



ROCK OF AGES
Other foundation can
no man lay—
A RANSOM FOR ALL

"Watchman, What of the Night?
The Morning Cometh, and a Night also!"—Isaiah

VOL. XLI

SEMI-MONTHLY

No. 6

Anno Mundi 6048—March 15, 1920

CONTENTS

The Uses of Adversity.....	83
Fire Adds Texture and Charm	83
Opposition from the World.....	84
"Hereunto were ye Called".....	85
Bruits from the Brethren.....	86
Chastisements from God	86
Divine Comfort and Encouragement	87
Rejoice Evermore.....	88
Rejoice in Providence	89
Rejoice in Tribulation	90
Rejoice in Hope	91
Victory of Gideon's Band	92
Gideon's Courage Manifested	92
Ruth's Wise Choice.....	94
Moves not always Beneficial	94
Two Beautiful Characters	94

"I will stand upon my watch, and will set my foot
upon the Tower, and will watch to see what He will
say unto me, and what answer I shall make to them
that oppose me."—Habakkuk 1:2.

© WTB&TS

Upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves (the restless, discontented) roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking
to the things coming upon the earth (society); for the powers of the heavens (ecclesiasticalism) shall be shaken. When ye see these things begin to come to pass,
then know that the Kingdom of God is at hand. Look up, lift up your heads, rejoice, for your redemption draweth nigh.—Matthew 24:33; Mark 13:29; Luke 21:26-31

THIS JOURNAL AND ITS SACRED MISSION

This journal is one of the prime factors or instruments in the system of Bible instruction, or "Seminary Extension", now being presented in all parts of the civilized world by the WATCH TOWER BIBLE & TRACT SOCIETY, chartered A. D. 1884, "For the Promotion of Christian Knowledge". It not only serves as a class room where Bible students may meet in the study of the divine Word but also as a channel of communication through which they may be reached with announcements of the Society's conventions and of the coming of its traveling representatives, styled "Pilgrims", and refreshed with reports of its conventions.

Our "Berean Lessons" are topical rehearsals or reviews of our Society's published STUDIES most entertainingly arranged, and very helpful to all who would merit the only honorary degree which the Society accords, viz., *Verbi Dei Minister* (V. D. M.), which translated into English is *Minister of God's Word*. Our treatment of the International Sunday School Lessons is specially for the older Bible students and teachers. By some this feature is considered indispensable.

This journal stands firmly for the defense of the only true foundation of the Christian's hope now being so generally repudiated—redemption through the precious blood of "the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom [a corresponding price, a substitute] for all". (1 Peter 1:19; 1 Timothy 2:6) Building up on this sure foundation the gold, silver and precious stones (1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Peter 1:5-11) of the Word of God, its further mission is to "make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery which . . . has been hid in God, . . . to the intent that now might be made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God"—"which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men as it is now revealed".—Ephesians 3:5-9, 10.

It stands free from all parties, sects and creeds of men, while it seeks more and more to bring its every utterance into fullest subjection to the will of God in Christ, as expressed in the holy Scriptures. It is thus free to declare boldly whatsoever the Lord hath spoken—according to the divine wisdom granted unto us to understand his utterances. Its attitude is not dogmatic, but confident; for we know whereof we affirm, treading with implicit faith upon the sure promises of God. It is held as a trust, to be used only in his service; hence our decisions relative to what may and what may not appear in its columns must be according to our judgment of his good pleasure, the teaching of his Word, for the upbuilding of his people in grace and knowledge. And we not only invite but urge our readers to prove all its utterances by the infallible Word to which reference is constantly made to facilitate such testing.

TO US THE SCRIPTURES CLEARLY TEACH

That the church is "the temple of the living God", peculiarly "his workmanship"; that its construction has been in progress throughout the gospel age—ever since Christ became the world's Redeemer and the Chief Corner Stone of his temple, through which, when finished, God's blessing shall come "to all people", and they find access to him.—1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; Ephesians 2:20-22; Genesis 28:14; Galatians 3:29.

That meantime the chiseling, shaping, and polishing of consecrated believers in Christ's atonement for sin, progresses; and when the last of these "living stones", "elect and precious," shall have been made ready, the great Master Workman will bring all together in the first resurrection; and the temple shall be filled with his glory, and be the meeting place between God and men throughout the Millennium.—Revelation 15:5-8.

That the basis of hope, for the church and the world, lies in the fact that "Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man," "a ransom for all," and will be "the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world", "in due time".—Hebrews 2:9; John 1:9; 1 Timothy 2:5, 6.

That the hope of the church is that she may be like her Lord, "see him as he is," be "partakers of the divine nature," and share his glory as his joint-heir.—1 John 3:2; John 17:24; Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4.

That the present mission of the church is the perfecting of the saints for the future work of service; to develop in herself every grace; to be God's witness to the world; and to prepare to be kings and priests in the next age.—Ephesians 4:12; Matthew 24:14; Revelation 1:6; 20:6.

That the hope for the world lies in the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to all by Christ's Millennial kingdom, the restitution of all that was lost in Adam, to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified church, when all the wilfully wicked will be destroyed.—Acts 3:19-23; Isaiah 35.

PUBLISHED BY

WATCH TOWER BIBLE & TRACT SOCIETY

124 COLUMBIA HEIGHTS □ □ BROOKLYN, N.Y., U.S.A.

FOREIGN OFFICES: *British Branch*: 34 Craven Terrace, Lancaster Gate, London W. 2; *Australasian Branch*: 495 Collins St., Melbourne, Australia; *South African Branch*: 123 Plein St., Cape Town, South Africa.

PLEASE ADDRESS THE SOCIETY IN EVERY CASE

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION PRICE \$1.00 IN ADVANCE
CANADIAN AND FOREIGN SUBSCRIPTION PRICE \$1.50

SEND MONEY BY EXPRESS OR POSTAL ORDER, OR BY BANK DRAFT
FROM FOREIGN COUNTRIES BY INTERNATIONAL POSTAL ORDERS ONLY
(Foreign translations of this journal appear in several languages)

Editorial Committee: This journal is published under the supervision of an editorial committee, at least three of whom have read and approved as truth each and every article appearing in these columns. The names of the editorial committee are: J. F. RUTHERFORD, W. E. VAN AMBURGH, F. H. ROBISON, G. H. FISHER, W. E. PAGE.

Terms to the Lord's Poor: All Bible students who, by reason of old age or other infirmity or adversity, are unable to pay for this journal, will be supplied free if they send a postal card each May stating their case and requesting such provision. We are not only willing, but anxious, that all such be on our list continually and in touch with the Berean studies.

Notice to Subscribers: We do not, as a rule, send a card of acknowledgment for a renewal or for a new subscription. Receipt and entry of renewal are indicated within a month by change in expiration date, as shown on wrapper label.

Entered as Second Class Matter at Brooklyn, N.Y., Postoffice under the Act of March 3rd, 1879.

NEW YORK MEMORIAL CONVENTION

A three-day convention, April 2, 3, and 4, will be held in the Sixty-third Street Music Hall. This building was formerly the New York City Temple, where the Photo-Drama of Creation was first shown to the public. Brother Rutherford and several Pilgrim brethren are expected to address the convention.

The Music Hall is reached by taking the West Side subway (commonly called Seventh Avenue subway) local train to Columbus Circle, then by walking a short distance north to Sixty-third Street, then west on that street a very short distance to the convention place.

The convention Auditorium will be open at 9 a.m., Friday April 2. All visiting friends will kindly come direct to the convention building, where they will receive assignment of rooms. Memorial service will be held on Friday evening. The Sunday afternoon meeting will be for the public.

All correspondence regarding the convention should be addressed to the Convention Committee, T. M. Bedwin, Sec'y, 124 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, N.Y.

N.B. Do not confuse this convention with the public meeting to be held in the New York Hippodrome on March 21.

BOOKLET ON "TALKING WITH THE DEAD ???"

Contains just the information needed at this time. It is presented in fairness to those who do not accept the Bible view on this subject; but it is at the same time convincing for the Bible view. Mandarin Sunburst, embossed, overhanging cover, very attractive; 160 pages; single copies 50c each, postpaid; lots of 50 at 25c each, carriage collect.

STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES

These STUDIES are recommended to students as veritable Bible keys, discussing topically every vital doctrine of the Bible. More than eleven million copies are in circulation, in nineteen languages. Prices are net, postpaid, and barely cover cost of production and handling. Two sizes are issued (in English only): the regular maroon cloth, gold stamped edition on dull finish paper (size 5" x 7 1/4"), and the maroon cloth pocket edition on thin paper (size 4" x 6 1/2"); both sizes are printed from the same plates, the difference being in the margins; both sizes are provided with an appendix of catechistic questions for convenient class use. Prices for both editions are uniform. The leather bound and fine India paper editions formerly issued are permanently out of stock.

SERIES I, "The Divine Plan of the Ages," giving outline of the divine plan revealed in the Bible, relating to man's redemption and restitution: 350 pages, plus indexes and appendices. 75c. Magazine edition 15c. Also procurable in Arabic, Armenian, Dano-Norwegian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hollandish, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Roumanian, Slovak, Spanish, Swedish, and Ukrainian; regular cloth style, price uniform with English.

SERIES II, "The Time is at Hand," treats of the manner and time of the Lord's second coming, considering the Bible testimony on this subject: 366 pages, 75c. Obtainable in Dano-Norwegian, Finnish, German, Polish, and Swedish.

SERIES III, "Thy Kingdom Come," considers prophecies which mark events connected with "the time of the end", the glorification of the church and the establishment of the Millennial kingdom; it also contains a chapter on the Great Pyramid of Egypt, showing its corroboration of certain Bible teachings: 380 pages, 75c. Furnished also in Dano-Norwegian, Finnish, German, Polish, and Swedish.

SERIES IV, "The Battle of Armageddon," shows that the dissolution of the present order of things is in progress and that all of the human panaceas offered are valueless to avert the end predicted by the Bible. It contains a special and extended treatise on our Lord's great prophecy of Matthew 24 and also that of Zechariah 14:1-9: 656 pages, 85c. Also in Dano-Norwegian, Finnish, Greek, German, and Swedish.

SERIES V, "The Atonement Between God and Man," treats an all important subject, the center around which all features of divine grace revolve. This topic deserves the most careful consideration on the part of all true Christians: 618 pages, 85c. Procurable likewise in Dano-Norwegian, Finnish, German, Greek, and Swedish.

SERIES VI, "The New Creation," deals with the creative week (Genesis 1,2), and with the church, God's new creation. It examines the personnel, organization, rites, ceremonies, obligations, and hopes appertaining to those called and accepted as members of the body of Christ: 730 pages, 85c. Supplied also in Dano-Norwegian, Finnish, German, and Swedish.

No foreign editions in the pocket size.

The WATCH TOWER

AND HERALD OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE

VOL. XLII

MARCH 15, 1920

No. 6

THE USES OF ADVERSITY

"It is good for me that I have been afflicted"—Psalm 119 71.

JESUS, our Savior, declared to his disciples: "It must needs be that offenses come" (Matthew 18: 7); and experience adds her own confirmatory word. Some one else has appropriately remarked: "Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament; adversity is the blessing of the New". Certain it is that the New Testament writings are full of references to the sufferings of Christ's followers, and even of himself it is written that "he learned obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5: 8), and that he was made "perfect through sufferings". (Hebrews 2: 10) In fact the whole tenor of the New Testament inculcates the principle of resignation under adverse conditions, and more. For the follower of the Lord Jesus must not be merely a passive sufferer, but a strenuous and persevering combatant against opposing forces.

We see how a certain beneficial operation of adversity is traceable even in other than Christian realms. Tourists who travel the shores of the Mediterranean Sea often express surprise at the tastelessness of the fishes served up for food. This flavorless quality is easily accounted for when one learns that the fish around the coast of Spain, Italy, Greece, and Asia Minor are for the most part caught in quiet lagoons or calm waters of protected bays and gulfs, where the demands on their energy are few and where the days pass in indolent quietude. How different is the life of battling with storm and tempest and chilly waves on the part of the creatures that live in the rough waters around the Orkneys, the Shetlands, and the Hebrides of Scotland! Fish caught there is always delicious.

FIRE ADDS TEXTURE AND CHARM

A very common looking brownish clay is taken as a basis for some of the finer pottery wares. It is fashioned into vases and painted by the artist, but it still looks lifeless and the colors crude and dead, if not really inharmonious. But it is then subjected to the fire until it rivals even the loveliest flowers in delicacy and beauty. The outline, the form, the elements, were all there; but the fire gave texture, durability, and charm. The best of pieces are more than once put in the fire and the value increases with each firing. So the Lord sends his children through repeated furnaces of affliction in order that their characters may attain a rare, a priceless perfection.

Troubles and afflictions are intended under the dispensation of divine grace to bring out the deeper capacities of the heart. Experiences which would deaden the calloused mind will develop consecration, richness, and devotion in the thoughtful. A cellist once came into

possession of a very fine instrument, but its tone lacked the depth necessary to make it heard in a music hall. When entering the stage for a performance he accidentally hit his instrument against a sharp corner, stoving in a part of the cover. Having no time to procure another one, he began his part and to his pleased surprise the cello gave forth the clear and resonant tone which he had longed for and all possibility of which he was sure he had destroyed by the unintended blow. Often it is so with the Lord's people, that, though they encounter unexpected experiences which threaten to be catastrophes, that which they thought would surely be their death has but made them *more* meet for the Master's use.

SELF-OPPOSITION REQUISITE

When we reflect on the conditions of discipleship laid down by our Lord we need not be surprised if certain adverse or unpleasant things be our portion. He said: "If any man will come after me, let him *deny* himself, and *take up his cross*, and follow me". (Matthew 16: 24) The very first step of the way is thus seen to be a self-imposed adversity against ourselves, and the narrow way never grows broad and easy. The Apostle Paul, who himself suffered so much of opposition, was comforting instead of discouraging the early church when he told them: "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God". (Acts 14: 22) A Christian without trouble is like a ship that has never weathered a storm; evidence of her seaworthiness is lacking. It has not been demonstrated just how much ballast is necessary to steady her.

The Wise Man says: "Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better". (Ecclesiastes 7: 3) There is a depth and melowness to the character produced by sorrow and suffering which can be produced in no other way. True, if troubles be brooded over unduly they tarnish and darken the life, but if, like a cleansing acid, the destructive influence be quickly removed and counteracted by the oil of the holy spirit, their uses are sweet and purifying and the sufferer emerges brighter than ever before.

The squash grows rapidly under the influence of sun and warm rain, but its texture is unable to withstand the rigors of frost and snow. On the other hand, the oak grows much more slowly but has a fiber which is imparted to it in large measure by the adversity of wind and cold. In making our consecration we have chosen the way which calls for the rugged and enduring grain.

Some kinds of adversity are chiefly of the character of *trial* and others of *discipline*. By discipline is to be

understood that which has a direct tendency to *produce* improvement or to create some quality that did not exist before; and by trial, anything which tends to *ascertain* what improvement has been made or what qualities exist. Both purposes may be served at once.

ADVERSITY FROM VARIOUS SOURCES

The adversity, opposition, hindrance, or resistance brought to bear against our Christian progress would seem to derive from five main sources: the devil, the world, the flesh, the brethren, and from the Lord Jehovah.

That from the devil is calculated to be antagonistic in both purpose and effect; opposite, hostile, and inimical to our best interests. The Apostle Peter describes him in these words: "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith". (1 Peter 5: 8, 9) His resistance to our Christian walk is to be met with a still stronger resistance on our part, and that not in our own strength and power, but by the power of faith, instructed, inspired, and sustained by God's Word.

His method of opposing does not always consist in direct endeavor to hinder our progress; but, since he is a deceiver, he attempts to cause delay by getting us interested in various other schemes and subjects than that most vital to us. In one place he is referred to as the "accuser of our brethren". (Revelation 12: 10) False accusations made against the brethren tend to hinder them by arousing their sense of justice. They are obliged to spend time and energy in resisting the desire to recompense the evil with evil, instead of committing their cause to him who judges righteously.—1 Pet. 2: 23.

We may safely assume that since the Lord has seen fit to allow us to be confronted with opposition from so malignant and crafty a foe as Satan he sees some good in it for us, and just that good it is which we wish to experience. There are several things which we can learn: by force of reverse example we may learn humility. Often it is that a child learns how disgusting it looks to be naughty by seeing the misbehavior of another; and such a lesson is more deeply impressed and more effective than all the oral precepts given by the parents—or rather the precepts previously given there have their first beneficial influence.

LESSONS IN SELF-CONTROL

With Satan as a foe we learn also self-control. It is written that Michael, great though he was, "when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee". (Jude 9) If we sometimes feel inclined to lambaste everybody and everything and to set everything right in the world, we can remember that God is still in heaven and that he will recompense every act in righteousness, regardless of whether the righteous way correspond with our present views or not. How often we would be filled with bitterest regret if the Lord always recompensed our opposers according to the mood in which we happened to be at the time of their offense.

Again, Satan's antagonism drives us to closer fellowship with God; for we realize that the devil is wiser and stronger than we. But abiding under the shadow

of the Almighty we can say: "If God be for us, who can be against us?"—Romans 8: 31.

One of the devil's chief methods is to dishearten and discourage us. He calls to our attention how many ideals, hopes, and wishes we have had in years past, only to awaken and find them wrong or false. He sets us wondering as to whether we could not be mistaken in this also. Is there a God at all? Has he interest in me?—But even experience battling such suggestions will be helpful in the next age when we are dealing with some who are inclined to doubt what they cannot see.

So even Satan who so persistently dogs the steps of the toiling saint, may be a means to a noble end, if we are rightly exercised by his antagonism.

OPPOSITION FROM THE WORLD

The resistance which the world offers to our progress is twofold: it may come from the secular world or from the religious world. Opposition from the world in a general sense consists in its being or acting in a contrary direction; opposed or opposing in position or course to the new creature.

From the secular wing of the world comes a passive opposition, as that of a fixed body which interrupts the passage of a moving body. The world has its ideas and ideals of life and these are said by the Scriptures to lie "in the wicked one". (1 John 5: 19) That is to say, Satan, the wicked one, rules in the hearts of men by pandering to and nourishing the spirit of selfishness. This spirit of self and the ideals and institutions it has generated are all firmly set and established in both the mind and the heart of the world. When the Lord's people, therefore, travel in an opposite direction they but naturally encounter the inertia represented in the world.

The Apostle James tells us that the "friendship of the world is enmity with God" (James 4: 4), and St. Paul warns us of the danger of being conformed to this world. (Romans 12: 2) The less we are conformed to the world the more will we be objects of the world's wonderment and disesteem. Oftentimes we learn our defects from adverse criticism which the world favors us with. The Lord has seen it to be not generally good for us to be too much with those who think just as we do. We mutually incline to overlook our own errors; though the brethren have enough of the world yet in their flesh to minimize this danger considerably. It must have been because he saw it to be the best way that the Master prayed the Father: "Not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil". (John 17: 15) The rolling, rubbing, scratching, battering received from the world were all foreseen by the wisest of fathers to be the best for his children—though that very process would at the same time sort out and shift to one side many who could not stand the rough treatment.

When criticized by the world we are not to take it for granted that they are always wrong, but we can well ascertain to what extent we are really at fault, and if we are convinced that it is not our fault then we should watch to see what lessons the Lord would have us learn in connection with our difficulties.

The lofty and superior attitude of the secular world should ripen humility and submissiveness in us and help

us to look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are eternal.

There are certain noble things in the world which may become hindrances to us. Friendships sometimes fall into this class.

"But can I love earth's ties so well,
As not to long with thee to dwell?"

In proportion to our faithfulness in the narrow way we are bound to drift further and further away from worldly friends and attachments. If we are faithfully walking after the spirit they will sooner or later drop us from intimate fellowship, as there will be small ground for intercourse. That some have had experiences of this kind is shown by the blood drops they have left behind them on the narrow way:

"Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
In his arms he'll take and shield thee,
Thou wilt find a solace there."

FROM THE RELIGIOUS QUARTER

Strange as it may seem, from the religious quarter of the world comes a more actively adverse influence. It is active as in the exertion of force to stop, repel, or defeat both our progress and our design. Concerning this adversity the Master, in conjunction with the Beloved Disciple, said: "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you". . . . "Ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." (1 John 3:13; John 15:18, 19) It was the Jewish religious world which was especially set against the work of the Master. The Romans and Greeks cared little one way or the other.

But though opposition be our portion from the religious world; though "affliction or persecution ariseth for the Word's sake" (Mark 4:17); though "bonds and afflictions await" us (Acts 20:23); though we be sent forth "as sheep among wolves"; though "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12); still we learn by that very method God's protecting care and how that "underneath are the everlasting arms". (Deuteronomy 33:27) "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me." (Psalm 138:7) May it not be true in our case as with the Israelites of old? "The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew."—Exodus 1:12.

"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake," because (1) such experiences place us in the class of the faithful prophets of old and of the apostles, who "rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5:41), and (2) they constitute a proof of our faithfulness up to that point; (3) we learn long-suffering, patience, tolerance, gentleness, and meekness by negative example; (4) we learn brotherly love by being drawn together toward those who are similarly used; (5) we are taught love even for our enemies, because we see how perverted are their minds and how thoroughly they are held in the toils of the great adversary.

"HEREUNTO WERE YE CALLED"

We learn meekness and fellowship with Christ from opposition from the world, as the Apostle Peter teaches us: "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye *do well*, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. *For even hereunto were ye called*: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."—1 Peter 2:18-23.

The opposition from the world whets our desire for eternal peace—"where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary be at rest".—Job 3:17.

Ornithologists assure us that the eagle, the condor, the albatross, and even the little dove, like many other birds that are strong on the wing, can fly more swiftly against the wind than in a gentle breeze. It may be that this is because they are stimulated to exert the muscular strength of their pinions. But, however this be, it is a fact that the fires of a steamship burn much more fiercely under the boilers when the vessel is going against a head-wind. The Christian's effort of the right kind is at its best when opposition is faced, for this very condition brings us into contact with the divine resources which are pledged to the help of the Lord's people. "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you."—Luke 6:26; John 17:14.

Adversity has attended every advance of the truth. All the various forward religious movements throughout this gospel age have been born and nurtured in opposition; and when the opposition stopped the progress stopped. It was not merely: 'Well, brethren, we have been making a mistake, now that we see it more clearly let us change our ways'. No, it has never been so simple as that; it meant contending for the faith against almost all odds, from the human standpoint. But "no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto".—1 Thessalonians 3:3.

RESISTANCE FROM THE FLESH

The resistance which the flesh offers is in the shape of opposing desires, which are contrary to the wishes or to the good of the new creature. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other." (Galatians 5:17) The electric wire is necessary to conduct the current to the point of use, but even the best of wires offers resistance to the current and mitigates its force and thus to a certain extent thwarts the very purpose for which it is intended. But this is not an unmixed evil, because the very principle of resistance can be so applied as to modulate or control the force of the current and thus bring it down to a point where it can be easily managed. So the divine energy of the holy spirit meets with resistance in our poor fleshly conductors. But here, too, it will serve the Lord's present purposes best, for if that holy power of truth found no modulating influence

in us we would give a well-nigh deadly shock upon first contact. But our poor rambling minds and our poor stammering lips proclaim God's message in such a way that whoever accepts it does so because of the message alone and not because of the wonderful power of the speaker. If angels came in shining garb to minister the truth, thousands might be attracted who would be unable to stand the subsequent tests necessary to prove them worthy for a place with Christ.

Through circumstances affecting the flesh we are at times "cast down—but not destroyed". Even such disheartened feeling, which arises as likely as not from an insufficient nervous vitality, is not without its uses. We are not likely to be proud or unsympathetic while in that condition. As the Apostle said of himself: "I take pleasure in infirmities . . . for when I am weak, then am I strong". (2 Corinthians 12:10) Trust and submission are thus learned to a degree otherwise impossible.

The flesh constitutes a means of testing our love of the truth, for in our brains are many natural and grievous prejudices. We must not allow our own preconceptions or prejudices to stand in the way of the truth, whatever it costs or however it hurts.

BRUNTS FROM THE BRETHREN

Yes, our closest friends and associates sometimes hinder us and the courage necessary to oppose these influences is greater than that required against outside forces, in that one's own feelings and the feelings of those held dear are involved. Nor does such courage often if ever call forth praise from any one. Even our Master found it necessary to say to Peter: "Thou art an offense unto me, for thou savorest not of the things that be of God, but those that be of men".—Matthew 16:23.

By seeing certain weaknesses in the flesh of others of like precious faith we learn consideration, lest, as they offend us, we might also be unconscious causes of offense to them. Sometimes hindering influences from the brethren come from underdevelopment or overdevelopment in some direction. They may come from a lack of sympathy or from too much sympathy or from sympathy unwisely applied. That there are differences which tend to bother us is made clear by the statement: "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak" (Romans 15:1); and again: "In meekness instructing those that set themselves in opposition". (2 Timothy 2:25) One brother talks too much, another brother has this or that fault—but we must bear in mind that this opposition from the brethren comes from their flesh and not really from their hearts.

We are admonished "lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble [us] and thereby many be defiled". (Hebrews 12:15) There must, therefore, be some way for us to draw benefit from those things which tend of themselves to engender roots of bitterness. In the first place we may learn humility of an extremely rare quality, when we try to make something right and our motives are misunderstood or misapplied. We go to a brother or a sister with whom we have had words and wish to apologize for our part, and they are thereby only confirmed in their belief that we were wholly wrong and they were wholly right. Otherwise why should we be coming there to explain anything if we did not now see

that they were right. The rebuff to our noble aims thus gained will pretty surely burn out anything of pride that might have been left.

From the brethren we learn the futility of looking to one another's faults to grow better. 'Comparing ourselves with ourselves we are not wise.' (2 Corinthians 10:12) No, it is not by looking, even with sympathetic eye, at the weaknesses of our brethren that we are changed from glory to glory but rather by "beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord".—2 Cor. 3:18.

PATIENCE AND GENEROSITY

Suppose a brother assumes a self-righteous attitude and says: No sir, I never did a thing like that and never would do it! We incline at once to say, Such a person is either a hypocrite or else has very poor judgment, for who knows exactly what he would do until confronted with all the circumstances. It seems that there is no good which we can get from such a brother. But wait and see: It is an adverse spirit first engendered in us by cock-sure righteousness, because it grates so upon our feelings of smoothness and truth. But by that very experience we can learn patience and generosity of thought which would never be possible under sweeter and more gentle influences. By reflection it teaches us lowliness of mind, because we wonder if we would do any better under all the same influences of birth, former experience, etc. Or it causes us to wonder if we have not some fault which is just as readily discernible to others and as little seen by us and to wonder amid it all how the Lord may view us and our efforts to please him.

Those people who are the most pleasant to us may not in the end prove to be those who have helped or developed us the most. We therefore should not be too assiduous in either seeking or rejecting the fellowship of those whom divine providence has thrown in our path. The direct result of some experiences may not be soothing, but in time it will be seen that strength has been imparted by them.

Well then, if offenses are of such good to the Lord's people why not turn to and cause all the difficulties we can? But no: "It must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh!" (Matthew 18:7) Not, however, a woe from us; it is not our affair to recompense evil with evil or hindrance with hindrance. The woes or difficulties upon those who offend us, as well as upon us if we offend others to their injury, will come from the Lord, who can judge and recompense wiser than we know how.

CHASTISEMENT FROM GOD

How rich a dowry sorrow gives the soul!

God, the great husbandman, sees sometimes best to plow the soil of our hearts with trouble that he may plant the seeds of a richer harvest in the fruits of the holy spirit. Ye "received the word in much affliction".—1 Thessalonians 1:6.

'Spare the rod and spoil the child' (Proverbs 13:24) is the principle on which the heavenly Parent deals with his children, though "in love and not in anger, all his chastening doth come". The slight hindrances put in our way by our loving Father are, though betimes painful, as surely for our good as the cauterizing stick is for

the poisoned finger. "Before I was afflicted I went astray."—Psalm 119: 67.

"In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity *consider*." (Ecclesiastes 7: 14) How often a spiritual stock-taking, revealing to us our real condition of heart, is the sequel brought on by adversity. Of course, in one sense, all adversity is from the Lord in that he allows it to transpire; but some is more directly so than others and in some his hand is more than generally seen. The purpose of such difficulty is never to drive us away from him but to draw us nearer by showing us our weak points and our need of his grace and fellowship. "In the world ye shall have tribulation"—"in *me* ye [shall] have peace".—John 16: 33.

"Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers" (Isaiah 30: 20), shall recognize thine instruction. We were perhaps blinded to the instructive providences of the Lord or yet to the real meaning of his Word until the hand of adversity was upon us. Even of our Lord it is written: "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted . . . the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all."—Isaiah 53: 7, 6.

When affliction is heavy and no one else seems fully to understand, we may be sure of a full appreciation of our little difficulties by Jehovah God, for it is written concerning his people of old: "In all their afflictions he was afflicted".—Isaiah 63: 9.

ADVERSITY A BITTER HERB

The world grins and bears it, but there is a finer kind of courage yet than this: it recognizes and appreciates the divine wisdom in permitting such tragic mistakes as we make, and is broad enough to see, in spite of one's own heart agony, that the present evil world is correctly heated as a furnace to draw and to temper the metal from which saints are made.

If we incline to think that the Lord does not actually send or arrange for offenses let us read how that Jesus was definitely foretold as being of such a character that he would be an "offense to both the houses of Israel". (1 Peter 2: 8) Divine wisdom is capable of having arranged such a course for our Redeemer that he could have appeared popular and suave and attractive to all; but this was not done.

Adversity is the bitter herb with which we eat the message of his grace, lest we become surfeited and vomit forth the whole. The Master says: "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions". (John 14: 1, 2) He did not say: Let not your heart be troubled, for you will have a nice, easy, and respectable time in the present life. Rather is the basis for our peace put not in the present but in the future, and this is the word of the Lord through the Prophet Isaiah: "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires".—Isaiah 54: 11.

Therefore we can confidently pray with the Psalmist: "Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us and the years wherein we have seen evil". (Psalm 90: 15) "O bless our God, ye people, and make

the voice of his praise to be heard: which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved. For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidest affliction upon our loins. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: *but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place*."—Psalm 66: 8 - 12.

Only the experienced child of God can say: "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me".—Psalm 119: 75.

DIVINE COMFORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT

The Scriptures tell us of a time when there shall be no more pain. Pain shall have done its work; the permission of evil shall have taught its lesson. Even for us the suffering is not long. As the Apostle says: "The God of all grace, who hath called you unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have *suffered a while*, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you". (1 Peter 5: 10) But if this light affliction, which endureth but a moment, be not only instrumental in preparing us for the eternal weight of glory, but also in qualifying us to heal poor humanity of its head-aches, heart-aches, and body-aches of every kind, is it not worth while?

All the philosophizing imaginable will not make hard things easy, will not make adversity pleasurable in itself. But a proper philosophy on the subject, guided by and based upon God's word, will enable us to avoid despair and enable us in saintly suffering to be calm during the trouble and thus minimize as much as possible, and some times entirely counteract the injurious effects thereof.

Trouble, without the aid of the holy spirit, means anything but benefit, as is shown by the Prophet: "Trouble and anguish shall make him [the wicked] afraid; they shall prevail against him as a king ready to the battle". Job 15: 24.

"Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?" the Master inquires. Yes, Lord, though it be through symbolic fire and blood; by thy grace we will. But the natural man is not able to drink the cup and it would be futile for him to try. The natural man wants his rights and cries loudly at every infringement of them. If our cup of trial seems to be of a peculiar nature or seems more intense than we can bear, it is well to consider whether or not we are trying to meet it in our own strength.

Yes, it is good for the new creature to be afflicted, for the winds of adversity fan to greater heat and brighter flame the fire of love already kindled in his heart. Affliction proves and tests our earnestness and burns away hypocrisy and shallow-heartedness. Therefore "count it all joy" and "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you".—James 1: 12; 1 Peter 4: 12.

We are forewarned and forearmed more than the worldly, who say: "I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity".—Psalm 10: 6.

If affairs in our own lives or in the church generally seem to be incompatible with our understanding of harmony, perhaps these affairs will be all right when we understand the main theme of God's purposes better; and perhaps we cannot understand the main theme better until we have had affliction. If others seem to be having

an easier time than we and to be missing the continuous kaleidoscope of perplexities which are our portion, we can know that either they are being prepared for another place, or have had more time, or are not making so much progress, or are adept in hiding their troubles; for every follower of Jesus must walk the way of him who was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.—Isa. 53:3.

There is a proverb which says: "Disaster lends to the just a charm, as night a beauty to the stars".

Tenderer and purer than a mother's kiss come the

words of the Master: "Let not your *heart* be troubled, neither let *it* be afraid". (John 14:27) Adversity will trouble the mind, will cause perplexities, but if our heart is set on Jehovah, on the Lord Jesus, on his Word and the best interests of his people it need not be moved.

"He kindles for my profit, purely,
Affliction's glowing, fiery brand:
For all his heaviest blows are surely
Inflicted by a Master hand.
And so I whisper, 'As God will,'
And in his hottest fire hold still."

"REJOICE EVERMORE"

1 THESSALONIANS 5:16

JOY is the most vivid sensation of the soul; the habitual temper and the inalienable right of the heart in harmony with God. It is various in its moods; *cheerful* under stress or anguish; *pleased* by lesser and more ordinary favors; *glad* at relief from want and pain; and *joyful* at the gratifying things of greatest moment.

The gladness of the angelic hosts was voiced in song when they "shouted aloud for joy". (Job 38:7) The Christian message itself opens with the declaration of "good tidings of great joy" (Luke 2:10), while part of man's blessing for the time to come is in that joy which "cometh in the morning". (Psalm 30:5) And of a now sorrowing and needy world it is said that, finally, "they shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads". (Isaiah 35:10) Now such joy is largely wanting in the world. Power to rejoice, like all other powers, has suffered loss since sin has come and disturbed the sensitive magnetic pole of human feelings, causing them to be untrue.

But while the world is not now in the most gladdening circumstances, the church of the called-out ones may have much blessing in joy. Concerning our Lord Jesus, the Head of the church, we read in Psalm 45:7 that he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, and that a part of the office to which he was anointed was "to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness". —Isaiah 61:3.

The ideal Christian is not an embodiment of unimpassioned propriety. His life is rich in varied emotions, and is marked by trials severe and joys sublime. Grief and gladness alternate in his experiences like lights and shadows upon a landscape. Though he becomes sorrowful, he is always rejoicing.

Seeing, doubtless, by prophetic vision the sufferings which the Lord's children would have to endure throughout this gospel age, and knowing the discouraging influences which would be brought to bear against them by the world, the flesh, and the devil, the Apostle evidently sought to counteract these influences by words of cheer: hence our text, which should be considered in the light of an admonition.

Christian joy is a thing which can be excited by several causes, and they are all different from the things which cause delight to the worldly. Their pleasure arises

chiefly from things which they are able to accomplish, oftentimes to the disadvantage of others. Our joy arises principally from things which God himself has done on our behalf, and which are traceable to our relations with him.

"REJOICE IN THE LORD"

First comes the exhortation to "rejoice in the Lord". (Philippians 4:4) This statement must be carefully read or we shall be making something out of it which is not there. The suggestion is not that we rejoice in our *environment*, or rejoice in our *feeling* at all times, but it is to the effect that we should have an abiding joy, which finds its fountain head in the Lord himself. In the measure that we have come to know the Lord Jehovah he inspires us with gladness, because of the beauty of his character and of the harmony with which all his cardinal principles work together. We see how his love is so great as to prompt his wisdom to devise a scheme, whereby his justice can remain inviolate and his power at the same time perform the liberation of those who were justly condemned.

"We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:11) God's character of love is shown for us and for the world most vividly in the person and in the doings of his beloved Son; and the joy which is inspired by him was mentioned in particular by the Apostle Peter: "Whom having not seen we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory". (1 Peter 1:8) The salvation which God provides us through Christ becomes another source of gladness. As the Psalmist says: "My soul shall be joyful in the Lord; it shall rejoice in his salvation".—Psalm 35:9.

God has so arranged it that joy in him is now only for the humble of heart. The proud of the world know him not, for the god of this world has blinded their minds. But the attitude of the Lord's people is this: "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad". (Psalm 34:2) That is, we come to realize our condemned state and learn that forgiveness has been vouchsafed through Jesus Christ. We take the steps of obedience necessary to make forgiveness accessible to us. And when secured, pardon brings gladness, and gladness tends to break forth in song. "My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips." —Psalm 63:5.

This joy which we have in the Lord is not dependent

upon outward circumstances or environment; hence, no change in our surroundings can alter that joy. Our happiness is inspired by the fact that God is good instead of evil, and since with him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning, there is no possibility of losing that joy as long as we are in relationship with him and we do not lose sight of the facts. As it was prophetically spoken of our Lord Jesus: "I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore, my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope."—Psalm 16:9.

That our rejoicing in the Lord is inspired by the very nature of his being, and not merely by his tangible beneficences, is shown by the prophecy which expresses implicit trust in him, even in trouble: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation".—Habakkuk 3:17, 18.

"Every human tie may perish,
Friend to friend unfaithful prove,
Mothers cease their own to cherish;
Heaven and earth at last remove;
But no changes
Can attend Jehovah's love."

Our joy is still further inspired by God's message, by its gladness. He who is filled with love "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth". (1 Corinthians 13:6) The truth gives him appreciation, a kind of pleasure which cannot be duplicated by anything else in the world. "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance."—Psalm 89:15.

In a parable our Lord portrayed the zeal and delight with which the called and chosen class would accept the truth and its requirements. A certain man for joy went and sold all that he had in order to obtain the pearl of great price. (Matthew 13:44) Again the Master tells us that one purpose of his instructing the disciples was that they thus might have a more reasonable and intelligent basis for joy. "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." . . . "Your joy no man taketh from you." (John 16:20-22) He was speaking of the happiness which they would experience when they had learned that he was risen from the dead.

Our Lord remains risen and no man is able to remove this knowledge from the true believer, thus robbing him of his joy. If anything occurs to obscure his faith in this fact, then he is pitiable indeed, for if Christ be not raised, our faith is vain, and we are yet in our sins, and are of all men the most miserable.

Our pleasure in the truth leads us to be happy at a knowledge of its publication. As the Apostle expressed it: "We rejoice that Christ is preached". (Philippians 1:18) We are glad because we know how good God is, and we know that his message if received, will make others happy. Where there is spiritual vision, the people are joyful; but "where there is no vision, the people perish".—Proverbs 29:18.

REJOICE IN PROVIDENCE

The third mainspring of our joy we find in the divine providences on our behalf. We are made glad at God's dealings with us because they show the divine interest in our welfare; and we are made glad in God's kindly dealings with others. The Psalmist said: "The Lord hath done great things for us whereof we are glad". (Psalm 126:3) If we are loyal to him, God defends us by his providences from vital harm to the new man; and, though the outward man is made to perish, the inward man is renewed, refreshed and strengthened by those same experiences. "Let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them."—Psalm 5:11.

The captive daughters of Zion were requested by their wardens to sing some of their noble songs in Babylon, but they replied: "How can we sing the songs of Zion in a strange land?" But when they had been delivered from Babylon and returned to the ancient landmarks so prominently identified with God's providences for them, we read that "many . . . wept . . . many shouted aloud for joy". (Ezra 3:12) How much more joy should be in the hearts of those who have been delivered from the still more enthralling bondage of Babylon the Great, and have been led to see and to trust in the promises once delivered to the saints.

"When all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love and praise."

During our Lord's ministry the disciples were glad that even the demons were subject to their power, and were obliged to obey their behests to cease troubling certain poor afflicted humans. He told them, however, that they would have still greater cause for joy than that: "But rather rejoice that your names have been written in heaven". (Luke 10:20) To be so honored as to have the prospect of joint-heirship with Christ and of participation in all the glories which attach to an exaltation like that which our Lord Jesus has undergone, ought to fill us with continuous rejoicing.

Again the Apostle James says: "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted". (James 1:9) Exalted not in his own estimation, nor necessarily in the view of others, but exalted in fact—lifted from the miry clay and placed with his feet upon the solid rock, Christ Jesus. No more than this has been done for the wealthy brother or for him whose worldly advantages have been greater.

Further, we have cause, under divine providence, for rejoicing in the joy of others. One of the essential things of the Christian's life is true sympathy. "Rejoice with them that rejoice and weep with them that weep."—Romans 12:15.

REJOICE IN VIRTUE

Another field where joy springs up, though small, must not be overlooked. It is the field of virtue. It has been often said that "virtue is its own reward". One of the rewards of virtue even at the present time is joy. "To the counsellors of peace is joy." (Proverbs 12:20) Those whose influence makes for peace have the satisfying consciousness of knowing that they are thus standing for the principles of the Prince of Peace; and

whether they succeed or not in promoting and maintaining peace the reward of such virtuous influence is theirs. They are happy to know that they have done their best and have not added to the strife.

Again: "It is a joy to the just to do judgment". (Proverbs 21: 15) Our judging opportunities now are limited principally to ourselves. But even here we have pleasure in comparing our lives and sentiments with the standards set forth in God's Word, and though the needed corrections are not joyous to the flesh, but grievous, the new man takes a genuine delight in correcting to the extent of his ability every fault which is discovered. If he allowed personal pride to hinder him in the work of self-judgment, he will be robbing himself of that pure enjoyment of knowing himself to be engaged in a righteous task. It requires meekness to delight in finding one's own faults, that they may be corrected, and that the fruits of the holy spirit may be substituted therefor. Thus, "the meek shall increase their joy in the Lord".—Isaiah 29: 19.

The more of the holy spirit we have, the greater will be our rejoicing, for we "joy in the holy spirit". (Romans 14: 17) Joy comes second in a list of the fruits of the holy spirit. (Galatians 5: 22) Furthermore the Apostle had a keen delight in knowing that his personal influence had been employed in the most blessed and sanctifying of all labors, the spreading of God's gracious message. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward."—2 Corinthians 1: 12.

REJOICE IN TRIBULATION

Strange as it may seem, the New Testament Scriptures closely identify the tribulations of the church with joy. That there is a close connection between these seemingly paradoxical points is shown by the Master in John 16: 19-24. He knew that his disciples were about to be engulfed by the greatest tribulation of their lives. He was to be taken from them and made to endure such ignominy and shame as to cast reproach upon them for years to come. He told them, however, that their sorrow should be turned to joy, as with a woman who is delivered of her child.

It would hardly be true to say that suffering is always a prerequisite to joy, for if that were true the holy angels would be precluded from joy. But it is evidently the Lord's purpose for the church in embryo to have a degree of pain, in order to heighten her appreciation and to call her attention to the possibilities of real joy. This is everywhere the thought held forth by the New Testament Scriptures. The Apostle James tells us: "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (James 1: 2), knowing that the trying influence thus brought to bear against your faith will call into service, and even call into existence, qualities hitherto unknown. The Apostle Peter also says: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy".—1 Peter 4: 12, 13.

Here is emphasized the intimacy existing between Christian tribulation and Christian joy. Analyzed it would seem to be about as follows: The world is dominated by the spirit of selfishness and "lieth in the wicked one"; his spirit inspires or directs in a greater or less degree the actions and the thoughts of the inhabitants of the earth; the tide moves in that direction and when the Lord's people by virtue of faith in the message which God has given them, recognize the iniquity of the course in which they are and turn round to go in the opposite direction, they but naturally incur either the studied or the unstudied opposition of the worldly—those who have small appreciation of God's will and who are making no efforts to do that will.

If the Lord's people were to lack experiences of this sort, if there were no opposition from the world, it would be one good indication that they were either standing still or that they were drifting with the tide: their lives would not be such as to attract the attention in any manner of the religious worldly class. As long, however, as tribulation arises from this source, it is a fair indication of itself, that the individual is making progress against the preferences of the world and against its ideals. Our Master implied as much when he said: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven".—Matthew 5: 12.

The earliest disciples of the Lord, we are told, "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods". (Hebrews 10: 34) The spoiling of their goods would not call forth their admiration for the spoilers; nor would they have thought it proper to destroy their own belongings merely to make a demonstration. It was not to be in the limelight that they were seeking. Their joy sprang not from the destruction of property itself, but from the fact that persecution was an evidence to them that they were walking not with the world but were following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Concerning two of the apostles, we read that they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for his name's sake. (Acts 5: 41) The same apostles who had formerly told the Lord they were willing to drink of his cup were now happy because an opportunity was granted them under trying and unfavorable circumstances to prove the truth of their statements.

Those sayings which are usually referred to as the "beatitudes" all contain a kernel of this same thought.

The word "blessed" in those promises really contains both thoughts of *blest* and *happy*. Lukewise we read: "Blessed are ye when men shall hate you and when they shall separate you from from their company and shall reproach you and cast out your name as evil for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for behold your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets." (Luke 6: 22, 23) Truly it is a source of genuine joy to be found anywhere in the wake of those noble men of God who suffered of old. We must not however, in this, think that our joy will make the suffering much less intense. The only mitigating influence is merely such as comes from a knowledge that it is an honor to suffer for

Christ's sake and a further knowledge that in most cases, at least, those who are perpetuating the persecution are not fully aware of their own spirit.

REJOICE IN HOPE

But whatever joys may arise from local causes in the lives of the Lord's people, the essential element of their present happiness lies in hope. Hope constitutes the color to the Christian's life. It is made up of two elements: expectation and desire. The glorious promises which are in God's Word respecting our own future blessing and also the blessing of the world inspire us with confidence because we are acquainted with the integrity of the One making the promises. These promises of life and blessing are not fulfilled at the present time, but look forward to the future, hence, we must still *expect* a fulfillment. And, since these promises refer to far better things than we have ever known or experienced, we cannot help desiring them. Those things, therefore, which we actively expect and truly long for, beget in us joy. Hope anticipates our future joy.

It will be seen that this joy is not brought into being by merely fortunate circumstances, and, hence, it cannot be removed by change of circumstances. The promises which originally inspired our joy are still the same, they remain unaltered in God's Word. If they once filled our minds and hearts with joyful prospects, they should logically be able to do so again. Indeed, hope, with its accompanying joy, constitutes the principal spur to a constant devotion to the Father while in our trial time. If we could imagine hope being removed from our lives, what incentive would we have for sacrificing? None whatever. Sacrifice is not a normal state of being and without some abnormal circumstances to feed and support it, such a course would be illogical. If throughout all the ages of the future there were no prospect of relief from pain, we would be in very truth the fools which the world takes us to be.

But everywhere the Scriptures abound in promises of final relief. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." (Psalm 126:5) There may be a natural organic reaction tending from suffering to rapture, but that is evidently not intended to be referred to in this text. It does not say that those who sow *tears* shall reap joy, but those who are engaged in the Lord's work, sowing the truth, his message, under sorrowing circumstances, and with pain to themselves, shall eventually have their reward in joy. Our Lord held this same thought before his people in the parable of the talents, saying that those who are faithful in the small things now committed to them would be accounted worthy of a participation in still greater responsibilities and honors. "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (Matthew 25:21) The Lord himself suffered the ignominy and the shame of his earthly ministry and was at the end of his course exalted to that joy which was set before him.—Hebrews 12:2.

Again the Apostle identifies hope with our joy when he says: "And the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in blessing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the holy spirit". (Romans 15:13) In other words, this hope does not feed itself; it is inspired by and sustained by the active agency of the holy spirit

in the mind and heart of God's consecrated followers. The world and its spirit tend to dampen and to discourage our hope.

Again, the very essence of our Christian life is bound up in that hope which is set before us in the gospel and mentioned by the Apostle when he says that we "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:2), of divine glory, of participating in the joys and privileges of the divine nature. "Rejoice in hope" (Romans 12:12), is one of the general admonitions given us by the Apostle. Elsewhere he explains that this hope is worked out in us by the train of experiences set in motion by tribulation. "We glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed, for the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the holy spirit, which is given unto us."—Romans 5:3-5.

Furthermore, we are assured that we shall be made partakers of Christ if we "hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end". (Hebrews 3:6) Having held *firm* unto the end, we may enter into the real joy, for, "Thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance".—Acts 2:28.

The joy arising from our hope is not merely because we hope for our *own* blessing. We are glad that all the world of mankind is to be blest, that instead of the dark night of sin and death which now prevails, the glorious light of the Millennial morning shall finally usher in the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings; and instead of darkness, the people shall learn of the glory of God, the knowledge of which shall fill the whole earth. Even concerning the desert we have the assurance: "It shall rejoice even with joy and singing". (Isaiah 35:2) Then again: "The Lord shall comfort Zion; he shall comfort all her waste places; and will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; *joy* and *gladness* shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody".—Isa. 51:3.

HOW INCREASE OUR JOY?

How then can we cultivate and increase our joy as the Lord's people?

(1) By a grateful contemplation of our causes for joy, some of which we have named above.

(2) By taking heed to the admonition of our Lord: "Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full". (John 16:24) If our joy is lean and scant, we have only ourselves to blame. Here is our Master's word for it that we may ask and receive things which are necessary and best for us, and that by so doing joy may be full. If we realize our need of joy, shall we not ask him to give us joy? The Father will not be displeased with such request, for his Apostle encourages us by saying that our God "shall supply all [our] need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus". (Philippians 4:19) His riches in glory are abundant: he will, therefore, abundantly supply our needs, but not unless we *ask* him. That which is not worth asking for in the shape of divine blessing and joy, is scarcely worth having.

Our joy sometimes is in jeopardy of being dampened by observing merely the things which are seen and which are passing. In the measure that our hearts are set and

fixed on things which are not seen, the eternal things of God, in that same measure will our joy be full and rich and abiding.

But whatever joy we have now, it is but a foretaste and an earnest of the joy that we may have when perfect. "In thy presence is fullness of joy, and at thy right hand

there are pleasures forevermore." (Psalm 16:11) "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen."—Jude 24, 25.

VICTORY OF GIDEON'S BAND

— — APRIL 18 — JUDGES 7:1-8, 16-21 — —

A LOGICAL MAN — A STRONG CHARACTER — TOO HUMBLE FOR SELF-CONFIDENCE — FAITH AFTER PROOF — DARING AND DOING FOR GOD — A LITTLE ARMY TOO LARGE — WHY THE LAPPERS WERE CHOSEN — THE INCIDENT A PARABLE — ITS APPLICATION.

"There is no restraint to Jehovah to save by many or by few."—1 Samuel 14: 6.

ALTHOUGH the Scriptures tell us that not many great, rich, wise and strong are chosen of the Lord for his work, we may be sure that this is not because they would be unacceptable, but because their wisdom, riches, strength, courage, usually make them too self-confident and not sufficiently humble to be taught of God and to be glad of opportunities for his service. It was to Gideon, a stalwart young Israelite, that the angel of the Lord was sent with a message and with a work. The angel's salutation was: "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor". Gideon replied with excellent logic: "Why, if the Lord be with us, hath all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles of which our fathers told us?"

The Midianites and others of the nomadic peoples from the east, discerning that the land of Canaan was very fertile, repeatedly invaded it and confiscated much of the product of the country. Indeed, on this very occasion of the angelic visitation Gideon was threshing out a few sheaves of wheat, fearing to have a customary threshing, lest the Midianites rob them of all their possessions and increase their levy.

The angel was not there to discuss theology, however, but to inspire Gideon and to make of him a messenger of the Lord in the deliverance of the people of Israel. The humility of the man shines out in his protest that his family was one of the poorer of the tribe of Manasseh, and that he himself was inferior to his brethren of his own father's house. Surely a mistake had been made in the selection, and a more capable person should have been found! But to this protest the angel of the Lord replied: "Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man".

PROOFS OF NATIONAL UNFAITHFULNESS

When we remember the Lord's promise to Israel that he would defend them and protect their interests, when we remember that theirs were earthly interests, then we should also remember that this protection was dependent upon Israel's maintenance of heart loyalty and faithfulness to God. In the same covenant the Lord had assured the people in advance that if they would wander away into idolatry he would bring upon them various kinds of adversity—that their enemies should reap their harvests, etc. Thus we may know the answer to Gideon's question as to why the Lord permitted the distress in which the Israelites found themselves. It was not that God was unfaithful to his covenant, but that the people had not kept their obligations.

A proof of this unfaithfulness is found in Judges 6: 25-32. Gideon's father was the caretaker of the groves of Baal and Ashtaroth. Their images were near his home, apparently on his property. These groves were large posts, significant of honor, erected near the idols; and these were maintained by the people of Gideon's own town, his father being one of the principal of them. Here was the secret of Israel's helplessness and subjection to the Midianites. It did not seem to occur to the people that the Lord's disfavor, as manifested in the successes of their enemies, was on account of Israel's disloyalty to the Lord in idolatry; for apparently in some sense of the word they respected Jehovah at the same time they worshipped Baal also.

Although Gideon apparently did not surely know who his visitor was, nevertheless something in the conversation persuaded him that he had an honorable guest. He prepared a feast and brought it to the stranger. But instead of eating it, the angel directed that the soup be poured out on a rock round about the food, and then he touched the cakes and the lamb with his staff. A miracle followed which demonstrated that the visitor was the angel of the Lord. Fire proceeded from the rock and entirely consumed the food, which was thus accepted as a sacrifice. Immediately the angel vanished from Gideon's sight; for he had accomplished his purpose.

THE MINISTRY OF ANGELS

Here we have another illustration of the fact that we are surrounded by spirit beings, invisible to our natural eyes, and also of the fact that in olden times God communicated to mankind through these angels. Of these we read: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them". Again, "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister unto those who shall be heirs of salvation?" Doubtless the angels of the Lord are as present with his people as ever, indeed more so during this gospel age since Pentecost than ever before; for now God's people are the spirit-begotten ones especially precious in their Father's sight.—Psalm 34: 7; Hebrews 1: 14.

"Their angels do always have access to the Father", was the comment of our Lord Jesus respecting his followers. It is a part of their business to look after the interests of the consecrated members of the body of Christ and to deliver them from everything that would not be to their advantage, in harmony with the assurance that "all things shall work together for good to those who love God". But it is the interest, the good, of the new creature that is being considered, and not the interests of the flesh. These messengers, though no less powerful, are invisible throughout the gospel age because the Lord would have the members of the house of sons walk by faith, not by sight. In olden times, however, in the time of the house of servants, the Lord's representatives assumed human bodies and ordinarily appeared in connection with their visits to humanity, that they might have the better opportunity of direct conversation and instruction when communicating their messages. Thus the angels of the Lord appeared to Abraham and ate with him. But he knew them not until they revealed their identity.

GIDEON'S COURAGE MANIFESTED

The same night following the angel's visit, the Lord made further revelation to Gideon, instructing him to destroy the idols upon the property and to overthrow the altar of Baal and to build instead an altar to Jehovah, to kill one of his father's bullocks and therewith to make burnt offerings unto the Lord, using for the purpose the wooden pole, or "grove", which formerly did honor to Baal. The work was accomplished in the night because his father, his brethren and the men of the village would have stoutly resisted it, had they known what he was about to do. Gideon, therefore, was very courageous when once he knew that he had been called of the Lord to do this work.

Indeed, we may say that conviction that our work is of divine authority is a power of itself in the heart of any man or woman. This is part of the lack of today, lack of faith in God, failure to recognize a mission which is of God. Much of the preaching, praying and good endeavors is, therefore, formalistic, "having a form of godliness without its power". From such we turn away, as the Apostle Paul directed. We are seeking to be God's servants, and we surely desire to know the divine Word. Armed with it, "one may chase a thousand".

When the villagers found what had happened and traced it to Gideon, they called upon his father to deliver him up to death. But the father wisely responded that a god of mighty power would not need to be defended. If Baal could not defend himself he could not defend Israel. The argument was potent. The people were prepared to look for a better God as their deliverer. Meantime, in harmony with his commission, while the Midianites were gathering, Gideon sent messengers to the various tribes, with the result that thirty-two thousand volunteers responded to give battle to invaders. Meantime, also, Gideon required fresh evidences of the Lord that he was doing the divine will. The one test was that a wool fleece laid out in the open over night might be thoroughly wet with dew, while the ground all about it might be dry. The Lord responded and granted the proof: for Gideon wrung from the fleece a bowl of water. But this was not enough. Who could tell but that there was some special attraction in the water for the fleece? He would reverse the test and ask God to grant a demonstration that all around the fleece might be saturated with dew and that the fleece might be dry. This request also was granted.

A STRANGE PROCEEDING

We are not to think, however, that because the Lord thus granted proofs to Gideon it would be proper for us today to make similar tests. We have much advantage every way. Behind us are the experiences of Gideon and others for now thousands of years, added to which we have the New Testament records of God's favor toward mankind and the Lord Jesus. We have the "wonderful words of life" and an introduction to the heavenly Father through the begetting of the holy spirit as a result of faith in the precious blood. Ours is a different case. The Lord would have us walk by faith in the lessons already taught us, and not by sights and signs of our own time.

The little army of thirty-two thousand marched to the foot of Mount Gilboa and encamped at Harod Spring, a little lake which drains off eastward to the Jordan. On the farther side of the lake were the Midianites, numbering about one hundred and thirty-five thousand men. An invading host, they had for some time been pillaging the Israelites unmolestedly; but now they learned that Gideon's army was gathering, and they assembled themselves to crush it.

While Gideon was feeling that his army was far too small for such a battle, one to four, the Lord directed him to the contrary, telling him that his army was too large, and that there would be danger that the victory God purposed to give might not be appreciated as being of the Lord, but be thought to indicate the dexterity of Israel's warriors. Accordingly by divine direction Gideon gave word to his army that as many of them as were fearful might return home. Many were fearful—twenty-two thousand. Harod, the name of the spring, signifies coward; and it has been assumed that this name was given because of the fear manifested by those who returned home.

Surely Gideon's faith was tried as his little army melted to ten thousand men! But the Lord told him that there were yet too many. "Bring them down to the water, and I will try them for thee there. . . . Everyone that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise everyone that boweth down upon his knees to drink." There were three hundred who lapped the water, and the Lord declared these to be the proper ones to win the victory. The remainder of the ten thousand, however, would join in the pursuit of the enemy.

The custom of lapping water with the hand is still common

with the people of Palestine. Shepherds, etc., become very expert at it. Symbolically this act would seem to signify alertness and obedience. An ox drinks by putting his mouth into the water and sucking it up; when thirsty he gives his entire attention to the sucking of water, refusing to heed the commands of his owner, and even resisting the use of the rod upon his flanks. A dog, on the contrary, while lapping the water with his tongue, is all alert, with his eyes watching in every direction, seeing everything about him, and ready to quit the water at any moment in pursuit of obedience to duty.

THE VICTORY AT ARMAGEDDON

If water here, as elsewhere in the Bible, be understood to represent the truth, these two companies of Gideon's army would represent two classes who love and appreciate the truth. Both classes drink the water of truth. One class, however, drinks more for their own satisfaction; but the other class, watchful, attentive, drink according to their needs, and do not neglect alertness in the Master's service, keeping eyes and ears open for their guidance of divine providence at all times. This wiser class are represented by the three hundred who were with Gideon, he himself representing Jesus, the Captain of our salvation.

Oldtime armies evidently did not keep so strict a watch as do modern armies. At all events Gideon and a trusted companion were able to penetrate in the darkness of the night among the tents of the Midianites. Listening, they heard a soldier relate his dream of how a barley loaf had rolled down a hill and had done havoc. Another soldier offered the interpretation that this represented Gideon and his small army, which was likely to be the undoing of Midian. The incident shows that the Midianites were fearful, apprehensive. Gideon was confident. His faith was strengthened by this little experience which the Lord permitted him to have.

About midnight, shortly after the hour of the changing of the guards among the Midianites, was the time appointed for Gideon's attack. The method of warfare was novel. The three hundred were divided into three companies, and spread out over a considerable space near the Midianites. In addition to their usual armor, sword, etc., Gideon and his three hundred had new weapons. In his left hand each man held a pitcher of earthenware, each pitcher containing a lamp, and each soldier had in his other hand a ram's horn trumpet. The instructions to the three separated bands were that those who were immediately with Gideon should do as he did; and that the other bands, hearing, should imitate, breaking the front of their pitchers to let the light shine out, shouting aloud, 'Jehovah and Gideon' and blowing into the rams' horns.

The Midianites, waking out of sleep, beholding the flashing lights, and hearing the shouting of voices and the blowing of trumpets, imagined themselves to be surrounded by a great host; and half-dazed they fled. In their flight they fought each other, mistaking each other for a foe. Gideon and his three hundred pursued and were soon in the fight, assisted by the remaining nine thousand seven hundred of his army. The victory was a great one. The Lord was recognized to be the deliverer; and his servant Gideon was honored accordingly.

SOME LESSONS FOR TODAY

Referring to Old Testament matters the Apostle declares: "These things were written aforetime for our instruction". (Romans 15:4) In addition to the lessons learned at that time, the Lord gives certain spiritual lessons to spiritual Israel through some of these experiences of the past. Gideon's call resembles the gospel call for volunteers on the side of righteousness, of right against wrong, truth against error. Many in the world hear the message, sympathize with it and respond, purposing to become soldiers of Christ. But before they are fully accepted, the voice of Jesus calls to them, saying, 'Sit down and count the cost; it is better not to put your hand to the plow, and become a servant of the Lord, than afterward to look back and wish that you had not become one'.

The sight of the enemy, the "fear of death" (Hebrews 2: 15), causes them to walk not with the Master, because it costs too much. When first they responded to the call, they thought of the glory and honor, but overlooked the fact that these could be obtained only at the cost of hardship and endurance. These cowards who turn back, and never really take the vow of consecration, are perhaps no worse off than if they had never responded. But they will not share in the great victory; the laurels will not be theirs: the crown of life will not be their portion.

Then comes the second test, that of obedience and loyalty. One class of the Lord's people, like the faithful dog, put obedience to the Master's voice first, alert to do his will. Another portion of the Lord's consecrated people heed less the Master's voice, and even the rod; and being less alert to the Lord's service, they are less used of him.

Compared with the world, the most alert ones are but a very few. It is those of the Lord's people who are alert

that he chooses and grants the greatest opportunities for service. These are the ones most willing to break the earthen vessel, to use their present earthly lives in the service of the Lord, in order that the light of truth may shine out and that the cause of truth may have the victory. These zealous ones are most faithful in blowing upon the trumpet, representative of God's Word. These have the blessed opportunity for letting their light shine. Their zeal entitles them to special privileges and opportunities.

The Lord's victory is attained by the antitypical Gideon and his little band of faithful followers, "not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord". The Lord's spirit is represented by the light of the lamp shining from the broken vessel. These broken vessels of Gideon's band represent how the Lord's people present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, in his service, in letting the light shine out, in fighting a good fight against sin.

RUTH'S WISE CHOICE

— — APRIL 25 — RUTH 1:14-22 — —

KING DAVID'S GREAT-GRANDMOTHER — A BEAUTIFUL STORY — A GLIMPSE OF ISRAEL'S HOME LIFE — BENEATH THE SURFACE — GOOD PEOPLE ASTRAY — RELIGIOUS INTERESTS MORE IMPORTANT THAN TEMPORAL ONES — NAOMI'S RETURN — RUTH'S CONVERSION.

"Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."—Verse 16.

WHILE the book of Ruth is not prophetic, but merely historical, it is valuable to us in various ways.

(1) It furnishes an important link in the chronological chain leading down to King David, and hence a part of the chronological line leading down to the Man Christ Jesus. (2) It gives a glimpse of the habits and customs of the Israelites in general as an agricultural people. In this respect it is in marked contrast with the books of Judges, Kings and Chronicles, which deal more particularly with the rulers, generals and wars. (3) The story of Ruth points a very beautiful lesson of fidelity, sympathy and love among the people at that time, and inculcates a similar lesson of kindness of disposition among the spiritual Israelites, guaranteeing them along this line blessings both for the present and for the future.

The story of the book of Ruth gives a little glimpse into the deep spirit of religion underlying the surface of wars, captivities, etc., which naturally impress themselves most upon our attention in every history of every people. The opening was at Bethlehem, "the city of David", where centuries later Jesus was born, "David's Son and David's Lord". The religious sentiment of the family is shown by the import of their names. Elimelech, the husband's name, signifies "My God is King". His wife's name, Naomi, is said to mean "The pleasure of Jehovah". They had two sons, Mahlon (sickly one) and Chilion (pining one). They became discouraged because of the invasions of their enemies and the frequent loss of the fruits of their labor. Finally, because of a severe drought which almost produced a famine, they left their home and crossed the Jordan into the land of Moab, where they dwelt for ten years. There the two sons married. Both died, each leaving a widow; and in time Elimelech died also.

MOVES NOT ALWAYS BENEFICIAL

Evidently the leaving of the land of promise, the land of the covenant, to live among a people who were idolaters and who were not in covenant relationship with God in any way, had not resulted greatly to the benefit of the family; for when Naomi concluded to return to her native land, she had practically nothing. It is worth while here for us to learn a lesson to the effect that it is never good policy to sacrifice our religious interests for our temporal ones. With all Christians the motto should be "God First". It will not do to say that perhaps this family moved to Moab to do a little missionary work; for although the Moabites were the descendants of Lot, and therefore related to the Israelites, nevertheless God's covenant was merely with the descendants

of Abraham; and the others were aliens, strangers, foreigners, from the commonwealth of Israel, like all other Gentiles. Nor would it have been proper for these Israelites to attempt to convert the Moabites; for God had called merely the Israelites.—Amos 3:2.

However, many Christians have made the same mistake that Elimelech's family made; and if Christians indeed, they were all the more responsible, because the Christian has a higher relationship with God and should have a clearer knowledge of the divine will and more of "the spirit of a sound mind". It was unwise to take two boys into a heathen land, where they were likely to be contaminated. Instead, every reasonable influence should have been thrown about them to preserve their loyalty to Jehovah. Doubtless Naomi realized all this, as indicated by her words: "It grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me". Here again we perceive that the Lord's hand against her was really in her favor, and that it had a proper influence upon her and brought her back to the land of promise.

TWO BEAUTIFUL CHARACTERS

Naomi must have been a beautiful character. This is evidenced by the deep affection manifested toward her by her two daughters-in-law. Both preferred to join her and to go to her homeland, to leave their own home associations; and they started with her. But as she reflected that they would be strangers in a strange land and would pine for their home, even as she was pining, she tenderly urged them to reconsider the matter, to return to their own home and kindred, their habits and customs, to remarry, etc. One of them so concluded, and kissed Naomi good-bye. But the other one, Ruth, broke forth in such eloquent terms that her words have become permanently identified with classic literature. We do not mean that Ruth became a Christian when we say that she was converted, or that she became an heir of Christian promises; for there were none such until after Jesus by his death had opened up the "new and living way" beyond the veil. She was converted to Judaism, and this is a fresh testimony to the faithful living of Naomi.

One thing here is worthy of note: namely, the positiveness with which Ruth made her decision. It was not a proposal to try for a time how it would be to live in Judaea. It was a decision unto death. In this respect all true conversions are alike. The Christian, for instance, did not really become a Christian until he made just such a definite, positive consecration of himself to leave the world, its affairs, its loves,

its hopes and ambitions, and to spend and to be spent even unto death in the service of the Lord. The value of positive decision as respect to life we can hardly overestimate. Thousands of lives are blighted because of lack of decision. Positiveness for God is the only condition in which we can hope to "make our calling and election sure".

True to God's promise to the Jewish people, Naomi and Ruth were blessed in their return to the Lord, to his people, to his land of covenant and promise. We are to remember that all the promises to natural Israel were earthly, while all those to spiritual Israel are heavenly. Both the nobility and the wisdom of Naomi's character are manifest in the course which she pursued on arriving in Bethlehem practically penniless, and unable to retrieve the interest of her husband and her sons in their share of the land. She did not beg, nor did she request Ruth to do so. There was no false cry nor false modesty. Ruth went out, like other poor women, to glean handfuls of grain after the reapers. Under the Mosaic law it was a part of God's provision for the poor that no one should reap the corners of his field, but should leave these for the poor. Naomi counseled Ruth to glean in the fields of one of her wealthy relatives, named Boaz.

AN ANCESTOR OF DAVID AND OF JESUS

As Naomi had surmised, the wealthy Boaz took note of the modest young woman who daily gleaned in his fields. Subsequently he learned that she was a relative through marriage. He pursued the course of the Jewish law, and Ruth became his wife. Obed was the name of their son, Jesse was the name of his son, and David was the youngest of Jesse's sons. Thus Ruth the Gentile became identified with the royal family as an ancestor and with King David's greatest Son and Lord—Jesus.

The Bible is a very honest book. It does not disguise the fact that Rahab, the harlot of Jericho, was received into the Jewish nation by marriage and became an ancestor to David, Solomon and Jesus. It does not disguise the fact that Ruth was by nature a foreigner, a Gentile, and at one time an idolater. No other book is so honest. Similarly the New Testament tells with wonderful candor all the details of how one of the Master's own disciples betrayed him, how all forsook him and fled, how the subsequently noble Peter denied him with curses, and how Peter and John, when preaching in the Temple, were perceived by the people to be ignorant and unlearned. Similarly the weaknesses and sins of King David and others of the royal family are in no sense covered or disguised. They are all laid bare and re-proved, their punishments stated, and the repentance of the culprit noted. We dare trust such honest writers, even as in the history of our day we would be willing to trust such writers. Indeed, we do not know of any modern history which would compare with the Bible in candor.

In these Bible studies we make no attempt at impassioned appeal. Rather, in the words of Jesus, we suggest that when considering whether or not he will join himself to the Lord, become a follower of Christ, each one shall first quietly "sit down and count the cost", as the Master directed. We do, however, earnestly urge the importance of decision, and a positive decision as being essential to proper peace of mind and to proper Christian progress, and to an inheritance with the saints under the terms of this gospel age. (Colossians 1:12) Those who conclude to give their hearts to God should know that "there is no other name given under heaven or among men" whereby we can be recovered to God's favor, so as to be permitted to enter the house of sons, than the name of Jesus. In his name means in, by and through all that his name stands for to have faith in God, obedience to his terms, etc. But when the decision is reached it means, "Thy God shall be my God".

HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

Decision is reached to join the house of sons through Christ. Be it noticed that we have not recommended the joining of any denomination; nor does the Bible. The instruction of the Scriptures is that to be a member of the house of sons each one must be joined to our Lord Jesus Christ, and through him to the Father, in order to be an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ. Such as do this have their names written, not on an earthly roll of membership, but "in the Lamb's book of life", "in heaven".

The next step should be to say, "Thy people shall be my people". And so surely as any of God's people are found, they are all brethren of one family, whether they be found among Roman Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans or Anglicans, or whether they be found outside of all denominations. God's people are all one, because by one spirit they are all baptized into the one spiritual body, the Head of which is Christ, whose spirit must pervade all his members. Not only should we seek for the people of God, but we should acknowledge and fellowship them, whether they be white or black, rich or poor, learned or ignorant; for "ye are all one in Christ Jesus", and "One is your Master, even Christ".

The proper course for all who come into Christ is to inquire for and search out "the old paths", the footsteps of Jesus and the apostles, their teachings, their practices, and not to be influenced by modern digressions, philosophies and sciences falsely so-called, or by the creeds and theories of the dark ages. "They shall all be taught of God" is a promise which belongs to the entire household of faith; and the Word of God is "meat in due season", and is the strength provided for their growth, upbuilding and preparation for a share in the kingdom of God.

EAGER FOR EVERY SERVICE

DEAR BRETHREN IN CHRIST:

Greetings to you in the Master's name and may the grace of our Lord Jesus be with you and peace be multiplied!

It has now been several months since I canceled my subscription to THE TOWER and severed my affiliation with the I. B. S. A., and now after this period of being in darkness I am glad to be back in the dear Lord's service, and to push the good work on with greater zeal than ever. Having lost so much time in "standing idle" I am more than glad to have had several opportunities of service since getting my eyes opened to the delusion.

I want to ask your pardon for sending such a letter to you dear brethren to cancel the Tower. Much more so do I ask the dear Lord to forgive me and show me his will in all things and give me of his meat through that channel, the Society he has been pleased to use for so many years.

After careful investigation concerning the Society and the important questions of the hour, I am now convinced that I had no reason for leaving the channel, and I am extremely sorry that I did not investigate earlier. However, the

experiences I had and the lessons I learned are all for the best and surely "the steps of a righteous man are ordered of the Lord". So I shall consider that the Lord has overruled in it all. I trust I shall not again be led astray, but may walk in the Lord's footsteps faithfully unto death.

May the dear Lord guide and direct you in all his ways,

Your brother in the best of bonds,

LLOYD B. BURTCH,—Ore.

I.B.S.A. BEREAN BIBLE STUDIES By Means of "STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES" *Questions from MANUAL on VOLUME SIX*

Study XIV: "Foes and Besetments of New Creation"

Week of May 2 Q. 50-56	Week of May 16 Q. 64-69
Week of May 9 Q. 57-63	Week of May 23 Q. 70-76
Week of May 30 Q. 77-82	

Question Manuals on Vol. VI Studies in the Scriptures, 15c. each postpaid

International Bible Students Association Classes

Lectures and Studies by Traveling Brethren

BROTHER W. A. BAKER			BROTHER T. H. THORNTON		
Garnett, Kan.	Apr. 1	Baxter, Kan.	Apr. 7	Shelby, Ohio	Apr. 1
Iola, Kan.	" 2	Parsons, Kan.	" 8	Gallion, Ohio	" 2
Arcadia, Kan.	" 3	Chetopa, Kan.	" 9	Marion, Ohio	" 4
Fort Scott, Kan.	" 4	Coffeyville, Kan.	" 10	Cardington, Ohio	" 5
Pittsburg, Kan.	" 5	Independence, Kan.	" 11	Delaware, Ohio	" 6
Columbus, Kan.	" 6	Nowata, Kan.	" 12	Columbus, Ohio	" 7
BROTHER R. H. BARBER			BROTHER S. H. TOUTIAN		
Plover, Wis.	Apr. 1	Wausau, Wis.	Apr. 8	Norfolk, Neb.	Apr. 1
Shiocton, Wis.	" 2	Marinette, Wis.	" 11	Winside, Neb.	" 2
Clintonville, Wis.	" 4	Vulcan, Mich.	" 12	Sioux City, Ia.	" 4
Black Creek, Wis.	" 5	Manistiquie, Mich.	" 14	Vermilion, S. D.	" 5
Green Bay, Wis.	" 6	Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.	" 15	Yankton, S. D.	" 6
Bonduel, Wis.	" 7	Superior, Mich.	" 17	Irene, S. D.	" 7
BROTHER T. E. BARKER			BROTHER L. F. ZINK		
Hallowell, Me.	Apr. 2	Plympton, Mass.	Apr. 9	Doyle, Tenn.	Apr. 1
Portland, Me.	" 4	Plymouth, Mass.	" 11	Lebanon, Tenn.	" 3
Springvale, Me.	" 5	Brockton, Mass.	" 12	Nashville, Tenn.	" 4
Saugus, Mass.	" 6	Taunton, Mass.	" 13	Milton, Tenn.	" 5
Quincy, Mass.	" 7	Fall River, Mass.	" 14	Gadsden, Tenn.	" 7
N. Duxbury, Mass.	" 8	New Bedford, Mass.	" 15	Big Sandy, Tenn.	" 8
BROTHER J. A. BOHNET			BROTHER J. A. BAEUERLEIN		
Bentonville, Ark.	Apr. 1	Bidding Springs, Okla.	Apr. 9	Hamburg, N. J.	Mar. 28
Eureka Springs, Ark.	" 2	Muskogee, Okla.	" 11	Camden, N. J.	Apr. 11
Springdale, Ark.	" 3	Peggs, Okla.	" 12		
Fayetteville, Ark.	" 4	Claremore, Okla.	" 14		
Red Star, Ark.	" 6	Nowata, Okla.	" 15		
Swain, Ark.	" 7	Porum, Okla.	" 16		
BROTHER B. H. BOYD			BROTHER E. W. BETLER		
Atkins, Mich.	Apr. 1	Flint, Mich.	Apr. 8	Kingston, N. Y.	Mar. 28
Port Huron, Mich.	" 2	Birch Run, Mich.	" 9		
Detroit, Mich.	" 4	Saginaw, Mich.	" 11		
Holly, Mich.	" 5	Bay City, Mich.	" 12		
Fenton, Mich.	" 6	Caro, Mich.	" 13		
Durand, Mich.	" 7	Midland, Mich.	" 14		
BROTHER E. F. CRIST			BROTHER L. T. COHEN		
Elma, Ia.	Apr. 1	Chariton, Ia.	Apr. 8	Norristown, Pa.	Mar. 28
Waterloo, Ia.	" 2	Moulton, Ia.	" 9	Lansdale, Pa.	" 28
Shellsburg, Ia.	" 3	Des Moines, Ia.	" 11		
Iowa City, Ia.	" 5	Kirkman, Ia.	" 12		
Cedar Rapids, Ia.	" 4	Omaha, Neb.	" 13		
Indianola, Ia.	" 7	Glenwood, Ia.	" 14		
BROTHER A. M. GRAHAM			BROTHER E. J. COWARD		
Niles, Ohio	Apr. 1	Brownsville, Pa.	Apr. 7	Linfield, Pa.	Mar. 28
Youngstown, Ohio	" 2	Illice Landing, Pa.	" 8	Boston, Mass.	Apr. 4
New Brighton, Pa.	" 3	Port Marion, Pa.	" 9		
Pittsburgh, Pa.	" 4	Brandonville, W. Va.	" 11		
Greensburg, Pa.	" 5	Frostburg, Md.	" 12		
Scottsdale, Pa.	" 6	Lonaconing, Md.	" 13		
BROTHER M. L. HERR			BROTHER E. L. DOCKEY		
Yuma, Ariz.	Apr. 1	Lawndale, Cal.	Apr. 7	Washington, D. C.	Mar. 28
San Bernardino, Cal.	" 2	Redondo Beach, Cal.	" 8	Baltimore, Md.	" 28
Riverside, Cal.	" 3	Long Beach, Cal.	" 9		
Los Angeles, Cal.	" 4	San Diego, Cal.	" 11		
Pasadena, Cal.	" 5	Oceanside, Cal.	" 12		
Alhambra, Cal.	" 6	Santa Ana, Cal.	" 13		
BROTHER G. S. KENDALL			BROTHER A. DONALD		
Stephenville, Tex.	Apr. 1	Lubbock, Tex.	Apr. 9	Morgantown, W. Va.	Mar. 28
Dublin, Tex.	" 2	Lamesa, Tex.	" 11	Syracuse, N. Y.	Apr. 11
Clyde, Tex.	" 4	Sweetwater, Tex.	" 12		
Ablene, Tex.	" 5	Port Worth, Tex.	" 13		
Merkel, Tex.	" 6	Bowie, Tex.	" 14		
Barstow, Tex.	" 7	Stoneburg, Tex.	" 15		
BROTHER S. MORTON			BROTHER A. D. ESHLEMAN		
Pride, La.	Apr. 2	Longville, La.	Apr. 12	Scranton, Pa.	Mar. 28
New Orleans, La.	" 4	Port Arthur, Tex.	" 13	Carbondale, Pa.	" 28
Bogalusa, La.	" 6	Silsbee, Tex.	" 14		
Folsom, La.	" 7	Kirbyville, Tex.	" 15		
Jennings, La.	" 9	Jasper, Tex.	" 16		
Lake Charles, La.	" 11	Beaumont, Tex.	" 18		
BROTHER W. H. PICKERING			BROTHER A. R. GOUX		
Punxsutawney, Pa.	Apr. 1	New Brighton, Pa.	Apr. 8	Lancaster, Pa.	Apr. 11
Curry Run, Pa.	" 2	Duquesne, Pa.	" 9		
Mahaffey, Pa.	" 4	Pittsburgh, Pa.	" 11		
Butler, Pa.	" 5	New Kensington, Pa.	" 12		
Ellwood City, Pa.	" 6	Kittanning, Pa.	" 13		
Sharon, Pa.	" 7	Vandergrift, Pa.	" 14		
BROTHER R. L. ROBIE			BROTHER G. H. FISHER		
Vanceboro, N. C.	Apr. 1	Savannah, Ga.	Apr. 9	Camden, N. J.	Mar. 28
Newbern, N. C.	" 2	Jacksonville, Fla.	" 11	Riverside, N. J.	" 28
Charleston, S. C.	" 4	Sanford, Fla.	" 13		
Sumter, S. C.	" 6	Grand Island, Fla.	" 14		
New Brookland, S. C.	" 7	Apopka, Fla.	" 15		
Elko, S. C.	" 8	Orlando, Fla.	" 16		
BROTHER W. J. THORN			BROTHER H. E. HAZLETT		
Newport, Vt.	Apr. 2	Canaan, N. H.	Apr. 9	Allentown, Pa.	Mar. 28
St. Johnsbury, Vt.	" 4	Pittsfield, N. H.	" 11	Paterson, N. J.	Apr. 11
Hanover, N. H.	" 5	Epping, N. H.	" 12		
Charlestown, N. H.	" 6	Kittery, Me.	" 13		
Nashua, N. H.	" 7	Dover, N. H.	" 14		
Manchester, N. H.	" 8	Haverhill, Mass.	" 15		
BROTHER W. E. VAN AMBURGH			BROTHER F. H. ROBISON		
Bridgeport, Conn.	Mar. 28			Mt. Vernon, N. Y.	Mar. 28
Lehighton, Pa.	Apr. 11			Bangor, Pa.	Apr. 11
BROTHER C. A. WISE			BROTHER H. A. SEKLEMIAN		
White Haven, Pa.	Apr. 11			Newark, N. J.	Mar. 28
Rutland, Vt.	" 11			Bloomfield, N. J.	" 28
BROTHER C. H. ZOOK			BROTHER W. E. VAN AMBURGH		
Yonkers, N. Y.	Mar. 28			Pitts. N. Y.	Mar. 28
Valley Stream, N. Y.	Apr. 11				