

## "WHY I WITHDRAW FROM METHODISM.

"Having recently withdrawn from the Methodist church, of which I have been a member for more than thirty years, and knowing, as I do, that some will be wondering at my motive in doing so, and knowing, also, that of the various motives which will be imputed to me, some are likely to be suggested by those who have not investigated the matter for themselves, and hence will be incapable of rendering a fair judgment. I desire to occupy enough space in my county paper in which to give my true reason for the step I have taken, and then leave it to the public to approve or disapprove as they may feel inclined.

"My reason for leaving the church was not that I had any dissatisfaction with, or the slightest ill will towards, a single member of this or any other church, but simply because my honest convictions as to the true interpretation of God's Word had become too much at variance with the doctrines taught by all the churches with which I am acquainted to admit of my longer remaining therein with justice to the church, to myself or my God.

"Whether by chance or by divine intervention the MILLENNIAL DAWN series of Bible helps, consisting of five books, was recently placed in my hands. I confess it was with no little prejudice that I began to investigate the doctrines taught in them, but to my surprise I have found that:—

"1. They teach nothing which is not in the very strictest accord with the New Testament code of morals.

"2. I find that the author of said books 'reasons together' with his readers in the most fair, liberal and logical

manner, giving quotation after quotation and reference after reference to the Bible in support of his construction and understanding thereof.

"So logical, patent and convincing are the theories advanced (if you chose to call them theories: for my part I call them truths) that I cannot resist them. With such beauty and grandeur do the books depict the power, wisdom, justice and love of the great Father, the Creator of all the world, as well as the beneficent character of Christ, the blessed Redeemer of all the world, that my mind has been opened to a far more vivid realization of the actual existence of God and his glorious plans and purposes concerning his creature, man; also the height and depth and length and breadth of the love of Christ, and the far-reaching efficacy of his sacrificial death on the cross, are so apparent that my heart has seemingly enlarged manifold, and my respect, reverence, love and admiration for God and Christ, as well as my love and good will towards my fellow creatures, have reached a point far, far beyond anything I ever before experienced.

"Hence I have determined to throw off the shackles of church creeds and prejudices, and with God's help let the new light shine forth in my daily life; to present the MILLENNIAL DAWN doctrine to as many as desire to hear it, and to help those who hunger and thirst after truth, to the very best of my ability, trusting God for direction and help. So, then, in the fear of God, I heartily recommend every one to procure these books, and with receptive mind and earnest prayer to God for his guidance, read them with Bible in hand.

WILLIAM HUDSPETH."

## A SPECIAL EDITION OF THE LINEAR BIBLE

A short time ago we proposed arranging for a wide-margin Bible, and selected the new Linear Bible as being in every way the best, most up-to-date Teachers' Bible published—possessing an excellent Concordance, and giving in the text the readings of both the Common Version and the Revised Version in good readable type, and of a size not extremely bulky. On the adjoining page we lay before our readers what the publishers have to say in favor of the Linear Bible, and their regular prices for them; also a sample page, showing style of type, etc. By special arrangement we can procure a large quantity of these Bibles for WATCH TOWER subscribers at a very much lower rate than the prices at which they are usually sold. And additionally we can have inserted eighty photographs of the Holy land and vicinity; and have the outer margin made 1 inch wide.

At first it was proposed that TOWER readers should in this margin make reference memoranda to the five volumes of MILLENNIAL DAWN, and the last six years' issues of the WATCH TOWER—opposite each verse, throughout this Bible. Subsequently, however, considering how much labor this would mean—how many hours and days would thus be spent, and how many would fail entirely to secure the desired results, and how many others would blot and blur, and only secure unsatisfactory results, we concluded to see what could be done in the way of *printing* these references in the margin. We find, as hinted in our last issue, that it will be quite an expense, both of labor and of money, to publish the Bible in this manner. But we reflect that when complete it would be one of the greatest blessings to the Lord's people interested in present truth that could possibly be prepared for them; and this would compensate for much trouble. It would be a Bible Commentary arranged in the most satisfactory manner ever designed. It would give the dear friends, as they meet in various parts of the world for the study of the Lord's Word,

an opportunity of having the Editor present with them at each meeting, to offer suggestions respecting the meaning of the texts. This would not mean, of course, that his suggestions would be considered indisputable or infallible, but merely that he would be present with the little companies of the Lord's people throughout the whole world, to discuss with them the Father's Word and to assist as much as possible in throwing a correct light upon its meaning.

We have already received a large number of responses on the basis of our first announcement of a blank wide margin, and unless countermanded we will understand these to be for the Bible as now proposed. But now we invite *postal cards* from all subscribers who have *not responded*, who would like to have the Bible as it is now proposed it shall be; namely, with the references in the margin. It is quite possible that we would never get out another edition, and we believe that every WATCH TOWER reader who can afford it at all should have the Bible proposed, in the cheaper or better binding.

We now propose that if we receive responses from 2,000, we will proceed to publish the Bible as stated, charging the following prices: In "French Seal," divinity circuit, gold edges, linen lined, \$2.00, including postage. In "Persian Seal" (Morocco), gold edges, leather-lined, \$3.00, including postage. These prices will apply only to those who place their orders in advance and thus guarantee us against loss. We may publish a few more than will be represented by the orders, but they will be sold at higher prices. It is our opinion that every WATCH TOWER reader who secures one of these best books, will consider it worth \$10—that he would not sell it for \$10. We invite postal cards *at once*, that the matter may be determined upon. We expect to have them all alike, none with thumb index, which would spoil the references. Send your *postal cards* at once, but send no money until the books are announced as ready.—which will probably be not much before Christmas.

## BALANCING EARTHLY GOOD WITH DIVINE FAVOR

"Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee."—Psa. 63:3.

Loving-kindness, in our text, has the signification of favor. The Prophet, in speaking, represents the church—the Christ, Head and body. The words are applicable to no others. None but the saints esteem divine favor more precious, more valuable, than the present life—than earthly good things. If we ask the world to balance this matter, to weigh on one side of the balances earthly interests, earthly pleasures, family ties, social position, pride, worldly aspirations, and to put on the other side of the balance divine favor, the reply would be that

the earthly good things have all the weight; and that divine favor has none, for the worldly know little or nothing respecting divine favor. They have indeed heard that some people believe in a God, believe in his providential care, believe in his love, believe in a future life, etc., but as for themselves they conclude that such things *may be*, while the earthly things are certainties; and they would not think for a moment of exchanging present certainties for unknown and intangible matters, called divine favor.

If we even ask the average nominal Christian to weigh this matter, and tell us if willing to exchange,—putting in the one side of the balance all the good things, hopes, ambitions, family ties, social position, churchianity, petty office and esteem of men, and putting into the other side of the scale God's favor,—he will hesitate and eventually decide that he will do nothing of the kind. The reason with many is that they do not appreciate divine favor. They have heard and believed certain things respecting the Almighty, some of them true and some of them false; and the misrepresentations of God's character have so neutralized and offset and made non-effective the truths which they have learned, that they lack confidence in the unseen: with such, worldly interests outweigh appreciation of divine favor ten to one. The truths they learned were respecting God's love and his gracious provision for his fallen creatures through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus our Lord; and that he willeth not the death of him that dieth, but would that all should turn unto him and live, in the enjoyment of endless blessing.

These truths are found in the sure Word of God; the untruths which they have learned came from a human source, or rather more remotely, from the great Adversary himself, Satan, "the god of this world," as the Apostle calls him. As he tells us, "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not"—blinded them to the real character and plan of Jehovah, and deluded them into thinking of him most unkindly, most disreputably we might almost say most blasphemously. He has blinded them into thinking that the Almighty, while declaring that he has all power, has declared also that he will exercise this power beneficially only over a mere handful of earth's teeming millions—that he will take out this sample to show his power and what he could have done for all if he had wanted to, and exercise his power in hurling the great mass of his creation into eternal torment;—that he made provision to this end before the creation of mankind,—prepared a great and awful place of torture,—prepared the fuel for eternity,—and prepared the devils to see that nothing was lacking in the worst form of torture.

Is it any wonder that those who have thus received human traditions instead of the Word of God, those who believe such terrible things respecting the Creator and his plans, things which outrank in cruelty the doctrines of the heathen, received from the same Satanic source, should doubt the love of such a God? It is no wonder that such find themselves unable to reconcile such human theories with the plain Scriptural declaration that God is love, very pitiful, very merciful, and that his mercy endureth forever; and that he doth not willingly afflict the children of men. The two thoughts are in violent conflict, the one represents God as loving and kind; the other represents him as a demon of the worst imaginable character: and it is no wonder that those who have in their minds this mixture of human traditions which make void the Word of God, are unable to see God from the right standpoint implied in our text—unable to see his loving kindness, so great, so good, so beneficent, toward all of his creatures.—unable to reconcile such human theory with the Scriptural declaration, that Jesus Christ by the grace of God tasted death for every man, and that this grace of God in Christ is yet to be testified in due time to every creature, and that thus all are eventually to come to a knowledge of the truth, and thus all eventually to have an opportunity for life everlasting.—1 Tim. 2:4:

Is it any wonder that those who entertain so mixed a conception of the Almighty's character, when they attempt to balance the loving favor of God with earthly good things, find that the scale weighs down toward the earthly things, because, altho they appreciate some features of the divine character, these are practically neutralized by such misrepresentations of the adversary through false theories. Well does the Apostle explain the object of this blindness on the part of Satan, saying, "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Cor. 4:4) Ah yes, here it is! The goodness of God, the loving kindness of God, God's favor, does not shine into the hearts of many, and while it does shine a little into some hearts, thick darkness of error hinders their hearts from receiving the full benefit of the light, and its blessing and joy. Such as are in this position find it impossible to love the Lord with all their heart, with all their mind, with all their being, with all their strength; because from all that they know of him, through this false representation of his character, he is not worthy of much love. The fear of the Lord might operate upon them under such circumstances, and might be balanced against the world and its good things, but

his "loving kindness" has comparatively little weight in their lives.

Are we to suppose, then, that there were no saints in the past, because in the past these false ideas of God held full sway amongst his professed children? Are we to suppose that Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, Calvin, Knox, the Wesleys and others, were not saints, and not joint-inheritors with Christ in the kingdom? No; on the contrary, we presume that these were saints, and that they laid down their lives in the Lord's service; and we merely mention these prominent names as illustrations, and not by way of saying that they were the only saints of their times, and not disputing either that there were saints before them, all through the dark ages, as well as in the primitive church.

What we do claim, however, is that the mixed theology, which represents God as half love and half devil, never produced the sanctifying effect which we see in the lives of the class we have mentioned. We hold that all those who reached the point of saintship described in our text, and who were able to balance the present life and its earthly good things with the loving favor of God, and to prefer God's favor rather than life, so that they were willing to sacrifice earthly interests, that they might have the divine favor, both as respects the life which now is, and that which is to come,—these never reached this position through their mixed theology, but attained this grand position only in proportion as they were able to forget or ignore the human and Satanic blasphemies respecting the divine character, and to think of God from the standpoint of pure justice and love. Some of them have told us in their writings how terribly this devil-inspired theology weighed upon them; how they found the theory so antagonistic to all their conceptions of divine justice, mercy and love, that the only thing they could do under the circumstances was to shut the eyes of their minds to the nightmare of hell and devils and torments, and to say to the Lord, O Lord, I cannot understand this, but I accept thee as a very God of love and justice, and I know that when I shall see thee as thou art, and when I shall see all the works of thy great and wonderful plan, then I shall realize, as I cannot now realize, wherein divine justice and love are compatible with this awful theory of eternal torment for all except the little flock, the elect.

Thus by shutting their eyes to the error, and opening their eyes by faith to the real character of God, substantiated by so many declarations of his Word, the class we refer to, through all the darkness of the dark ages, was indeed enabled to love God supremely, so that they counted not their lives dear unto them, that they might have his favor; they were willing to lay down life and earthly advantages and hopes and favors, that they might have the divine favor now and everlastingly. And if God's people in the past were enabled to triumph in spite of blindness, what shall we say respecting our position today, now that the due time has come for this veil that was spread over all nations to be taken away, so that the true light of the knowledge of God, shining in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord, should shine into our hearts and give us to see through his Word, and freed from human tradition and Satanic misrepresentation, the justice and the loving kindness of our God!

How shall we today balance this question of earthly life and its advantages and privileges and hopes and aims with the favor of God? Well, it will be a test to us, as it has been a test all through the ages. Those who are merely glad to find out that there is no eternal torment, and whose hearts are not touched with the "loving kindness" of God, will go on in the world, rejoicing that they have been delivered from a bondage of error, but not returning to give glory to God and to offer themselves in his service. And these, alas! are the majority; like the ten lepers who were cleansed by our Lord, of whom only one returned to give thanks and to become a follower of Jesus. Thus the test goes on today, as ever; for the Lord is now seeking only the kingdom class, only the little flock, and he wishes to have in it only such as love him supremely—only such as, having tasted that the Lord is gracious, desire to and do feast upon his favor, enjoying it, relishing it, appreciating it far beyond any earthly pleasure, any earthly hope, any earthly ambition, any earthly love.

This class today and at all times has been the same,—of one spirit with their Head. The Apostle Paul voices their sentiments: speaking on this very subject, and weighing the earthly life with the divine favor, he says: "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ and be found in him. . . . That I may know

him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead." (Phil 3:7-11). The Apostle's sentiment is that of all the saints; it is that of all who will be accounted "overcomers," and who will be accounted inheritors of the promise of joint-hen-ship with Jesus. Nothing short of this will do. We must appreciate the loving favor of God as *better than earthly life*, else we are not worthy of him and not of the Kind he is seeking. And it is with all who have the Lord's spirit just as it was with the Apostle; the moment they begin to weigh and contrast fellowship with God and the eternal hopes associated therewith, in contrast with earthly loves and family ties and earthly ambitions and pleasures, the latter all seem to be quite insignificant in comparison, dross as compared to pure gold. And from this standpoint they gladly renounce all, giving up life itself for the favor of God.

#### ATTAINING CHRISTIAN MATURITY

But this full development is not at the beginning of the Christian experience with us, nor was it at the beginning of Paul's experience. It is development attained by growth. At the very beginning, however, it was necessary, before either Paul or we could be accepted at all of the Lord, as begotten to the new nature, that we should first balance the loving favor of God with the earthly good things, and the balance must be settled on the side of divine favor, so that we would give up the other.—earthly life, earthly hopes, earthly aims, earthly pleasures, consecrating them to sacrifice, in such measure as may be necessary in order to maintain divine favor and blessing. From the time the scale was thus turned to the Lord's side, and our hearts were consecrated to him, earthly things began to lose their weight and to lose their value, to lose appreciation in our eyes, as our eyes began to open the wider to the heavenly things; and the latter became more and more weighty with us more and more real, until we could see with the eye of faith him who is invisible to the natural sight, and the crown of glory, and the exceeding great and precious things which God has in reservation for them that love him, and be more and more strengthened thereby. And so with some it may have been after weeks or months or years that they reached the position attained by the Apostle when he wrote, as above, that all earthly things were henceforth but as loss and dross when weighed in comparison with Christ and God's loving kindness or favor toward us in him.

This loving favor of God, so much appreciated by the saints that they consecrate their earthly all to obtain it, is not merely a favor as respects future prospects and hopes—not merely as respects the kingdom to come and the glory and the honor and immortality then to be granted to such as are in divine favor, but it extends to the present life. Gradually we come to appreciate fellowship and communion with the Father to such a degree as to produce misery of soul if this communion is interrupted. And this sentiment is beautifully expressed in the hymn which we sometimes sing:—

"Sun of my soul my Father dear,  
I know no night when thou are near;  
O let no earth-born cloud arise  
To hide thee from thy servant's eyes."

The true child of God will be in such close fellowship with the Father, and with the spirit of truth and righteousness and love, that anything which would interrupt or hinder this fellowship would be esteemed a calamity, however sweet or precious it might be to the natural man. The new creature is willing rather to cut it off, if it were dear as a right hand; to pluck it out, if it were precious as a right eye; than to allow any earthly thing to intervene between him and the divine loving-favor which he has learned so to enjoy that he considers it better than all the rest of life.

#### "THEREFORE WILL MY LIPS PRAISE THEE"

Many Christians, confused with the Babylonian din of false, contradictory theories, have felt that they would desire to show forth the Lord's praise; but then to offset this there arises in their minds the terrible errors which, as a great nightmare, darken their souls and hush their lips, so that as a rule few are found ready to speak of the Lord and his matters except those who speak either from a sense of *duty* or from a love of money and position. And so it is that today were the emoluments of honor and salary taken away, and were it necessary in order to be a minister of Christ to follow the example of the Apostle Paul, and to labor, working with their hands, in some sort of tent-making, nearly all

of the ministers of Babylon would cease preaching. As it is, the ablest and most intelligent of them can only be retained in the service by making it pay them better in money and honor of men than any other occupation which they know of.

On the other hand, those who have tasted of the Lord's grace, those who have come to realize his favor as *better than life*, and who have joyfully laid upon his altar every earthly good thing, and hope and ambition, rejoice to tell the good tidings to others; they rejoice to tell forth the praises of him who called them out of darkness into his marvelous light. The message is too good to keep, they not only do not require to be hired to tell it, but they are willing that the telling of it, and the enjoying of God's favor in connection with the telling, shall cost them something—cost them trouble, cost them money, cost them the loss of earthly friendships, cost the straining if not the breaking of some of home ties, cost the frown of the world and of churchianity,—yes, they rejoice, saying, in the language of the Prophet, "He hath put a new song into my mouth, even the *loving-kindness* of our God!"

Some one, perhaps, will say this is exaggeration; it will not cost earthly friendships nor home ties; it will bring with it respect and honor of men, and a salary. We answer, "No! The Lord's Word is still true; he is still the example to all who will walk in his footsteps. For what did the Master suffer the loss of social position? Why did the doctors of divinity of his day, and the notables of the religious people, hide as it were their faces from him? Why did they finally become so embittered against him, and so hate him, that they crucified him? Was it because, of evil-doing on his part? Nay, but "he went about doing good." It was because he told the truth—truths which they believed in great measure, but with which they had mixed "traditions of the elders" which blinded them and made them children of darkness. Our Lord gives us the key to the situation when he says "The darkness hateth the light." The darkness does not hate the light so that it will not wear a garment of light to deceive and so the adversary, in inculcating the darkness of misrepresentation of the divine character, takes care that this false doctrine shall always have associated with it, to some extent, as a sugar-coating, a garment of love and charity also. He associates a blasphemous misrepresentation of the divine character, which teaches that God is hurrying the masses of poor, frail humanity into the hands of demons for eternal torture, with moral platitudes and churchwork, and on the other hand satisfies the human cravings for better lives by instituting hospitals, asylums, orphanages, etc., thus giving mankind the suggestion that they are really better than God, for they would care for and assist the poor and the weak and the fallen, while the Almighty would deliver them over to demons and torment, and foreknew and purposed it so from the beginning—this is their theory.

Those who were deluded by Satan at our Lord's first advent so hated the glorious message which he brought, and so hated his purity and truthfulness, that they called him the prince of devils, Beelzebub, and he told his followers that it he was thus treated they must not marvel if they shared a somewhat similar experience. And as his persecutions and oppositions came not from the world, the Gentiles, the heathen, but from the professed holiness people of his time, so all through the dark ages, and at the present time, those opposing the Lord and the truth are not worldly people, but sectarians whom Satan has more than half blinded with his false doctrines and misrepresentations. We are not, therefore, to be surprised that we find it as the Lord declares, that wherever his truth goes it will be like a sword to separate, and that especially in the home and the family. And as he declared, "Ye shall be hated of all men for my sake."—Matt. 10:22.

These experiences are for the very purpose of testing us, as the Lord's experiences were for the purpose of testing him. He consecrated his life fully and completely at the beginning of his ministry, when he reached thirty years of age, and symbolized his consecration in baptism. So fully did he appreciate the heavenly Father's loving kindness and favor that it required not a moment's hesitation for him to decide that it was better than life—to decide to sacrifice the earthly life; and immediately he began to proclaim the truths respecting the divine love and provision. And well he understood from the beginning how this would bring the hatred of nominal professors of Judaism, and that in thus letting his lips praise the Lord he was doing so at the cost of his earthly life, and all the blessings and privileges associated therewith.

Likewise with those who walk in Jesus' footsteps in the

narrow way; however much it may surprise them, they find that the proclamation of good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people—the loving favor of our God, manifested in Jesus Christ our Lord—told in its fulness, brings the hate, the scorn, the persecution of nominal Christendom of today. Those who love the present life close their lips and refrain from speaking his loving kindness; but those faithful to their covenant, and appreciative of the Lord's favor, as "better than life," will show forth his praise at any and every cost of an earthly kind.

The "harvest" message of good tidings which is now revealed to the Lord's consecrated people, by which they discern the loving kindness of God, which they feel they must

tell forth to others, not for money, nor for reputation, but at the cost of worldly reputation, at the cost of financial loss, at the cost of home trials and difficulties—this message is the "new song" mentioned by the prophets, that the Lord has put into the mouths of his consecrated ones. It is the same new song that is mentioned by our Lord in Revelation, which none others might sing except the elect 144,000, who have the Father's name in their foreheads—publicly professed. If others hear of the song they cannot sing it, because it costs something to sing this song. "Because thy loving favor is better than life [more esteemed by us, more than all of earthly life and its good things] therefore will my lips praise thee."

## THE MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT

Our issue of July 15 contained an article on this subject which should be put into the hands of all of "Rev." John Alex. Dowie's followers, who give evidence of sincerity;—peradventure they might be recovered out of one of Satan's snares. Remember the words of the Apostle.—James 5:20.

We printed an extra edition of that issue in order to give you this opportunity for service. Order *free*, as many as you will promise to use judiciously. Or send us the addresses and we will mail them direct.

## GOD'S PROMISE TO ABRAHAM REITERATED

GEN. 15:1-18.—AUG. 11.

*"I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."*

Lot had not lived a great while in Sodom when King Chedorlaomer descended upon the Sodomites with an army and took away many persons and great spoils of flocks, herds, etc., including Lot and his family and possessions. Word of this affair reached Abraham, who armed his own servants, 318, and with two associates pursued the victors, who, doubtless expecting no army or night attack, were careless as to their defenses, and being surprised by a night attack were routed; and Lot and his family and goods, and the Sodomites and their goods were released. The conduct of Abraham in connection with this matter was most noble and unselfish. Not only did he inconvenience himself and all his affairs for the sake of others, but subsequently he refused any share of the booty which he had saved. Would that the children of God could fully appreciate such benevolence and copy it more in the little affairs of life! Much of the distress prevailing in the world is the direct or indirect result of selfishness, and all of the Lord's people should be on the alert to practice and to exemplify the opposite spirit of benevolence in the little things as well as in the great things of life; and should remember that selfishness is a depravity, which needs to be fought against, and to be, so far as possible, overcome by the new nature.

One would have supposed that Lot's vexatious experience in Sodom, and after experience in his capture and subsequent deliverance by his uncle, would have led him to desire a reunion with his uncle, with a keener appreciation than ever of the fact that God was with his uncle, blessing him and guiding his affairs and interests. But this does not seem to have been the case; he was still willing to cast his lot with the ungodly. He reminds us of the words of the Psalmist, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." (Psa. 1:1) Lot did not pursue this course, and hence failed of a blessing. It was not sufficient that his righteous soul should be "vexed" continually by the misconduct of those about him; his love for righteousness should have been such as to lead him to the sacrifice of temporal interests on behalf of his own heart and on behalf of the interests of his family. Let all of the Lord's people who may find themselves in a similar position remember the Apostle's words, "Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed."—Heb. 12:13.

It was directly after his experience in the delivery of Lot and the defeat of Chedorlaomer, and while Abraham was evidently feeling somewhat disheartened or discouraged, that the Lord again manifested himself to him. We do not know the cause of the discouragement, but may infer that he realized that in his attack upon, and defeat of the army and the military forces behind it, he had probably incurred a displeasure which could not be wiped out by anything short of the destruction of his own camp. As ever, Abraham was peaceably disposed; and the battle he had just won implied the straining of his whole nature. He had done what he considered to be his duty in the interest of justice, and especially in the defense of his own ward, Lot; but now that the excitement was past the reaction set in, and with it certain

gloomy feelings and forebodings. So also some of the Lord's people today have moments in which for various reasons the flame of faith and hope smokes, and darkens the eyes of their understanding and the clearness of their perception of the divine character and plan; but if they still hold firmly by faith to the hands of divine providence they will find, as Abraham did, that even the trials and difficulties and discouragements of life will be overruled for good to them.

It was while Abraham was downcast that the Lord appeared to him in vision and said to him, in the language of our Golden Text, "Fear not, Abraham: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Apparently this was the great lesson that God was teaching him and which he was learning by the experience permitted, much better than had the Lord not delayed some of the promised favors. Abraham was now 84 years old; and, altho wealthy and highly favored of the Lord, he was a pilgrim and a stranger, away from kindred and home through his respect to the divine call and promise. He had no children to cheer and enliven and comfort his home, and even his nephew, Lot, whom he had not detained unwillingly, had preferred the companionship of the wicked and had left him, and even when rescued from his enemies, at the cost of danger and sacrifice, he had not appreciated the matter fully, and still preferred the strangers.

No wonder poor Abraham felt as tho his life, passing quickly by, was a comparative failure—no wonder he felt discouraged. How the words of the vision must have brought new thoughts, new sentiments to his heart; God was his *shield*—to protect him, to guard him from the anger and power of all the kings of earth and their armies, and able and willing to make all things work together for his good. What a comfort was in this thought. How it reminds us that God is our shield also; our protector from every evil thing and power. The thought is beautifully expressed in one of our hymns:—

"Shield of my soul, tho tempests rage,  
And 'gainst me hosts of foes engage,  
My refuge and my fortress thou;  
Before thee every foe must bow."

The latter part of the message is no less striking: the fact that, not flocks nor herds nor servants nor children nor friends, were to be the *price* upon which his heart should be set; but that God himself was to be his *reward*;—the having of God for a friend and counselor and guide was to be esteemed far beyond every earthly interest and blessing. And so it is also with the church of the Gospel age. We may have blessings or adversities or both, as respects the present life. We have promises which pertain to the life that now is and also to that which is to come; but all of these together are inferior, subordinate to the one great thought that God, the great Creator is ours.—our Father, our God, our Friend.

Undoubtedly Abraham's heart was comforted by this message; and yet his reason was still operative, and hence his inquiry of the Lord, How can you bless me and fulfil to me your gracious promises, seeing that I go childless—seeing that my servant Eliezer and his children are the only heirs

apparent for my estate? Is it wonderful, Lord, that I should feel discouraged, seeing that apparently the most indispensable part of your promise is unfulfilled for now fourteen years, and that Sarah and myself are growing old; and that even my nephew, Lot, who might have perpetuated the family and been the heir of my estate, cares not for me and has gone from me? The Lord was not displeased to have Abraham use his reason in this manner, for it was not a reasoning of skepticism or doubt as respected the divine power, but merely the proper questioning of faith as to how the promises on which he had left his home could be fulfilled; and a request for guidance in understanding. And so may we inquire of the Lord respecting his gracious promises. Indeed, he invites us to reason, saying, "Come, let us reason together." In Abraham's case the Lord merely repeated and amplified previous statements to the effect that he should have a child of his own who should be his heir; and leading him out from his dwelling in the starry night, he assured him that his children would yet be multitudinous as the stars of heaven. This feature of the promise evidently applies to the spiritual seed—the Christ, the elect of God, Head and body, as explained by the Apostle. (Gal. 3:29; 1 Pet. 1:2) The other expressions,—“as the dust of the earth,” and “as the sands of the sea,” represent not the natural children of Abraham, but the whole number of the human family who, under the blessing of the spiritual seed, during the Millennium, shall ultimately attain to the *faith* and *obedience* of Abraham, and full human restitution and the Lord's reward for these—life everlasting.—Rom. 11:12, 15, 32.

The record is that Abraham believed on the Lord—his faith in God triumphed over every obstacle and rested securely, confidently;—his doubts and fears fleeing away. The faith of Abraham is the particular point of his character prominently set before us in the Scriptures for the encouragement of our faith, for our example. Abraham was not perfect, even as others of our race are imperfect.—“There is none righteous, no, not one.” (Rom. 3:10) But we are told that God so highly esteemed Abraham's faith that he counted it as making up for his natural blemishes and imperfections. “It was counted [reckoned] to him for righteousness.” (Rom. 4:3) He had faith in what God had told him, and, as James (2:22) points out, he manifested his faith by his general conduct. We of the Gospel age are also justified by faith—righteousness is reckoned to us through the exercise of faith—but not faith in the same promises.

God does not promise us earthly children nor an earthly inheritance in the land of Palestine as he did promise to Abraham; hence we are not to have faith in the same things. As the Apostle says, God has given unto us “exceeding great and precious promises”—promises much greater than those given to Abraham: heavenly, instead of earthly promises. We are to believe the promises given to us and to act upon them as implicitly as Abraham believed the promises given to him and acted upon them. The promises made to Abraham were attested by the Lord's word and by his oath, and similarly, tho on a still higher plane, the Lord has made known to us, has attested to us, his love and power, and his willingness to perform for us all the good things promised.

In answer to Abraham's request the Lord attested his promise in connection with sacrifices, after a manner that was probably customary at that time as described in our lesson. The sacrificed animals, part over against part, were separated by a narrow path along which between the parts passed a small furnace enveloped in smoke, out of which shot a flame of fire. In connection with the weird scene the Lord revealed to Abraham that his posterity would not come into the land of promise for some four hundred years after his son should be born, but would have affliction as a people, even as Israel experienced this in Egypt. The four hundred years being a statement in round numbers, otherwise more explicitly stated as four hundred and thirty years, included the wanderings of Isaac and Jacob before going down into Egypt, as well as the captivity in Egypt. The revelation further pointed out the fact that the deliverance of Israel from Egypt would be with great wealth, and that in connection with it judgments of the Lord would come upon Egypt, and that meantime the Amorites, who then resided in Canaan, would fill to the full the measure of their iniquity, and fully deserve to lose the land of promise; and at that time Israel would be brought in to inherit it.

As God's favor and faithfulness toward Abraham were attested by the sacrifices and revelations of the divine plan, so do they testify to his faithfulness in this Gospel age, that we also may have strong consolation, and full assurance of faith. He testifies to us the fulness of his favor and love

by showing us the better sacrifices for sins, through which the New Covenant is sealed, ratified, made operative. He has shown us through his Word that darkness must prevail for a time, and that the Christ (Head and body) must be brought in contact with the fiery furnace of trial and affliction, the smoke of which might well represent the incidental confusion and darkness that necessitates our walk by faith and not by sight, while the flame of light would represent our guidance by the holy Spirit. Being thus assured by the Lord of his love for us, and of the bountiful provision made for our welfare, and of the necessity for trials, persecutions and difficulties during the time of the great darkness, we are strengthened in our faith and enabled to endure as seeing him who is invisible, and to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

It was at this time that the Lord revealed to Abraham that the great blessings already promised him were to have a far distant fulfillment—for it was here indicated that he should die and his children not inherit the land for some four hundred years: and that he would not see the fulfillment of the promises, altho a part of the promise was that he, as well as his seed, should inherit that land, and join in the work of universal blessing and uplifting of humanity. Abraham was thus indirectly taught to hope in the resurrection, for this last revelation clearly implied that he could have neither part nor lot in it except God would raise him from the dead. And this was in full accord with the subsequent words of Stephen (Acts 7:5) It was no doubt for Abraham's good that the Lord did not tell him that it would be about four thousand years before the full blessing would begin.—did not reveal to him that the natural seed could not inherit all of the great promises;—that the likeness of his seed to the stars of heaven and to the sands of the sea were two different figures;—the first representing the spiritual or heavenly seed, and the other an earthly or human seed. It was to his advantage not to know that so long a time would elapse before the completion of the spiritual seed, of which Christ is the Head and the Gospel church the body; and that through this seed, glorified, must come the blessings upon the earthly seed, and through the latter to all the families of the earth during the Millennial age.

But God has revealed these things to us, and we may well feel that we have more advantage every way in connection with the divine promises and plan than even faithful Abraham, whose trustfulness under very adverse conditions is a stimulus to all of God's children. We have not only his example, but many other noble examples, including that of our Lord and his apostles; and we can see, under the guidance of the Word, as revealed by the spirit, that all things have been and are yet working together harmoniously for the development of the Lord's great plan for man's salvation, briefly summarized in his promise to Abraham, “In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”

Nothing is more evident than that God's promises to Abraham have not yet been fulfilled. Abraham reasoned that they would not be fulfilled in his day; Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets reasoned that they had not been fulfilled during the Jewish age; and the Apostle declares that the whole twelve tribes of Israel were still waiting for the fulfillment of those promises in his day. (Acts 26:6,7) Those promises have surely not been fulfilled during this Gospel age, as we all are witnesses—the natural seed of Abraham has been outcast, persecuted and without divine favor, while the true ones of spiritual Israel, though possessed of divine favor and rejoicing therein, have been persecuted and caused to suffer for righteousness' sake, and thereby to learn lessons of patience and experience to prepare them for the great work they are yet to do in fulfillment of the divine promises to Abraham.

The Apostle Paul clearly sets this matter forth in Gal. 3:16-29. He tells us that Christ is the seed of Abraham—the spiritual seed; and are not we “members of the body of Christ,” over whom, as the Scriptures declare, Jesus Christ is the Head forever under God's blessing? (Eph. 1:22, 23) And so the Apostle declares (vs. 29), “If ye be Christ's [members], then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

And if the Lord's saints are still heirs of that Abrahamic promise, assuredly it proves that the promise has not yet reached fulfillment. Thank God that we are still privileged to be heirs of that wonderful promise, “heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together.” Let our faith be strong, trusting in the promise and in him who made it, who is able to do for us, and for all who trust in him, exceedingly abundantly more and better things than we know



how to ask or expect. Let us through patient perseverance, based upon an undimmed faith, complete our sojourning here; and by the Lord's grace make our calling and election

sure to a share in the promised glory, honor and immortality and in the opportunity to bless, which the Lord purposes to give to the faithful in Christ Jesus.

## ABRAHAM'S AGE ON ENTERING CANAAN

We are in receipt of a number of letters, calling attention to what seems to the writers an error in the chronology given in the *MILLENNIAL DAWN*, VOL. II., relative to the date of Abraham's birth, his entrance into Canaan, etc. For the sake of these, as well as others who may have the same difficulty, we here enlarge upon what is stated in VOL. II., pages 44-47.

Gen. 11:32, says that at his death Terah's age was two hundred and five years; Acts 7:4 says that *then* Abraham removed into Canaan; and Gen. 12:4 states that Abraham was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. Hence Terah's age at Abraham's birth *must have been* one hundred and thirty years.

But is not this out of harmony with Gen. 11:26, which says: "And Terah lived *seventy years* and begat Abraham, Nahor and Haran?" We answer, No. The point of confusion is in the fact that Haran, the eldest, is mentioned last, while Abram, the youngest, is mentioned first—possibly because of his greater prominence in the narrative, or possibly,

as a little stumbling-block to hinder us from seeing the facts except as guided by the Lord, in his due time.

That Haran was the eldest of the sons of Terah is quite evident from the recorded facts. His son Lot was old enough to be the companion of his uncle Abraham. Lot and Abraham were probably nearly of the same age, as each had his own flocks and herds and herdsmen. When Sodom was destroyed Lot had two daughters of marriageable age and others already married. This was before Isaac was born, Abraham being then ninety-nine years old.—Gen. 17:24; 18:16; 19:8, 14.

Again, notice the likelihood of Haran's being much the oldest of Terah's sons, and Nahor the second, thus,—Nahor married one of his brother Haran's daughters (Milcah—See Gen. 24:15), whose *grand-daughter*, Rebekah, became the wife of Abraham's son, Isaac.—Gen. 24:67.

Our reckoning as given in the *DAWN* is, therefore, sustained by all the known facts, as well as by the exact statements of Scripture.

## QUESTIONS ON THE RESURRECTION HOPE

### WHAT IS GUARANTEED BY THE RANSOM?

*Question.*—Would it be correct for us to say that our Lord Jesus by his death canceled the sins of the entire human family, so that there is now no condemnation to any?

*Answer.*—No; this would not be a correct statement. The Scriptural declaration is, "There is now no condemnation to *them that are in Christ Jesus*." There is still condemnation upon all who have not yet come into Jesus through faith in the precious blood and through a reformation of life in harmony with that faith. This is directly implied by the Apostle's words. Again, he says, "We were children of wrath, even as others [are], but we who believe [who have accepted Jesus] have escaped the condemnation that is on the world." These Scriptures imply that the condemnation was still on the world at the time of these letters, after our Lord's death and resurrection.

Consequently the death of Jesus did not cancel the condemnation, it did not remove the sins, and all the world of mankind not only have continued under the condemnation, but also under its sentence of death, and have died, the same since Jesus died as before—except in the case of the church, whose death is reckoned as being no longer Adamic death, as a penalty for sin, but as "being dead with him," as joint-sacrifices, participators in the sin-offerings.

That our Lord's death did not cancel sin is again attested by the Apostle Peter's declaration to some at Pentecost (after our Lord's death and resurrection, ascension, etc.): "Repent and be converted, that your sins *may be* blotted out when times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, and he shall send Jesus Christ [at the second advent]." This Scripture shows that the blotting out is a future work, just as the Apostle elsewhere shows that the sins of those who are in Christ Jesus are now covered from God's sight, to permit us to have present blessings and privileges, prior to the time when the sins shall be blotted out. The sins of the church will be blotted out, and no more record will appear of them forever, as soon as the first resurrection shall have taken place, for all who have part in it will have perfect bodies, without a trace of sin, blemish or imperfection in them. And as for the world of mankind in general, the blotting out of the world's sins will be during the "times of restitution"—a gradual work, as implied in the word "blotting." Every one who accepts Christ and the kingdom, and endeavors to live in harmony with the Lord under the terms of the New Covenant, will, during the thousand years of Christ's reign, find his sins, his blemishes, mental, moral and physical, gradually giving way, yielding to perfection, and they will thus be in process of blotting out until, at the close of the Millennial age, there shall no sin remain unblotted out for any one who has desired to have them blotted out, and who shall have availed himself of the abundant privileges of that time.

Thus we see, by two lines of demonstration, either of which would be sufficient, that Christ has not canceled the sins of the whole world, nor the sins of any, and that he has merely covered the sins of the church, preparatory to the

cleansing time, while the world's sins are not even covered. To make these two proofs the more conspicuous we will state them thus: (1) The fact that God's Word speaks of the world as being still under condemnation, and children of wrath, is a conclusive proof that their sins are not blotted out. (2) The fact that sin, and its wages of death, including pain, sickness, etc., are still inflicted upon humanity, is a second and indisputable proof that the sins are not blotted out, for if they had been blotted out it would be wrong on God's part to punish for sins no longer recognized.

*Question.*—If Christ's death did not effect the cancellation of man's sins, wherein lies the fault? Does it imply that the sacrifice was not sufficient to cancel the sins, or does it imply that God has not been just toward the sinners, but has accepted a payment from Jesus and is also requiring a payment directly from the individual sinner, as tho he had not accepted Christ's ransom sacrifice?

*Answer.*—Neither of these is implied by the fact that the world's sins are not yet blotted out. The Scriptural statement of the matter is that our Lord bought the whole world with his own precious blood. (1 Pet. 1:19) There is no statement anywhere in the Scriptures to the effect that the sins of the whole world were canceled by Christ's death, nor that God ever purposed to cancel the sins of the world as an offset to the sacrifice of our dear Redeemer. On the contrary, the Scriptures everywhere hold out the thought that neither the blotting out of sins nor even their covering, is possible, except as the sinner shall first of all accept of Jesus through faith. Thus we read that God arranged the plan as he did arrange it, in order that "he might be just, and yet be the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." There is no proposition in this text, or in any other, to justify any others than believers—no proposition to justify the world in sin, but merely to justify those who desire to escape from sin and its penalties, accepting of Christ as the Savior.

The statement of 2 Cor. 5:19 is in full accord with this. It represents a work begun by God in Christ, but not yet concluded. The *ministry of reconciliation*, committed to the church, will not be finished until the close of the Millennium; and whoever of mankind shall by that time have failed to accept the reconciliation, proffered by God in Christ, will "be destroyed from among the people."—Acts 3:23.

The statement that our Lord Jesus was a propitiation (satisfaction) for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world, implies that his death was sufficient in merit to meet the penalty against every individual and to satisfy the claims of divine justice against each individual. However, the canceling of the sentence which Justice had decreed against Adam and his progeny would include and imply nothing of restitution whatever. It was merely a sentence that Adam could not live, having forfeited his right to life. The fact that after this sentence came upon Adam, and while under it, he and his race decayed mentally and physically, and became morally leprous, has nothing

whatever to do with the original sentence—the degeneracy of the race is a side issue. It resulted from the sentence of death, but was not a part of it, and the removal of the sentence of death need not mean a recovery from the fall.

The sentence of the divine law against Adam and his race, prohibiting them from the privileges of life, having been paid by the Lord Jesus' sacrifice, and the payment having been accepted by the Father, there can be no objection now raised on the part of Justice to hinder the sinner and his race from having eternal life if they can now demonstrate their worthiness of it. Had such an offer been made to father Adam the day after his transgression and expulsion from Eden, he would doubtless have gladly reentered Paradise and stood a fresh trial, and with better hopes of success, having learned something, at least, by his experience. But after six thousand years of falling and degradation under the dominion of sin, Adam and his race are in no condition to profit by the removal of the sentence of Justice which was against them, being unable, in their fallen condition, to comply with the divine requirements, if granted a new trial by the Father. Hence this proposition is set aside at once as infeasible, and instead God turns over the entire race to his only begotten Son, their Redeemer, that the Son may institute amongst those whom he redeemed processes of restitution, which will be helpful to them in bringing them up again to the grand perfection originally enjoyed by father Adam. And when this work of restitution shall have been accomplished, the world, furnished with a large experience both in the fall and their restitution from it, will be ready for final testings or judgments preparatory to acceptance of those who stand the tests to eternal life which were set before father Adam, but which he failed to attain through disobedience.

In order to make this restitution process of the largest advantage possible to mankind, the divine plan is that step after step of the journey upward from degradation to perfection shall be attained only through the coöperation of the restored ones with their Redeemer and Restorer. To this end it is called a period of judgments or discipline, under which every effort for righteousness will bring its meet of blessing, and every dereliction bring its stripes or punishments. Thus day by day and year by year during these "times of restitution" the lesson on the desirability of righteousness and heinousness of sin will be given to the world of mankind, with every encouragement to those who will to do right; but with the rod, and eventually "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord," to all those who, under those favorable conditions, love iniquity and serve it rather than righteousness.

Thus seen, Christ's death became the offset and cancellation of the legal sentence against man, but it did not and was not intended to remove his degradation. Man's sentence, recorded in the race, mentally, morally and physically, is still in evidence all about us, and will continue in evidence even after the Millennial reign has begun, and until the gradual processes of "blotting out" these sins shall, by the close of the Millennium, have completely obliterated them. The record of sin is in every human being, and the blotting out of those sins will mean the full restoration of that being to the image and likeness of God. This blotting out of sins, therefore, was not accomplished by the satisfying of the claims of justice and the removal of the sentence of death, but must be accomplished, if at all, in the divinely arranged manner, by processes of restitution to the image and likeness of God—to which none will attain except as they coöperate with the great Restorer—the Life-giver, Christ.

Suppose an illustration of this matter of the canceling of the sentence in respect to an earthly criminal sentence by an earthly court. Suppose a criminal had been sentenced for life, and that fifteen years after sentence he was pardoned and set at liberty. In those years he might have changed quite considerably, might have contracted disease and have become bald-headed and crippled with rheumatism. But no one would suppose for an instant that in pardoning him the court would undertake additionally to give him back his hair, his strength, his health, and the fifteen years of life which he had lost in prison. Neither does the remission of the original sentence by the heavenly court in any sense of the word promise or imply restitution of the things which man lost while under the sentence of death. The promises of restitution through Christ, while all based upon the ransom, are separate and distinct from it—the operation of love and mercy, and not in any sense of the word the operation of justice, on man's behalf.

In regard to Rom. 5:18,19. The world could not be on trial before a court which had already condemned it, unless the condemnation were lifted; but in the case of man there is a transference of the case to a new court, of which not the Father, but the Son, is the Judge; as it is written, God "hath committed all judgment unto the Son." In one sense man starts in his new trial, under the new Judge, free from condemnation, that is, free from the judicial feature of his condemnation; but not free from the actual degradation which, in another sense of the word, is the curse or condemnation which rests upon our race. Justice will have nothing against the culprit, and makes no objection to his being awakened and assisted back to perfection by the new Judge; but neither Justice nor the new Judge will release the culprit from the difficulties under which he labors, called the curse, the fall, etc., except as he exercises both trust and obedience in the new Judge under the terms of the New Covenant; and the new Judge will only release him from this curse or condemnation little by little, as he shall, by obedience, give evidence of transformation of his character from that of a servant of sin to that of a servant of righteousness.

In a word, the sentence or decree of death which came upon Adam, and through him upon us, was merely the judicial sentence, not the degradation which followed it as a consequence; and the removal of the judicial sentence by the payment of a price and the transfer of a sinner to the jurisdiction of Christ, for a fresh judgment or trial, secures merely the release of the original judicial sentence, but secures no release from the fall and degradation which followed the original sentence. The ruined sinner, whom justice would not permit to live, and who has degraded himself since, may now know that through Christ the demands of justice have been met for him, and that if he were back again to the condition in which father Adam was when he fell he would now be able to keep the divine law perfectly. However, having fallen into degradation, and sin, he is now on so low a plane mentally, morally and physically, that altho the sentence be lifted, he is quite powerless to accomplish anything of consequence for himself. He first needed a Redeemer to ransom him, to pay the redemption price for him; he now needs a Savior, a Life-giver, to deliver him from the death-conditions, mental, moral and physical, into which he fell while under the divine sentence, and this will be the gracious work of the kingdom, of which Christ will be the Head and King, and the elect church his joint-heirs in the kingdom, and under-representatives in the work of judging and uplifting the race.

## THE FERVENT PRAYER OF ABRAHAM

GEN. 18:23-32.—AUG. 18.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."*—Jas. 5:16.

Abraham at the time of this lesson was ninety-nine years old. He was camping at Mamre with his family and household, servants, herdsmen, etc., over 1,000 persons. His faith still rested in the Lord's promise, which he evidently believed would be fulfilled through his son Ishmael, at this time thirteen years old. As he rested in the door of his tent three men approached him, and, after the manner of the sheiks of that country today, he arose to meet them most hospitably, and provided for their entertainment tho they were strangers to him. By and by he ascertained that his visitors were heavenly beings, who for the occasion had assumed human form—one of them being a special representative of Jehovah himself, either one of the chief angels, or, we think still more likely, the Lord Jesus in his pre-human condition. How glad Abraham must have felt when he learned who his visitors were,

that he had entertained them so kindly and hospitably. The Apostle calls this matter to the attention of the church and urges that the Lord's people always be on the alert to show hospitality, and citing this case he says, "Thus some have entertained angels unawares."—Heb. 13:2.

True, circumstances are in many respects different today from what they were in olden times, in that now we have hotels and boarding houses for the accommodation of travelers; hence our responsibilities are lessened; this very fact, we fear, inclines us to be more selfish, less hospitable, than would be to our profit. The Lord's consecrated people will do well to cultivate hospitality, and that of the kind which Abraham showed—without waiting for it to be requested. A Scripture statement is, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than

is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." (Prov. 11:24) Another declaration is, "The liberal soul shall be made fat." (Prov. 11:25) In practicing liberality we are developing God-likeness, for is not God benevolent? is he not continually giving to his creatures? The greatest of all his gifts was the gift of his own dear Son to die for us—to ransom us. True, all cannot exercise liberality alike—those who are in debt or in poverty are properly to consider themselves hindered, limited in this direction by justice to their creditors, their families, etc. Nevertheless, the spirit of benevolence and hospitality should always abound in our hearts, whether we have much or little opportunity to manifest it; and rarely do those who exercise themselves in this respect fail to profit by this course, even in temporal matters. Where we cannot give all the succor needed, we can at least dispense words of consolation and cheer, which may prove of much greater value than money. Many need the spiritual counsel and advice and encouragement, which every true Christian should be able to give, far more than they need temporal assistance. To have Christ-likeness implies not only a *desire* to be helpful to the groaning creation and "especially to the household of faith," but it means more,—it means the *effort* to assist them, even at the cost of our earthly comforts and pleasures.

It was while partaking of the hospitality of Abraham and Sarah that the Lord and his two companions were made known to Abraham—that they were not ordinary men, and at this time a further promise was made respecting the long-expected son Isaac. "Let patience have her perfect work," says the Apostle, and surely it would seem that this was the case with Abraham, who had waited twenty-five years indefinitely, and now for the first time received a definite assurance of a prompt fulfilment of this part of the promise. Isaac was born within a year, when Abraham was one hundred years old. Abraham's faith and patient waiting on the Lord are instructive to us. The Gospel church likewise was called to inherit a promise and to perform a pilgrimage while waiting for its fulfilment. The promise to us is our deliverance as sharers in the kingdom, and ultimately in the work of blessing all the families of the earth, to be accomplished at the second coming of Jesus, who was typified in Isaac, even as Jehovah, his Father, was typified in Abraham. The Gospel church has had great need of patience and endurance, of trust in God, during the nearly nineteen centuries since Jesus suffered in the flesh and was quickened in spirit, and going away, promised to come again to receive us unto himself, and to fulfil all the exceeding great and precious promises foretold respecting him and us. The faith of many has cooled so that they are hoping for the long promised Millennial blessings through other channels,—hoping that earthly churches, human organizations, begotten not of the Lord's instruction, but unauthorizedly, like Ishmael, may convert and bless the world without the second coming of Jesus and the establishment of his kingdom. But all those who have the faith of Abraham will also have the Lord's testimony that the blessing can come only through Isaac.—Rom. 9:7; Gal. 4:28.

At the same time that faithful Abraham and Sarah were consoled and refreshed, at the same time Isaac was begotten, the iniquity of the Sodomites had become great,—the cry of its wickedness calling upon Justice for repression. The Lord and the two angels took their departure from Abraham's tent, going in the direction of Sodom, Abraham accompanying them through courtesy and through a desire to continue in heavenly company. And because he was a faithful servant of the Lord it was revealed to him that the destruction of Sodom and her sister villages was imminent. Thus we see the principles upon which the Lord deals with his creatures—to those who are in heart-harmony with him, full of faith and trust and loving obedience, and yet willing to wait patiently for the various features of his plan,—he reveals his plans not only as respects the coming blessing of all the families of the earth, but also as respects the punishment of the ungodly.

We do not find Abraham rejoicing in the calamities about to come upon his neighbors; on the contrary, we find him generous; and so we should expect to find all who are the Lord's true people, full of generosity, kindness and good wishes toward their neighbors—even toward such as they could in no degree recognize or fellowship. Instead of glorying in the adversities coming upon the Sodomites, Abraham instinctively prayed for them divine compassion. And we are to remember in this connection that he had no thought of their calamity extending beyond the loss of the present life. He knew nothing about an "orthodox hell" with its corps of devils to receive and everlastingly torture them. He merely understood the Lord that the *destruction* of the people and of their cities impended. If he thought at all of their future,

it would doubtless be in connection with God's promise, that by and by all the families of the earth should be blessed through his promised heir.

We notice with pleasure the modesty of Abraham as he petitioned the Lord to have mercy upon his neighbors: "Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city, wilt thou consume and spare not the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?" He was not attempting to charge or condemn the Lord by applying his standards; rather he was wishing to ascertain what would be the divine standard in the matter—how much compassion the Lord could justly exercise in behalf of such as sought at all to walk in his ways. Abraham must have known well the unsavory reputation of the Sodomites;—no doubt being in communication with Lot frequently. It is to his credit, therefore, that he was unwilling to think of those people as badly as they deserved. Actually there were only three worthy of being delivered; yet Abraham, with generosity of heart, assumed that there might be fifty. Benevolent people generally are pretty sure to err in their judgment on the favorable side, when they think of the weaknesses and villainies of their neighbors.

The Lord assented to Abraham's proposition, and the latter's faith thus encouraged, he ventured to lessen the number in his inquiry to forty-five, forty, thirty, twenty, ten, and with all his earnest desire he could not think of petitioning the Lord to save those cities from destruction if wickedness had gotten such a hold that only ten could be found loving righteousness. We rejoice in Abraham's mercifulness, as well as in his faith. Had mercy not been a part of his character we may doubt if the Lord would have called him to be the starting point of his plan of salvation. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Such the Lord is seeking, to be his agents and the channels of the mercies he has provided for mankind, to be dispensed during the Millennial age. Only the merciful will be acceptable to the Lord as joint-heirs with Jesus in the kingdom, and only the merciful of the ancient worthies will share with Abraham in dispensing divine favors to mankind as "princes in all the earth;" representatives of the spiritual kingdom.—Psa. 45:16.

We contrast Abraham's modest and reverent petition with some which we have heard uttered by those who suppose themselves to be members of the Gospel church, the body of Christ,—and the contrast is immensely in Abraham's favor. "O let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but this once [more]; peradventure ten be found there [will you have mercy upon the cities for their sake?]" How some can go to the Lord in prayer in rude and dictatorial manner, telling him what they want to have done—how many they wish to have converted, how he shall manage the various features of his work, whom he shall bless and how, etc.—we cannot tell. Let not such persons think that they shall receive anything of the Lord; let them not think that such praying is either fervent or effectual in any good sense. Let us, on the contrary, as the Lord's people, reason how great he is, and how insignificant we are; how just and true are his ways, and how imperfect are our best conceptions; and let us approach him with reverence to ascertain what are his purposes, rather than to amend or alter them to alignment with our imperfect judgments.

#### SAVED SO AS BY FIRE

Evidently Lot's decision to reside in Sodom was for business reasons: he evidently had some children twenty-five years before, when he started out with Abraham, his uncle, and probably his interests in business and his desire for prosperity leading him to reside among the Sodomites was chiefly for the prosperity of his children. Alas, how great was his mistake! Yet he did not seem to fully realize it until, urged by the angel, he fled from Sodom accompanied by his two unmarried daughters, losing all else he had in the world—his wife and married children and grand-children, his flocks and herds and servants and all his personal belongings. He was indeed saved, preserved, from the destruction which there came upon the ungodly; but it was a bare rescue, not an abundant deliverance; he was, so to speak, pulled out of the fire.

We may consider ourselves justified in considering Lot and his daughters who escaped to be illustrations, samples, whose antitypical lessons would apply in this present day. For as Abraham and his patient waiting represented the faithful, the overcomers, so Lot seems to represent a class in the end of the present age, who do no walk sufficiently by faith and who seek not chiefly the kingdom and its righteousness; but who for the sake of earthly advantage are quite willing to risk their spiritual interests and the highest interests of their