I must also see Rome" (19: 21); and, what is more important still, it was the Lord's purpose for him—"so must thou also bear witness at Rome" (23: 11). We have just been tracing God's ways behind the scenes bringing to pass that "it was determined that we should sail into Italy." Again Luke uses "we," showing that he was now again a companion of Paul as they started on this journey, which was

to be so full of disaster, and yet have so miraculous an ending.

Looking at second causes, Paul might have bitterly regretted his appeal to Caesar, when Agrippa declared that but for it he might have been set at liberty. Looking to God, all was clear, and Paul with other prisoners started on the voyage. Yet though the journey was thus ordered of God, it did not follow that everything moved with ease and smoothness. The very opposite; for it is put on record from the beginning that "the winds were contrary" (v. 4). The fact that circumstances are against us is no proof that we are out of the way of God's will, nor do favouring circumstances necessarily mean that we are in the way of His will. We cannot safely deduce from circumstances what may or may not be His will for us.

Circumstances continued contrary and progress was tedious, "the wind not suffering us" (v. 7), and the dangerous time of year arrived when it was customary to suspend voyages in some safe harbour. The place called Fair Havens was reached, which in spite of its name was not a suitable spot, and here a conflict of opinion developed. The skipper was desirous of reaching Phenice, while Paul counselled that they were about to run into disaster and loss, not only for ship and cargo but also to their lives. The Roman centurion, in charge of the party of prisoners, held the casting vote, and having

listened to the voice of worldly wisdom and nautical skill on the one hand, and that of spiritual understanding on the other, he decided in favour of the advice of the skipper.

Any ordinary person, without a doubt, would have decided as did the centurion; and when suddenly the wind veered and blew gently from the south, it looked as though God was favouring the centurion's decision. But again we see that circumstances furnish no true guidance; for they set sail only to be caught in the dreaded Euroclydon, which upset all their plans. They proceeded by sight and not by faith, and all ended in disaster. They took all possible measures to work out their own salvation, but without effect, so that ultimately all hope was abandoned. It is easy to see that all this may be effectively used as a kind of allegory; representing the soul's struggles for deliverance, whether from the guilt or the power of sin. Nothing was right until God intervened, first by **His word** through Paul, and then by **His power** in the final shipwreck.

It was when they were nearly starved and quite hopeless that the angel of God appeared to Paul. Nearly a fortnight had passed since the storm began, and until this point Paul had not had anything authoritative to say. But now the word of God had reached him, stating that he must appear before Caesar, and that he and all sailing with him were to be saved. God having spoken

Paul could speak with authority and the utmost assurance. After a fortnight's tossing on the wild seas the feeling of one and all must have been deplorable and depressing. But what had feelings to do with the matter? **God had spoken**, and Paul's attitude was, "I believe God," in spite of all the feelings in the world.

All the probabilities of the situation also would have given a negative to what the angel had said. That a small sailing vessel, packed with 276 people, should be wrecked and destroyed, in days when there were no friendly lifeboats, and yet every one of the 276 be saved, was so highly improbable as to be pronounced impossible. But God had said it, so Paul laughed at the impossibility and said, "It shall be done." Moreover so strong was his faith that not only did he say this in his heart but he also said it aloud in the way of testimony to the other 275 people on board. His exact words were, "It shall be even as it was told me." The salvation of all had not yet happened, but he was as sure of it as if it had.

Faith has very simply been defined as "Believing what God says, because God says it," and this is well supported by Paul's words, "I believe God." In this case **feelings, reason, experience**, the **probabilities** of the situation, all would have contradicted the Divine statement, but faith accepted what God said, though all else denied it. Faith in our hearts will speak in just the same way. The Divine testimony to us deals

with matters far greater than a salvation for time only, and it reaches us not from the mouth of an angel but through the holy and inspired Writings, which we now have in print in our own tongue; but our reception of it is to be equally definite. We simply believe God, and thus set to our seal that God is true.

Verses 34-36 show us that Paul's attitude and actions corroborated his brave words of faith. Thus we see him exemplifying what James so stresses in his epistle: faith, if it is alive, must express itself in works. If, having uttered words of faith, he had remained depressed and dejected like the rest, no one would have paid much attention to his words. But rather, having announced words of good cheer, he was himself most evidently of good cheer. He gave thanks to God, he partook of food, and exhorted the others to do the same. His works thus attesting the reality of his faith, all were impressed by it. They too were of good cheer and took food. As yet the circumstances were not altered, but they were altered as the confidence of faith found a place in their hearts, for it furnished them with "the substantiating of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11: 1. N. Trans.). The whole episode is an excellent illustration of what faith is and how faith works.

It illustrates also how faith is vindicated. God was as good as His word, and every soul was saved. His promise was fulfilled literally and ex-

actly, and not approximately and with tolerable accuracy, as is so common amongst men. We may take Him at His word with absolute certainty. Yet this does not mean that we can become fatalistic, and ignore ordinary measures of prudence. This also is illustrated in our story. After Paul had announced that all should be saved, he did not permit the sailors to flee out of the ship, since their presence was needed; and later, when all had eaten enough, they lightened the ship still further by casting the wheat into the sea. They did not fold their arms and do nothing as fatalism would have decreed, but took the ordinary measures of prudence, while trusting in God's word. The ending was really miraculous. In one way or another all were saved.

We still see the protecting hand of God stretched over Paul and his companions when they had landed on Malta. Though the inhabitants were "barbarians" according to Roman thoughts, they showed exceptional kindness to the shipwrecked party, and things were so over-ruled that they soon discovered that one of the shipwrecked visitors was no ordinary person. Paul was busily engaged, doing what he could to help, when a viper fastened itself on his hand. The superstitious islanders placed their interpretation on this, but when the expected did not follow they changed their minds, jumping to the opposite conclusion. Superstition never comes to right conclusions. To Paul doubtless it was a very minor happening, seeing he had been through the long

list of adventures which he catalogued in 2 Corinthians 11: 23-28. And when he wrote that list it was still unfinished. He had not, for instance, been through the shipwreck of which we have been reading. He had been shipwrecked three times before this happened. There are not many who have survived four shipwrecks, we venture to think, even if professional sailors, which he was not.

The chief man of the island taking a kindly interest in them in their need, Paul was enabled to repay him by prayer and the healing of his father. We do not read of any testimony that Paul rendered, yet his praying must have shown to all that the healing power he wielded was not his own but connected with God. The islanders, finding that the power of God was in their midst, were not slow to seek it for their bodies, and seeking they found it. All this, in the providence of God, led to a time of comfort after the fortnight of terrible testing, and even to a time of honour, and this lasted for three months. The Apostle has put on record, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound" (Phil. 4: 12). These three months proved to be a time of abounding.

The same might be said of the rest of the journey, when it was resumed. All went favourably and arriving at Puteoli, and finding brethren there who begged Paul might be with them for a week, the visit was happily arranged. By this time evidently the centurion in charge had taken

the measure of his prisoners, and was disposed to accord him remarkable liberty. On the overland journey too, brethren came to meet him, having heard of his approach, and this was a great cheer to Paul. Spiritual man though he was, and thoroughly in touch with God and dependent upon Him, he was not above thanking God and taking courage from the love and fellowship of saints, whose spiritual stature may have been much beneath his own. It is striking to see this, and very encouraging for us. Let us be very careful not to despise, or even underestimate the value of the fellowship of saints.

Thus Paul arrived at Rome. His circumstances were very different to those that he had visualized when he wrote in advance of what he purposed to do (see Romans 15: 22-32), but he **did** come to them with a certain measure of joy by the will of God, and he **was** marked by "the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ." God's hand was still over him, for though a prisoner he was permitted to dwell by himself under guard, and this gave him a measure of liberty for service and testimony.

Only three days after his arrival he was able to call together the chief of the Jewish colony in Rome and lay something of his case before them. He made it plain that he had no wish to be an accuser of his nation, but that his whole offence in Jewish eyes was connected with the "hope of

Israel;" that is, the long promised Messiah. The Jews on their part professed ignorance of his case, but they knew of the Christ whom Paul preached, and to be a Christian meant to them belonging to a "sect . . everywhere . . spoken against." **Every where**, be it noted; not only amongst the Jews but amongst Gentiles also. Genuine Christianity never has been popular, and never will be. It cuts too deeply across the grain of human nature.

Still they professed a desire to hear what Paul had to say; and so a day being fixed, many came, and for a whole day he was able to expound and testify and persuade. His theme was the kingdom of God and Jesus, as the One in whom that kingdom is centred and established; and all that he had to say was based upon the law of Moses and the prophets, for there all had been typified and foretold. The three verbs are worthy of note. First he **expounded** the Sacred Writings, showing what they had to say and making their force plain. Then he **testified** of Jesus, relating doubtless what he knew personally of His glory in heaven, and showing how exactly He had fulfilled all that the Scriptures had said concerning His advent in humiliation. Lastly he set himself to **persuade** his hearers of the truth of all he advanced. Paul did not preach what has been called a "take it or leave it" Gospel, but laboured with loving zeal to reach the hearts of those who listened, and secure a response in faith from them. Let us see that we imitate him in this, for we have to remember that though nothing short of the

working of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men is effectual, the Spirit is frequently pleased to work through the persuasiveness of servants of God, who are filled with love and zeal.

It was so in this case. The record here is that while some remained in unbelief, "some believed the things which were spoken." When the Word is preached it is nearly always thus. Only in the Acts—when Peter preached to Cornelius—do we find everybody converted; but that is not the usual thing, for at the present moment God is calling an election out from both Jew and Gentile.

To the unbelieving Jews, ere they departed, Paul spoke a final word, quoting the passage from Isaiah 6, which the Lord Himself quoted in Matthew 13, and John quotes in chapter 12 of his Gospel. This sad and terrible process of hardening and spiritual death had set in even in the days of Isaiah some seven centuries before Christ. It was far more pronounced when Christ was on earth; and now the final stage was reached. Paul pronounced these words, realizing that during this Gospel age Israel's day as a nation was over. Nationally they are blinded and without understanding in the things of God, though very acute as to the things of the world. This does not of course conflict with the fact that God is still calling out a remnant according to the election of grace, as Romans 11 states.

It is worthy of note that in quoting this pas-

sage Paul says, "Well spake **the Holy Ghost.**" If we turn to Isaiah 6, we find the prophet saying in regard to this message, "Also I heard the voice of the Lord," referring to **Jehovah of Hosts**; and turning to John 12, we find the comment, "These things said Esaias, when he saw **His** glory, and spake of **Him**," and we have only to look at the preceding verses to discover that the "His" and "Him" refer to **Jesus**. How plain it is then that Jehovah of hosts is to be identified with both Jesus and the Holy Ghost—three Persons, yet one God.

Verse 28 gives us the last words of Paul, as recorded in the Acts. They are very significant, as giving us the point to which the book has conducted us. He proclaims as a definite message from God that His salvation is now sent to the Gentiles as the result of the blindness and hardness of the Jew; and he adds "they will hear it." This does not mean that all of them will do so, but rather that in contra-distinction from the Jew, a hearing ear is going to be found there. This, thank God! has proved true throughout the centuries.

When the Lord spoke to the Syro-Phenician woman about the children and the dogs, the poor woman, seeing the point, took the place of being but a Gentile dog, and yet claimed that God was good enough to permit that there should be some crumbs of mercy for her. She was right: the Lord called her faith great and honoured it by granting her desire. But here we find something more won-

derful still. The children having despised and rejected the good things provided, not the crumbs merely but the whole meal is sent to the dogs. As Paul himself puts it in Romans II, "the fall of them" is "the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles. . . .the casting away of them . . the reconciling of the world." This does not mean that all the world is definitely reconciled, but that God has now turned in favour towards the world, offering His salvation to all men.

Paul was still a prisoner, yet he was allowed to hire a house and dwell there and receive all who wished to see him. Thus he had opportunities for testimony, and the word of God was not bound. As far as this book is concerned we take leave of him spending two whole years preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ without any restraint. His trial was delayed in the providence of God, and a door of utterance was thus opened to him. During this time Onesimus was converted and doubtless others also; some of his Epistles also were written.

Closing the Acts, we finish apostolic **history**: passing to Romans we begin apostolic **doctrine**. It is the doctrine which enables us to understand the **significance** of the history; while the history enables us to appreciate the **authority** and **weight** of the doctrine.