

of the holy Spirit we understand that before Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the holy prophets of the past can bless the world as the honored seed of Abraham in the flesh, another work must be done. That other work will be done by our Lord Jesus. The death of the holy, harmless, undefiled Lamb of God constituted the entire foundation for the complete outworking of the plan of God's mercy for our race.

During this Gospel age a secondary feature has operated; an elect, select company, a bride class of joint-heirs with the Master, has been called out of the world from Jews and Gentiles, to constitute the spiritual seed of Abraham. If this ladder of intercourse and communion came down to Jacob, still more does it come down to and center in The Christ, of which Jesus Christ is the Head and the church his faithful members.

When Jacob awakened, he felt overwhelmed. To have the Almighty thus indicate his care and blessing and approval, and to assure him of his protecting care in the future, seemed wonderful to the friendless man. He said, Surely this place may be called God's house and the gate of heaven! And so ever since, the church has delighted to be known as the house of God—Bethel. By and by as the great temple of God, composed of living stones, Jesus himself being the Chief

Corner Stone, this Bethel will be the gate of heaven, through which will come to mankind all the glorious things which God has promised—restitution, perfection, paradise—for all the willing and obedient.

Jacob took the stone he had used for a pillow, set it up as a monument and poured oil upon it, as signifying its sacredness to God. His example since has been imitated by the Egyptians, in setting up great columns pointing heavenward, and also imitated by the Babylonian steeples, and by Christians in the cathedral steeples and church spires. All of these, however, unwittingly point to heaven, and prefigure the fact that there is by and by to be a ladder, a communication between heaven and earth. That ladder will be the Messianic kingdom.

Tradition tells us that subsequently Jacob's stone was taken to Jerusalem, and there used in conjunction with the crowning of the Jewish kings. Tradition says that that stone was taken by Jeremiah when the Babylonians overthrew Jerusalem. Tradition further says that it was carried to Ireland and for a time used there for crowning their kings. It says also that this same stone is now in Westminster Abbey, and forms the seat of the throne on which the British sovereigns are crowned.

THE HARVEST IS GREAT

The Master said, "The Harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the Harvest that He would send forth laborers into His Harvest." (Luke 10:2) These words, applicable nearly nineteen centuries ago, seem very applicable today also. We have more opportunities for using unencumbered brethren filled with the Spirit than ever before. If any such brethren believe themselves reasonably well developed in meekness, gentleness, long-suffering, brotherly-kindness, love; and if, in addition, they have had some considerable experience with Present Truth and are fully consecrated to the Lord, we should like to hear from them.

Such desiring to co-labor under the Society's auspices might give us a brief history of their life-work thus far, and send their photograph. Let them tell us also to what extent they have had and used opportunities for presenting the Truth in public, and to what extent God has blessed their efforts in bringing others into a fullness of consecration and mental enlightenment.

Or if their talents run more toward stenography than toward public speaking, we should be pleased to know of that. But do not mention stenography to us unless you are thoroughgoing in it, as a poor stenographer is a hindrance.

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THE PRIVILEGE AND THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER

"Let us . . . come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."—Hebrews 4:16.

Prayer is a general term for all manner of petitions—whether a request, a hymn, or an expression of thanksgiving and praise. The word supplication seems to carry with it the thought of a continuous request, a repeated prayer, a longing desire, a waiting for the Lord to grant our petitions.

Well has the poet said,

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed."

The first intimation of approach to God on the part of humanity is that in connection with the sacrifices offered by Cain and Abel. They did not come, however, with a petition to a Father, but with sacrifices, thus acknowledging sin. The one who brought a sacrifice symbolically representing a sin-offering God accepted; the other, he declined to accept in any sense of the word.

Two thousand years later, God made choice of Abraham as the person through whom the vague promise made to Eve should be fulfilled; and to him he made the very definite promise that in him and his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed. With Abraham God made a covenant, which he renewed to Abraham's posterity—to Isaac, but not to Ishmael; to Jacob, but not to Esau. These men were privileged to pray, because by their faith they were justified to fellowship with God.

Eventually these blessings of divine favor and grace extended to Israel as a nation; and they entered into these privileges in the full sense of the word, under the Covenant of the Law, of which Moses was the mediator. From that time on they had the same opportunities to appeal to God as had Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Indeed, in some respects, they had a preferred condition. They had a typical atonement day, on which they were typically cleansed; and because of this typical cleansing, they were permitted to come to God, as did David, Hezekiah and others.

The temple at Jerusalem was called the house of God, and the people went up to the temple to pray. Apparently it was generally understood that they might not pray anywhere and everywhere. This is indicated by our Lord's conversation with the woman of Samaria. Suppliants were heard only when they went to the temple to pray. The Samaritans

claimed that the proper place to pray was on Gerizim, the mountain of Samaria. When the woman asked our Lord in regard to this matter, he intimated that the Jews were right in claiming that Jerusalem was the place where men ought to worship.—John 4:20-24.

The Jewish nation, by means of their Law Covenant made with God, were in covenant relationship to him, and were, therefore, permitted to pray to him. God does not regard all prayers, but only those offered by persons in a particular attitude of mind, and in a certain covenant relationship. Those outside—even sincere, honest Gentiles—did not have the privilege which Israel possessed.

ACCESS TO THRONE OF GRACE A SPECIAL PRIVILEGE

During the Gospel dispensation, all who have made full consecration to God have become spiritual sons of God and may ask of him as their Father, may come boldly, confidently, to the throne of grace in prayer. Those who have not made a consecration to God have no Advocate through whom to approach him. Those who come in the spirit of prayer and with a real desire for those blessings which God has promised to give, will see that prayer is a privilege restricted to a certain class. Those who do not esteem it a privilege may as well not come; for God has not as yet made any proposition to the world. Prayer is the privilege of God's children.

Cornelius was a man who sought harmony with God. Although he prayed for years and gave much alms, yet his prayers and alms did not come up before God until an appropriate time—not until Jesus had died and ascended up on high, there to appear in the presence of God for us. (Acts 10:1, 2, 4; Heb. 9:24) Three and a half years after the cross, at the end of the time of special favor to the Jews, this man's prayers and alms came up before God as a memorial. But even then he must send men to Joppa to invite St. Peter to come to his home and instruct him how to receive the blessing of God in Christ. When Cornelius accepted Christ, our Lord became his Advocate, and the holy Spirit came upon him. Thereafter he had the privilege of access to the Father at the throne of grace.

So is it with humanity today. There is but one way for any to avail himself of the privilege of prayer. Each must

recognize the fact that he is a sinner, and that there is no access to God except through Christ. In an earthly court, etiquette demands that one who desires to be presented to the king must first receive an invitation to appear in the king's presence, then at a set time he must appear, dressed in a certain kind of clothes. It is the same at the heavenly court. No man can come to God except through Christ Jesus. After he has accepted our Lord as his Redeemer, and has offered himself in consecration, our Lord, as his Advocate, must cover his imperfections with the robe of his own righteousness, and present him to the Father. Then he will be accepted and given the privilege of prayer.

POSSESSORS OF PARTICULAR QUALITIES OF MIND NATURALLY DRAWN TO GOD

The question then arises, If the world cannot approach God in prayer, what is the method by which he draws men? The Scriptures say that no man can come unto Christ except the Father draw him. (John 6:44) The answer is that the drawing cannot be done through the holy Spirit; for the world has not yet received that Spirit. The drawing power which the Almighty exercises over humanity is in different degrees. Some have a strong desire to worship God, others have a weak desire, and others have no desire at all. This difference is due to the shape of the brain. Mankind are born with differences in this respect.—Psa. 51:5.

Various imperfections were stamped upon us before our birth. As the Scriptures say, "There is none righteous, no, not one"; "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:10, 23) All come short of that standard which God would be pleased to recognize. But amongst mankind there are some who have not lost their reverence, whatever else they may have lost in the unbalance of mind resulting from the fall. Or perhaps they have the quality of conscientiousness or appreciation of justice well developed. These qualities draw or incline their possessors toward God; and they feel as if they cannot be happy without him. This is the drawing influence.

This drawing influence may be illustrated by the effect of a magnet. If a quantity of steel filings were scattered throughout a box of sawdust, and a magnet were held close to the surface, the steel filings would immediately respond to the attraction of the magnet. On the other hand, the sawdust would not be affected; nor would the steel filings respond to any other influence than that of a magnet, exercised either directly or indirectly.

Man was created in the image of God. The fall has greatly marred that image, but no one is totally depraved. All have unbalanced brains, some in one direction, others in another. When the truth comes in contact with those whose organs of veneration or conscientiousness are less impaired, they are drawn to investigate it, with the hope of being drawn close to God. Those whose organs of veneration and conscientiousness are more impaired, do not have this experience, and are not drawn unto God, if haply they may find him.

Those who are without this drawing influence are not to be blamed; for they were born under those unfavorable conditions. Those who are reverential are, however, favored in that whoever would come to God must exercise faith in Christ; for without this faith there can be no blessing. At first this blessing and privilege are not clearly discerned by the seeker after righteousness. He merely longs to know God, and as he seeks, he finds; and as he knocks, it is opened unto him.—Matt. 7:7, 8.

Any one, therefore, who seeks God will find him; for the Scriptures promise, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." (James 4:8) Those who thus find the way to God have something for which to be thankful in the possession of the quality of mind which led them to appreciate God. Persons of a particular character will follow on in the way and will, if faithful, attain to the reward. Those who have it not will not be drawn of the Lord until they shall have been made over in the next age. We are not, therefore, to suppose that everybody is being drawn during the present age.

After a person has been drawn, guided and instructed, then his will comes into action. It is for him to decide what course he will pursue. When he sees that no man comes to the Father except through Christ, and that the conditions are self-sacrifice, then he has the matter squarely before his mind. There are Scriptures which warn him that the path is difficult, but there are other Scriptures which tell him of the glory, honor and immortality at the end of the way. It is for the person to decide what he will do. But he does not come fully into the family of God until he has decided, and has taken the step of thorough consecration unto death; only then can he be begotten of the holy Spirit and enter the school of Christ.

PRAYER A PRIVILEGE OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH

During the Jewish dispensation, the Jews had the privilege of approaching God in prayer; but during the Gospel age they have not had this privilege. As long as the atonement day sacrifices were offered annually, they had the privilege of prayer under the Law Covenant; but as soon as the typical sin-offerings ceased, all those privileges which that covenant secured for them terminated; therefore the Jews have no access to God. They are still under the Law Covenant; but they have lost this special feature of it, because the typical priesthood ceased to be recognized as soon as the antitypical priest appeared.

The church of Christ alone, therefore, at this time has the special privilege of coming to God in prayer; for the great antitypical High Priest has made a satisfactory Sin-offering of himself. Whosoever will, through faith in him and under the covenant relationship of sacrifice, may draw near to God in prayer, nothing doubting.

But while only the consecrated class, the under priesthood, the new creation, are thus encouraged to approach the throne of grace with confidence and courage, very evidently all who in any proper sense belong to the "household of faith" may to some extent enjoy the privileges of prayer, the privileges of thanksgiving and intercession, and may rejoice in the peace of God, in a realization of the forgiveness of sins through faith in the atonement.

During the Millennial age, every good trait which any one possesses will be an advantage to him, and every evil trait will be a disadvantage. But no advantage will be so great that it will enable any to rise without the aid of Messiah. The less degraded will not have so far to retrace their steps; but where much grace is needed, much will be supplied. The power of the great Mediator will be adapted to all conditions; for the Scriptures give us the assurance that Christ's kingdom will be instituted for that very purpose. Since there is none righteous, no, not one, therefore all must have the great Messiah to assist them back into full harmony with God.

PRAYER AN OPPORTUNITY AND A NECESSITY

While prayer is a privilege and not a command, yet our condition makes it a necessity. Because of the fall of man from his original perfection, our flesh has imperfections, frailties; and yet we, as new creatures, have responsibility for these weaknesses. The only way to discharge these responsibilities is to go to the throne of grace and there obtain help in time of need. Whoever, therefore, goes frequently to the throne of grace in prayer thus indicates that he recognizes the necessity of using the opportunity which God has provided in his interest and as his privilege.

Prayer is necessary to the well-being of any one who would properly enjoy the blessings and privileges of his organism. We have the organ of veneration, which appeals to us for the worship of God. If we decline this worship, ignorantly or wilfully, our best interests could not be served. In this respect, the majority of the world are not serving their best interests; but the Christian is so doing.

The person who does the proper amount of watching will have no difficulty in determining when he ought to pray. If he watches properly, he will continually see something about which to pray. If he foresees trouble and says, "Tomorrow morning I will pray about the matter," he is making a mistake. As soon as one has any thought or idea of a coming difficulty, he should make it the subject of prayer. "To him that knocketh, it shall be opened." Whoever seeks the divine pleasing will find it.

The Lord's people are to watch in every direction. Our time is consecrated to the Lord, and it is our duty to watch that we render it to him. If we consecrate our time to him, and then waste it in reading novels and other worldly literature or in playing games, we are not using our time properly, although these practices are not sinful. Likewise we are to watch our own temptations, and to seek to control self and to guard against our own weaknesses, as well as those of others. We are also to watch the Word of the Lord, that we may be thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work.

Every trial, every temptation, is a special trial, a special temptation. No one knows whither the smallest temptation may lead. The Scriptures warn us to take heed; for what may seem a small matter may lead to something great. The fact that a thing may seem small does not imply that it may not be the most serious event of our whole life.

Those who have more opportunities for service are less liable to be led into temptation than are those who have fewer. We are, therefore, to be "not slothful in business"; but "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." (Rom. 12:11) Watching against the world and its temptations, against our

own flesh and its weaknesses, against the Adversary and his delusions—these duties will keep us busy enough.

We are also to watch the signs of the times. In our Lord's day he reproved some because they knew not the time of their visitation. His words were, "Ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?" (Luke 12:56) If we are too much engaged in work or in pleasure to have time to study, to watch properly, we find ourselves in difficulty.

WATCHING UNTO PRAYER COMMENDED

It is one thing to be tempted, and quite another thing to enter into temptation. Our Lord was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"—he did not in any manner give way to the tempter. So it should be with us. We are to resist the devil and to watch and pray that we yield not to temptation. If we are negligent, if we think, "Oh, a little indulgence this once will not hurt us!" we are in danger. The only safe position for us to take is to watch and pray continually, for if we should enter temptation we know not where the matter may end. As some one has aptly said, "We cannot prevent the birds from flying over our heads, but we can prevent their nesting in our hair."

On the night in which our Lord was betrayed, St. Peter was amongst the most confident of the apostles. He said to the Lord, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." (Matt. 26:33) He did not know how much weakness was in him; therefore, when the Lord was watching and praying that momentous night, St. Peter was one of the first to fall asleep! Afterwards he was the very one to deny the Lord, and denied him with cursing!

We recall our Lord's words to St. Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." (Luke 22:31, 32) St. Peter's very courage led him into a trap placed before him by the adversary. This quality he showed when he went into the courtyard of the palace and mingled with those who were there. St. John, who accompanied him, was a relative of one of the priests; but St. Peter, who was recognized by his speech as a Galilean, was courageous enough to enter, even after having cut off the ear of one of the priest's servants.—John 18:15, 16.

Our Lord had foretold what would take place, saying, "I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me." (Luke 22:34) After this had happened on the night of the trial, St. Peter remembered the words of Jesus, "and went out, and wept bitterly." (Luke 22:62) Had he not done so, we know not what might have happened to him. The weeping showed that the denial was merely the result of weakness of the flesh.

St. Peter could have taken a wrong attitude. He could have said, "I had a right to stand up for my own life, and not to be implicated in this matter." Thus he might have gotten into a wrong condition of heart; but his crushing out of this evil inclination toward self-preservation proved that in spite of his thrice repeated denial he was at heart loyal to his Master. So is it also with us; he who resists the smallest temptation thereby strengthens his character that he may be able to withstand the greater ones.

A good story is told which illustrates the wisdom of not entering into temptation. A man who desired to hire a coachman had a number of applicants for the position. They were ushered into his office, and he asked them, "How near could you drive to the edge of a precipice without danger of accident?" One said he could drive within a foot without fear of falling over; another thought he could safely come within six inches of the edge; and so on. Finally, one man who had listened in silence to the others, said, "I do not know how near to the edge of the precipice I could safely drive; but I do know that I would keep as far away from it as I possibly could." This man was given the position.

This is the principle upon which we should act. The one who keeps the farthest away from temptation is on the safe side. Those who feel too confident of their own strength and power and go too near the danger line are liable to slip over the edge. Let us ever pray that we may not enter into temptation; let us also watch that we may keep out of danger.

PRAYING FOR TEMPORAL THINGS

On his last evening with his apostles, our Lord said to them, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." (John 16:24) Undoubtedly there is a special blessing to those who look for a fulfilment of his promise. Our Lord said, on one occasion, that the heavenly Father is more willing to give the holy Spirit to those who ask him, than are earthly parents to give good gifts to their children. (Luke 11:13) He did not mean that we must necessarily use the words, "Give us

the holy Spirit," or that we should pray for a Pentecostal blessing, as do some well-meaning friends; but that we should ask for the spirit of the truth, of a sound mind, for the wisdom which comes from above.

We are not wise enough to guide our matters aright. We are instructed, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." (James 1:5) This wisdom seems to be especially necessary to us as the servants of God, that the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts may be acceptable in the sight of the Lord.—Psa. 19:14.

Our Lord instructed his disciples, "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek); for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." (Matt. 6:31, 32) His words seem to imply that we are to be different from the world. They would be ready to ask and pray for every imaginable blessing—different kinds of food, houses, money, and what not! They could not pray for spiritual things; for they have no appreciation of such gifts. Be not like them.

Why, then, did our Lord in his prayer say, "Give us this day our daily bread"? This is a very different matter from specialization in prayer. The Lord has promised that, if we are faithful, our bread and water shall be sure. (Isa. 33:16) We shall not be neglected. It is very proper that we acknowledge the Lord as the Giver of all good. According to his promise, we look to him to give us food and raiment. Whatever we have, we acknowledge our dependence upon the Lord for what he provides for us; and we ask for nothing beyond what he does provide.

The more we advance in spiritual development, the less we feel like dictating to the Lord and the greater confidence we have in his wisdom and the more faith in his promises. The most that we should do is to make mention to him of those promises for temporal provision and of our trust in them. Of one thing we may be sure—that the Lord, who has called us to be his followers, has us under his supervision, and will see to it that all things shall work together for our good. If he calls us to be members of the body of Christ, neither lack of food nor anything else can hinder us from the full opportunity of making our calling and election sure.

Those around whom the angel of the Lord encampeth (Psa. 34:7, may be said to have a charmed life. The Lord is directing his church. Therefore, think you that he will permit loss of life through accident or illness before we have had time to comply with the terms of his invitation? Surely not! Therefore, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matt. 4:4) We are trusting in the promises of God. He will accomplish his divine purpose in us, if we abide in him and his word abides in us, and if we are faithful in obedience.

The Editor does not recall having from childhood asked the Lord for physical strength or health. He has known times when his physical strength was not great and when there were opportunities for service which seemed to require more strength than he had. Then he has taken pleasure in going before the Lord in prayer and saying that he was trusting that the necessary strength and all else which the Lord saw best to give him would be provided; but that if the Lord saw best that he should not be able to make a satisfactory presentation, he would still do his part and leave the rest with the Lord, knowing that whatever the Lord permitted would be the best experience for him.

This course has always been sufficient. In forty years of active service, he has never missed a meeting because of lack of strength, although there have been times when his friends have said, "You cannot possibly speak tonight!" His reply invariably has been, "If the Lord gives me strength, I will go to the meeting place, and will trust him for strength to speak." At one time he almost fainted on the platform; but grace sufficient has always been his portion. So long as he remains on this side of the veil, he intends to speak whenever he has an opportunity, unless he is unable to do so. He is sure that if the Lord gives him the opportunity to speak, he will also furnish the needed strength.

PROPER SUBJECTS FOR PRAYER

When we recall that St. James said of some of his day, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss" (James 4:3), we feel that we should be careful what we ask for. Our Lord instructed his apostles that it is very important to abide in him and to see that his words abide in us, if we would have our prayers answered. His words are, "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." (John 15: 7) In other words, petitions

according to the Lord's will shall be answered, but those contrary to his will shall remain unanswered.

To ask selfishly for the things of the earth would not be true prayer. Many Christians have a mandatory way of telling the Lord what they would like to have him do for them—that so many should be converted to him at a meeting; that this meeting should be thus prospered; etc. Our prayers should be along higher lines than these. Temporalities should be presented in a casual way. We should have the desire to subsist in such a manner as would be pleasing to the Lord and should be thankful for whatever his providence may give us—whether much or little.

It has been suggested that to pray for anything which God is willing to give is entirely proper. We may pray for the holy Spirit, for more love, more gentleness, more patience, more wisdom from on high. We may pray that all these things will work together for our good; for he has promised that this shall be. We may pray for guidance from the Lord as may be best in his sight. But we may not tell him what to do; for we have no means of knowing what is his will in matters in general.

Our Lord did not pray in a mandatory fashion. With his petitions, he said, "Not my will, but thine, be done"—I have no will of my own; for I have given up my will and I desire to have thy will done. This is a prayer of full submission. It did not mean that our Lord did not pray in faith, nor that he would not get what he desired. It meant that he desired to learn the Father's will; and he learned that the Father willed that he should drink the cup of suffering to the very dregs.

If we are submissive, our prayers will become more and more messages of thanksgiving. We shall increasingly desire to walk in the Master's footsteps. We shall desire that his will be done in us rather than anything that we could attempt to tell him. Everything will be according to his plan, which will come to pass, and which he will not alter for us nor for anyone else in the world. Those who have reached this development of Christian living will realize that it is not necessary to pray that God will save this or that one; for has he not promised to save all the people of the earth who will come to him in his appointed way?

Consider the case of Saul of Tarsus. He was seeking to do God's will, but was blinded. After God had opened his eyes to the real facts of the case, he went forward in the right way. He was a holiness man both before and after he received the truth; but the enlightenment which he received taught him better how to do the will of God. If he had not been a chosen vessel of the Lord, he would have had no such experience, but rather he would have been treated as was Simon the Sorcerer.

ANSWER TO PRAYER DELAYED FOR OUR GOOD

Amongst some Christian people, agonizing in prayer, wrestling with God as Jacob wrestled with the angel, is very much encouraged. Frequently these people do so much praying that they do no studying, much to their disadvantage. The Scriptures instruct us to study to show ourselves approved unto God (2 Tim. 2:15), and not to seek to get something in a miraculous way, but rather in an intelligent manner. People who pray after this fashion are proceeding somewhat as did the prophets of Baal in the time of Elijah. Those men ran along the altar, cutting themselves with stones and crying to their god to consume the sacrifice.—1 Kings 18:26-29.

The Prophet Elijah, on the contrary, was very calm. He worshiped an intelligent God, who needed not to be shouted at to attract his attention. When the time came for Elijah to pray, he did so, using few words, but going straight to the point.—1 Kings 18:36-38.

There is a lesson for Christians in this narrative. Some who misunderstand the divine character and plan in general, pray for the things which they should not, and neglect to ask for the right things. If we abide in the Lord and his words abide in us, we shall know what to ask for; and we shall be so careful about our asking that we shall not ask amiss.

If one's prayers seem not to be answered, he should not become faint-hearted and cease to pray. Our Lord says that we should pray and not faint. (Luke 18:1-8) Our heavenly Father may will to bring us into such a condition of heart that we can appreciate his blessing. It may be God's will to delay the answer for our highest good.

Thirty-nine hundred years ago, God promised Abraham that he should have the land of Canaan, and that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed. That promise is not yet fulfilled. (Acts 7:5) For more than eighteen hundred years the church has prayed, "Thy kingdom come! Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." The Lord has not answered the prayer yet; nevertheless we are to continue to pray and wait patiently. We have faith that God will do as he promised. "Wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up."—Zeph. 3:8.

There is a great blessing in store for all those who delight their hearts in the way of the Lord. We are in line with his gracious promises. We are waiting and praying. By and by, the Lord says, he will avenge his own elect—in the end of this age. He will deliver them from all the opposition of the flesh and of the adversary. He will set them on high and pour them out a blessing such as he has promised. Then the prayers will be answered. Meantime, the prayers continue to go up, earnestly, trustfully.

There is a difference between "saying one's prayers" and praying. In prayer, we should have some definite request before our minds, in order that we may look intelligently for an answer. A brother, who was carefully scrutinizing his thoughts, words and doings, with a view to discovering what trait of character most needed upbuilding, concluded that he needed patience. Sometime after, he wrote, "I have been wondering what is the matter. I have been praying for more patience; but my trials are of such a character that my patience is actually growing less. But lately I begin to see that the Lord is answering my prayer for patience in this very way, and is permitting these trials for the very purpose of developing this trait of character in me."

This experience is in line with the Apostle's injunction, "Take unto you the whole armor of God." (Eph. 6:13) Whatever our prayer may be, we should watch to see in what manner the Lord is answering our petitions. This attitude on our part will demonstrate our faith, trust and loyalty. In turn our faith will be strengthened. Thus shall we be pleasing to the Lord because of our confidence in him. He knows the way that we take better than do we ourselves. Then if something which we had not been anticipating should come into our lives, we should think, "Here is a lesson for us to learn—of patience, of obedience."

It is the privilege of the Lord's people to ask, in order that they may have fullness of joy. We have this joy and the "peace of God, which passeth all understanding," and we rejoice greatly in hope of the glorious things which the Father has in store for us and which the holy Spirit reveals through the Word. The joyful Christian is the thankful Christian. The thankful Christian is the one who is making the best use of his life. By reason of having exercised thankfulness of heart, he will be the better prepared for the kingdom. Those less thankful may attain the kingdom, for aught we know. But the thankless heart will not get the kingdom.

THE ATMOSPHERE OF PRAYER

The text, "Pray without ceasing," would seem to be the equivalent of the statement, "Cease not to pray"—the petition continues, as if the person were in an expectant attitude. In one way or another that petition may be still awaiting an answer. This idea is carried out in a court of law. It is the custom to address the court, saying that the applicants pray for such and such release from such and such difficulty in certain cases. That request might be withdrawn, or it might be continued. So it is with the prayers which we make to the heavenly court. We have made our petition; and if it is worth asking for, it is worth waiting for.

We should not be as the Gentiles, who thought that they would be heard for their much speaking. But we should seek first the kingdom of God. Our prayers should be along that line. Whatever temporal experiences we would have the heavenly Father might see to be helpful to us in the attainment of the heavenly things of the Gospel. We should not cease our praying, although we are not bound by an iron law. God has not commanded us to pray, because that would be in the nature of a fixed rule, to disobey which would be sin. But we believe he will bless those who ask. The more we feel our need of things, the more we appreciate them when we get them. The Lord would have us appreciate these gifts by going frequently to request them; then, when they come to us, we are in a condition to receive and to make a better use of them.

We have many reasons for giving thanks—the heart that gives thanks will find itself more and more in a thankful attitude. At first when we begin to give thanks, we do so for the more pleasant things; but as our experience increases, we find joy in the afflictions and the persecutions of life; for these experiences refine our hearts and make them more susceptible to the right as against the wrong—the truth as against the error, the purity as against the impurity.

Not only should we pray frequently and with regularity, but we should be always in the attitude of prayer. The children of God should be in that attitude of heart which looks to the Lord for divine guidance in every perplexity and every experience. Just as the needle turns to the pole, so our hearts should turn to the Lord. If there is pain or trouble or difficulty in our pathway, we should look to him. If there is privilege of serving the Lord, we should not think ourselves competent for the service without turning to the Lord for help.

In other words, the Christian's prayer should ascend not only in the beginning of the day; the atmosphere of prayer should surround him continually. It should not be a mere sense of duty, but an appreciation of a great privilege.

Those who appreciate the Lord at all could not afford to be without this privilege. Those who do appreciate this privilege rejoice to go to the heavenly Father many times a day. Our advice to all who are seeking to walk the narrow way, would be that they forget not this privilege. But in their families or in their rooms with their roommate, the prayer should be in such a form as would be reasonable and proper, according to what would be their best judgment of pleasing the Lord—and not to be an intrusion in any sense.

FAITH STRENGTHENED BY PRAYER

As to just how the prayers of one may benefit another we may not know. We have not sufficient information to philosophize on it very deeply. We might surmise certain mental influences proceeding from one to another, just as we know electrical influences to proceed from one station to another thousands of miles away. The powers of the mind are something not comprehended. We can influence ourselves, and, to a certain extent, influence another. One mind can influence another without a word, by some telepathic power. As to why God permits this and gives blessings in answer to prayer we cannot say. We are left to philosophize, to speculate.

If we are in the school of Christ, we are there to be taught, to learn certain lessons of life. One of the lessons is to have full, perfect faith in God—absolute trust. Such a trust is exercised by our prayers for ourselves as well as for others; and this trust is cultivated by our prayers. God is pleased to bless these prayers, and thus to cultivate and strengthen our faith. We cannot suppose that God would leave any important work undone if we failed to pray for it, or that the answer to our prayer would come as we look for it; but blessings may come from one channel or another. God is quite able to overrule any matter so that he can give blessings, either by our co-operation and prayers, or without our co-operation and prayers.

We have reason to believe that when we pray for others our prayers avail. We have known instances where prayers have been answered very remarkably. The Lord's Word seems to inculcate this faith in us. God's people have been people of prayer, and are people of prayer. We cannot imagine how one could be a consistent follower of Christ without prayer.

FOR WHOM MAY WE NOW PRAY?

We understand that promiscuous praying for health during the Gospel age would have been improper, and that only by means of the gift of healing were the early cures of the age performed; that it ceased with the death of the Apostles after accomplishing its object; and that the proper prayers relating to sickness, on the part of the saints, would have been those offered for the forgiveness of sins—as a result of which healing followed. But we see, too, that as the Millennial age is dawning—lapping upon the Gospel age, which is closing—we should expect that healing and general restitution would begin to be manifested, much as we do see it. And this leads us to inquire, In the light of the foregoing examination of the Bible teachings, and in the light of our present location in the dawn of the Millennium, for whom may we now pray?

We answer, The saints cannot properly pray for their own health now, any more than could their Master. They cannot properly ask the restitution privileges which they have consecrated, nor can they ask that their sacrifices be nullified, by having all the cost of weariness, exhaustion, stripes or sickness miraculously removed. But when they realize their afflictions to be punishments for sins, they can still feel at liberty to confess their sins one to another, and to pray God for forgiveness. Thus they may as a result be healed.

The saints who abide in Christ, and in whom his Word abides, may pray for others than themselves, especially in view of the fact that we are now in the beginning of the times of restitution; namely, in cases where they are sure their object is not self-exaltation; where their desires for the recovery of the sick are not selfish, and where they have reason to believe that the restored health would be consecrated to good works and the glory of God.

In such cases we may upon request pray for the recovery of the afflicted or imbecile not of the consecrated little flock—the sacrificers, the royal priesthood. Yet even in such cases, though our faith must necessarily be strong, because confident of asking from right motives, and at a time when the Lord is pleased to grant a beginning of restitution blessings, we should always say, as the Master did in his prayers—“Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.”—Luke 22:42.

However, it is not time yet to expect general healing and

full restitution work, as that evidently will not be due until the entire priesthood shall have finished sacrificing and entered with their Head and Chief Priest, Jesus, into the glories and perfections of the heavenly state, or condition, typified by the Most Holy.

PRAYER FOR KINGS AND GOVERNMENTS

In his Epistle to Timothy, St. Paul says, “I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.” (1 Timothy 2:1, 2) Other Scriptures tell us clearly that the kingdoms of this world are not the kingdoms of our Lord. (Luke 19:11, 12) They inform us in an indirect way that the world would not appreciate the fact that the affairs of the present order of things are all under the supervision and care of Satan (Matthew 4:8, 9; John 14:30); that the Lord will not set up his kingdom of righteousness until his appointed time. When that time shall come, all kings and priests and people will serve and obey him. (Daniel 7:27) His reign will be the one that will be “the desire of all nations.”

But the Bible gives us to understand that, in the meantime, these present kingdoms are given the opportunity of seeing what they can do under these conditions. (Daniel 2:37-44) When the typical kingdom of Israel was destroyed and the kingdom was given to Nebuchadnezzar, it was for the opportunity of seeing what his kingdom could do. It might be righteous or unrighteous. And so it has been from the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar down. They are all Gentile kingdoms, and not representatives of God. All these various kingdoms are demonstrating various principles of government. Mankind under these kingdoms are learning lessons of experience which will be valuable to them in the future. Under these kingdoms we have seen man battling for rights. Sometimes they have been defeated, and sometimes they have been victorious—as the case may have been. In the various battles we have seen righteousness and unrighteousness striving together; but with all, policy rules.

Under all the kingdoms mankind has demonstrated that no government by imperfect man can rectify the difficulties which confront humanity. We cannot abolish sin and sorrow, crying and dying. Had only one king or one nation been permitted to experiment with the race, we would not have known whether or not other nations might not have been successful, had they had the opportunity. Each nation in turn seeks to be the universal power, and each claims to be the better government; as, for instance, the American Government wants to give better government to the Filipinos, and Great Britain wants to give better government to the people of South Africa. What do civilized nations and tongues do in less civilized lands? What can they do for the betterment of conditions? In all these countries, in all their endeavors, they show that selfishness dominates.

POWER USED FOR SELFISH PURPOSES

We see the fact demonstrated that if one nation had really the power to bless others, it would not bless them without taking advantage of them. Our civilized nations in heathen lands use their power in a selfish way, taking money away from their fellow-creatures. Instead of leading them to higher and better conditions, things have generally been conducted upon a commercial basis. And these very people who have more or less taken advantage of others in their extremity and need, and those people who have been taken advantage of by fear, will all no doubt learn some good lesson from these experiences.

God is permitting the nations to learn these various lessons, before setting up his kingdom in great power and glory. When his kingdom shall be established, the contrast between its government and all these other governments will be so marked that all will have a great deal to learn. No doubt many who suffered from injustice will be all the better prepared to appreciate the better government when it shall come in.

In the meantime, God's people who are being called out to be members in the body of The Messiah are not told to say, “These kingdoms are not doing well and our kingdom will show this.” On the contrary, we should speak encouraging words: “Your nation is seeming to do about the best it knows how to do. As it gets more intelligent, it strives for a better government.”

SYMPATHY FOR THOSE IN AUTHORITY

We who belong to the new kingdom are as citizens in a foreign country. We see that we are more or less influenced by the condition of the things of this world. We have sympathy with mankind. We are glad that a new dispensation is coming in. We see that these who are striving to make things better have a herculean task. If they were to give it up to us it would take all of our time; and under present evil conditions we could do no better than they are doing. We have

great sympathy for kings and princes. They do well to accomplish so much, with sin in every direction.

Our sympathy would lead us to consider them kindly in our minds. And we may pray for them such wisdom as God sees best. It would not do for us to request of God that one of them should be healed, if he were sick. If we had some means of helping, we should use that means; but as for the results, we should remember that these lie in the hands of God. We should help in any way we can. We are not to specify, but merely to pray God's blessings upon these kingdoms.

We are interested in these kingdoms because we are interested in mankind in general. We wish to live a peaceful and godly life, that we may have that much more opportunity for reading and studying. (1 Timothy 2:1, 2) We are glad if there is peace in the earth now; and we do not intend to quarrel. We intend to pray for these rulers; for we do not believe that they are at heart black or evil intentioned. Perhaps they are trying to do to the best of their knowledge what would be best for all. Most of the monarchs of Europe are not wishing to pull the people into war.

PRESENT DAY BLESSINGS

As to the people who are keeping such a wonderful government in our own land, we see how they are having persons to watch every building that is being erected; how they give special attention to the fire department and the water department that there may be a proper supply and purity of water; and how they care for the general health of the city, providing for quarantine, etc., etc. Those who have charge of the school systems for the education of young, and of the hospital systems, are doing a great work!

We should reflect that ours is a happy day in comparison with what it would be if we were living as people did in the time of the barbarians. When we see the wonderful things which are being done today—the great buildings, bridges and other wonderful improvements—we say, "What is man! Surely a wonderful piece of divine mechanism! What things he can do even in his imperfect condition! And what will he not be

able to accomplish when Messiah's kingdom is here, which will put stripes on the disobedient, and utterly destroy those who will not come into harmony with its rule of righteousness!"

We are glad that things are moving as well as they are. Instead of berating the people who are the leaders, we prefer to think that they are well intentioned people. We can well pray for such without any difficulty in mind. And we can feel glad and thank God that these people take care of us as well as they do.

Our prayer to God for kings, etc., is that he will so overrule and direct among the nations as would be most in harmony with his wise plans, for the blessing and development of the church now being selected. For though God has given over the world to the rule of the "prince of this world" until the full end of the Gentile times, yet God has not given unlimited power. The wrath of man shall not work ruin to the plan of God; for he will cause the wrath of man to work to his praise, and all that will not so work he will restrain. (Psalm 76:10) This is what the Apostle has in view: Pray God's guidance and direction over all the affairs of life and over rulers to the end that the piety, sobriety and growth of the church may be conserved.

FORMAL PRAYER

"I often say my prayers;
But do I always pray?
And do the wishes of my heart
Go with the words I say?
I may as well kneel down
And worship gods of stone,
As offer to the living God
A prayer of words alone;
For words without the heart
The Lord will never hear,
Nor will he to those lips attend
Whose prayers are not sincere."

MAKING FRIENDS WITH MAMMON

APRIL 20.—Genesis 33:1-15.

"Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other even as God also in Christ forgave you."—Ephesians 4:32. (R. V.)

The Great Teacher admonished his followers, "Make unto yourselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness." In other words, his followers were not to be selfish and grudging, or to be exactors of the last dollar or shilling. They were to be generous in their dealings, and thereby secure the friendship of those who otherwise might hate them. In other words, the followers of Jesus were to have heavenly ambitions instead of earthly ones, and they were to be willing to allow others to have the best of the bargain in earthly matters, if thereby they could forward their spiritual interests. This is well exemplified in today's lesson.

GIVING ALL FOR GOD'S FAVOR

In a previous lesson we saw how Jacob willingly, gladly, gave up all of the earthly riches of Abraham and Isaac, and left all those in possession of Esau, claiming only that he should be the heir of the spiritual blessings—the great promise made to Abraham, confirmed to Isaac and to Jacob himself. That promise was not in respect to the present, but to the future; it was purely of faith. What cared Esau for a promise of the future? He desired what he got—the earthly inheritance. Nor do we find that after he got possession of the earthly inheritance, he ever gave a thought to the covenant, which reads, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

But all the while, that covenant was the one thing before the mind of Jacob. He would not contend with Esau for the earthly blessing, although it was included in the purchase which he had made. He would give Esau all of the earthly blessings, if he might inherit this great blessing of the future. All of Jacob's course in life was governed by this great promise. If the Seed of Blessing was to come through him, then he must have children; hence he married and reared a goodly family, regarding them all as identified with himself in the original promise. His accumulation of wealth, flocks and herds, was along the same line—a desire to become great and influential, in line with that promise.

Under the Lord's guidance, he had left his uncle Laban's house, with the flocks and herds and servants which he had gradually accumulated there. Under divine direction he was going back to the land of his father. Although twenty years had passed since he left home, he felt a timidity respecting

his brother Esau, and prayed to the Lord upon the subject, reminding him of the promise, in which he trusted.

Then he sent word ahead to his brother that he was coming. Next he prepared a present—a gift of considerable value for those times—two hundred and twenty sheep, two hundred and twenty goats, sixty camels, fifty cattle, thirty asses, under the direction of servants. How large a proportion of his flocks and herds these were we know not, but they did represent long years of toil on Jacob's part. They were earthly things, however—things of the present time—and Jacob valued them as nothing in comparison to the great promise which he possessed. He could give this goodly portion of earthly mammon as a present to his brother Esau to purchase his favor, his good will. He was not under obligations to Esau; rather, Esau was indebted to him.

THE WISDOM OF JACOB'S COURSE

Jacob, the younger by a few minutes, had purchased of his elder twin brother all of the first-born's portion, which included the major share of Isaac's worldly riches. Jacob had left all these in Esau's hands. The latter, naturally enough, might expect that Jacob was now coming to claim his riches—to take possession of the estate.

Esau was ready to fight for it, of course. Even if Jacob had protested that he laid no claim to the estate, Esau would continually have judged him according to his own standards, and would have mistrusted that at an opportune time Jacob would make an attack. Thus a rivalry between the two families would have been established—a feud. Such a feud would have interfered with Jacob's hopes in connection with the Abrahamic promise. He must be a co-worker with God in the matter of establishing his seed, or posterity, numerous and influential, and qualified in due time to bless all the families of earth.

Jacob not only offered the present to Esau, but insisted upon his accepting it. It would stand as a pledge of good faith between them. It would help to heal any old sores. Esau would be all the more willing to see the prosperity of his brother; for he realized that he had gotten the better of Jacob; first, by getting the patrimony, and secondly, by getting in addition so rich a present.

Evidently Jacob's course was the wise one. He still had plenty, and God could give him as many more sheep, goats, cattle, camels and asses as He pleased. His chief concern would be the promotion of everything appertaining to that great Abrahamic promise, in which he delighted, the fulfillment of which lay beyond the present life.

THE LESSON OF GENEROSITY

One lesson which we as Christians may draw from the course of experiences of Jacob is generosity toward the world—toward those who have no interest in the heavenly promise. We do not mean to institute a comparison between Jacob and ourselves, in the sense of holding him up as a pattern for Christian conduct. Quite to the contrary, we point out that while Jacob's faith was commendable and may be copied by us, his standing with God was very different from ours. While he was an heir of that Abrahamic promise and the Christian church are also heirs to it, our inheritances are different.

We have already seen that the Abrahamic promise is to have a double fulfillment. The earthly fulfillment is to come to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all of the faithful; while the higher, the Heavenly fulfillment, is to come to Christ and his spirit-begotten followers—the true Christians of this Gospel age. Only the spirit-begotten from Pentecost onward have enjoyed the blessed privileges of the school of Christ, or been able to develop the fruits and grace of the holy Spirit.

Nevertheless, the general principle holds good with the spiritual heirs as with the natural heirs of that promise—that faith in the promise makes secondary everything else in life, hence, as Jacob was willing to set aside all other ambitions, aims, hopes and loves, wishing merely to see the accomplishment of this Abrahamic promise and to surrender earthly rights and privileges in its favor, so should we, the spiritual heirs—yea, more so. We have much advantage every way. We can understand the promise better than could they.

We see how God has already begun the preparation for the fulfillment of that promise in the sending of his Son to redeem our race, and thus to make possible the blessing of all the families of the earth in due time. We see further that Jesus, having redeemed mankind, has been highly exalted, and now in power and great glory is merely waiting for the time to come when his elect spiritual church will be completed. Then the Messianic kingdom will be established; and then Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the faithful heirs of the earthly part of the inheritance will be awakened from the tomb, to enjoy their share in the grand work of world-blessing which God has promised.

As Jacob forsook his father's house, leaving all with his brother without contention, trusting only to the heavenly promise, so must we spiritual Israelites forsake all earthly hopes and aims for joint-heirship with Christ in the heavenly kingdom. As Jacob was glad to give goodly presents to his brother for the sake of peace and prosperity, and to assist in carrying out God's arrangement under this promise, so should we as Christians be willing to give to our partners in life, our neighbors and friends and brethren, the larger share of earth's good things, if thereby we may forward the interests of the Lord's cause in connection with the Abrahamic promise, in which we trust.

The world has the things of the present time. They are its prize. Mankind set their hearts upon these earthly things—they know nothing higher. We, on the contrary, appreciate the heavenly things, esteeming, as the apostle said, that all the things of earth are unworthy of comparison. We, like St. Paul, esteem the greatest things of an earthly kind but loss and dross that we may win Christ—that we may win a joint-heirship with Jesus in the great blessing of God by becoming members of the spiritual seed of Abraham, and participating in the glorious work of this promise—the blessing of all the families of the earth.—Galatians 3:29.

SET YOUR AFFECTIONS ABOVE

God had certain lessons of faith and obedience for the ancient worthies to learn. And how well they learned these! How much faith we see manifested in Abraham's career, and Isaac's and Jacob's, and all along down the line amongst those enumerated by St. Paul in Hebrews 11! How their obedience proved their loyalty as well as their faith!

We are not surprised that those noble characters are to

have a goodly place in the work of blessing mankind under Messiah's kingdom. Their experiences in life were a schooling, and training and preparation for what lies before them during Messiah's kingdom. If they were faithful to God and trusted him in the dark, and loyally sacrificed earthly interests, doing his will, how sure we may be that they will be no less loyal, no less faithful, no less obedient, when as perfect human beings under the favorable conditions of Messiah's kingdom they shall be entrusted with honorable service and power by the great Messiah!

Who cannot see that if the ancient worthies of the house of servants required testing as to obedience, faith, loyalty, much more the spirit-begotten members of the Christian church require testing along these same lines! There are two reasons why our testing should be more thorough than theirs. (1) We are members of the house of sons, while they were members only of the house of servants. We have not only the spirit of begetting as sons of God, but additionally have much clearer light shining upon the divine Revelation, making known to us God's will and showing us how his plan is outworking. (2) Additionally, our testing is for a still higher position of glory and honor—"that we might become partakers of the divine nature"; that we might be joint-heirs with Christ in his kingdom on the heavenly, or spiritual, plane, still more important than the earthly plane, which the ancient worthies will receive. As St. Peter says, "What manner of persons ought we to be"—we who have had such great favors and privileges and enlightenment!

If then Abraham left his father's house—kindred—to be a stranger in a strange land in obedience to the Lord's leading, will the Lord expect less of faith and obedience in his spirit-begotten children of this Gospel age? Surely not! If Jacob surrendered up all of his rights to his father's property, should not the spirit-begotten children of God be willing to do as much, or more? If Jacob was willing to give liberally of his earthly possessions to secure peace with those who owed him much, ought not we, who have received the holy Spirit, be willing to give still more generously of this world's mammon, or riches, to those who love the present world, in order to secure our liberties and privileges, which we prize especially as opportunities to make our calling and election sure to the heavenly gifts and heavenly calling in connection with the divine plan?

FINALLY OUR GOLDEN TEXT

Our Golden Text seems at first not very closely related to the lesson. Nevertheless there is a relationship. It is this: Whoever cultivates the spirit of generosity and benevolence toward others in the interest of the Lord's cause will thereby be making character. Generosity in dealing with our enemies, with the world, will gradually make us more generous in all our dealings—in our homes, with our families, and especially in the Lord's family, to which our text refers.

"Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you." We are not to forget that the church of this Gospel age is represented as being in the school of Christ, to be taught and prepared for divine service, glory, honor, in association with the great Redeemer during his Messianic reign. We are not to forget that the lessons of this school are the graces of the holy Spirit, and to whatever extent we attain these graces, to that extent we shall be prepared for the place in the kingdom to which God has called us. To whatever extent God's people neglect the cultivation of these fruits of the Spirit, in that same proportion they will be unfit to share in Messiah's kingdom.

Is not this the very essence of St. Peter's exhortation when he says, "Add to your faith, fortitude; to fortitude, knowledge; to knowledge, patience," etc. "If these things be in you in abounding measure, they shall make you to be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord, and thus an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off," and looks merely at the things of this present life, and will be unprepared for the graduation examinations prior to the inauguration of the new dispensation—now at hand.—2 Peter 1:5-11.

THE DIFFERENT STEPS IN JUSTIFICATION

Even before Christ came into the world, God had dealings to a certain extent with some of the human race. He dealt with Adam, telling him of the penalty for sin and promising that the seed of the woman should some day bruise the serpent's head. He dealt also with Enoch, with Noah, with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and others, centuries before Jesus was

born. God did not, however, deal with these men in the particular and special sense in which he has dealt with the Gospel church, who are privileged to be called "the sons of God."—John 1:12.

The Scriptures state that Abraham believed God, and his faith was counted to him for righteousness. (Gen. 15:6) God

must have had some dealings with Abraham before he believed or there would have been nothing for Abraham to believe. Evidently God had had some communication with him before faith and trust could have brought him into even a tacitly justified condition.

Abraham sought to be as nearly perfect in conduct as possible, and to do those things which are pleasing to God. After he had manifested his desire to be obedient, God said, "If you will prove your faith by leaving your native land and risking the loss of your present earthly comforts and of the home of your childhood, I will make a covenant with you." Abraham believed God.

As soon as opportunity was afforded, Abraham left Chaldea and journeyed to Haran. Later, God made him certain promises on condition that he would go into the land of Canaan. After he had entered Canaan, God said, "All the land which thou canst see will I give unto thee and to thy seed after thee." (Gen. 13:15) Abraham was called the friend of God. (James 2:23) St. Paul tells us that God preached the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."—Galatians 3:8; Genesis 12:3.

FAITH IN GOD THE ESSENCE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

So we see that there was a kind of dealing with the ancient worthies before Christ came—before there was any actual justification to life. None could be thus justified until a life had been given as a corresponding price for Adam's forfeited life. Hence the promise of God, so far as these were concerned, was only a hope. They understood that in some way he intended to do something for their relief, but did not know how God, who had once condemned them to death, could give them everlasting life. Nevertheless, they had faith in the promise, and this God counted for righteousness; for faith in God is the essence of all righteousness. By this faith they were justified to fellowship with God.

When Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the prophets manifested their faith toward God, they proved their heart-loyalty, so that long after their death he could say, "I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob." They believed that some day they would be raised from the dead. If there were no resurrection, God could not have spoken of them as he did; "For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living." (Luke 20:37, 38) This is the argument with which Jesus offset the teachings of the Sadducees that there will be no resurrection of the dead; but it was not given as a proof that the patriarchs were in heaven at the time, for Jesus distinctly tells us that at the time in which he was speaking no man had ever ascended into heaven.—John 3:13.

We see, then, that Abraham had a measure of relationship with God, but not until he had manifested his faith. God had dealt with him, however, before this manifestation of heart-loyalty, and that dealing consisted in giving him knowledge of how to become the friend of God.

In due time God will indicate to the members of the human family that he is willing to accept them on terms by which he will be their God and they shall be his people, but that they must prove their faith by walking before him to the best of their ability. This is the most that God does for any one—simply to give him knowledge of the steps which he must take in order to have complete justification. He says, "My son, give me thine heart." (Prov. 23:26) On this principle God spoke to the Lord Jesus Christ and continues to speak to all who would come unto the Father by him.

TENTATIVE JUSTIFICATION NOT CONSECRATION

Manifestly, things are somewhat different now from what they were in Abraham's time. Abraham did not become a son of God; for he lived before the opening up of the way to life, and that which God counted a justifying faith could not bring him redemption. Our Lord had not yet opened up that living way. Notwithstanding the fact that the redemption had not taken place, Abraham had God's promise that in due time he and his seed should bless the world.

The message that now goes forth is that God is willing to receive again those who were once his sons, but who lost their sonship through the disobedience of Adam. Therefore, the very knowledge of God's plan is an offer of salvation to whosoever may hear of that plan. God says, in substance, "If you wish to become my son, this is the way. 'My son, give me thine heart.' After you have made a full consecration, I will reveal to you the deep things of my Word."

We should make a clear distinction between what God has done and what he intends to do. God considered Abraham and all the faithful of past ages as the servant class. (Heb. 3:5) But with the faithful of the Gospel age it is different. St. John tells us that "To as many as received him, to them gave he privilege to become the sons of God." (John 1:12) Only since Pentecost has opportunity been given for any to become

sons. Hence, before that time none could become "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ"—heirs of the Abrahamic promise.—Rom. 8:17.

To those who have come into Christ since Pentecost the assurance is given that they shall be made joint-heirs with the Lord if they continue faithful to the end, that if they suffer with him, they shall also be glorified together with him. (Rom. 8:17) The only ones who have full relationship with God are the consecrated, who have received the full life-justification possessed by none others in the world.

Just as God dealt in the past with those who dealt with him, and as he gave them encouragement and directed them by his voice, so now he gives those who deal with him particular information respecting his will through the Son and through faith in the blood of our Lord Jesus. Whoever thus starts out now is beginning to come into a justified condition; and every step of progress that he takes brings him nearer to consecration.

FROM KNOWLEDGE TO TENTATIVE JUSTIFICATION

The first step leading to justification is the gaining of a little knowledge; for no man can be justified in ignorance. This knowledge leads to a step of faith. With each advance in faith based upon that knowledge comes greater opportunity for increase of knowledge and faith. Thus we learn to walk by faith rather than by sight.

All of these steps, however, lead up to a full and perfect justification. First we come to a faith in God, believing that there is a great Creator, that we are his creatures, and that he has merciful intentions toward us. Then other steps lead us to see that God has made arrangements for receiving us back into fellowship with himself through the Lord Jesus Christ and his work of grace. We see that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." (1 Cor. 15:3) This is a step of greater knowledge and leads to another step of obedience. Thus we draw nearer to God. As St. James says, "Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you." (James 4:8) Each step enables us to see that we are getting nearer to the blessing.

After seeing that the Lord Jesus has prepared the way for the forgiveness of sin, we learn that there are certain terms upon which our sins will be forgiven. This is another step of knowledge. Then we are brought to the point where the Lord tells us by his own word and the words of the Apostles that this forgiveness is based upon faith in him and full acceptance of his finished work, that the only way by which we may become sharers in that work is by the consecration of ourselves and all that we have to the Father, and that we take up our cross and follow Jesus. We also learn that unless we take this step we cannot reach full justification.

TENTATIVE JUSTIFICATION DEFINED

When one has been drawn to the Father through his Word and his providences, and has accepted the blood of Jesus Christ as his only means of salvation, he comes to the place where he must decide whether he will present himself to God or whether he will wait for the Millennial blessings of restitution. What he will do is uncertain. He is tentatively (that is temporarily) justified for a purpose—that of considering which step he will take. He is still on the human plane—a natural man.

Tentative justification, then, is for the purpose of giving a standing with God, from which a believer in our Lord's ransom-sacrifice as his only hope of salvation may ascertain whether he has that spirit of sacrifice which will lead him to full consecration. The believer is at liberty to choose which course he will take. He may offer himself in consecration or he may decide not to do so. But should he decide to wait for restitution, he thereby proves that he has not appreciated God's offer.

The object in preaching the Gospel during this Gospel age—or at all—is to give an opportunity to whosoever will hear to attain to the privilege of spirit nature. Whoever hears the call and neglects to take advantage of it has evidently received the grace of God in vain. He suffers the loss of whatever he might have profited by accepting the offer. If for the doing of a certain piece of work a reward is promised, the one who fails to perform the work loses the reward, the honor, the money, or whatever was promised for doing the work.

God does not intend to inflict punishment on those who decide not to make the sacrifice of their humanity. But this class cannot gain the prize offered to those who do so. Only those who use their opportunity to be dead with Christ shall live with him—become participators in the glorious things that are his. Those who take this step constitute the church at the present time.

For the others, however, we trust that they will have opportunities in the future, in the Millennial age. Under the favorable conditions of that time we hope that they will do

better than they have done in this age. Yet our thought is that the person who has come to a knowledge of God's grace and has had a measure of light respecting it, but has rejected it, will be in a worse position than those who have never heard of it.

Nevertheless, we do not wish to discourage any one who experiences faith in restitution, in a future life, in good works. We would not discourage any one who hopes for earthly life, restitution blessings. We believe that there are a great many people who are living noble lives, but who have neither faith nor light regarding the high calling. They are not on that account to suffer forever, except in the sense that they will have lost the opportunity of attaining the kingdom blessing.

VITALIZED JUSTIFICATION

The Lord says that one should take the step of consecration only after counting the cost. (Luke 14:27-33) After one has decided to take this step, he presents himself to the Lord. If his consecration is accepted, the Lord imputes enough of his merit to make the sacrifice perfect; for nothing imperfect can be presented to Jehovah. At the very moment of his acceptance as perfect through the imputed merit of Christ, he is reckoned alive in the full sense of the word; he has received actual justification in a legal sense. His justification is said to be vitalized. In other words, as soon as our Lord Jesus becomes his advocate, God is reconciled to that sinner and treats him as one actually perfect. Full justification means full making right in the sight of Jehovah.

Let us be sure that we clearly understand this important point. Justification is said to be vitalized when, by the imputation of the merit of Christ, one who has made a full consecration receives by faith his share of the redemptive work of Christ. Those who have received vitalized justification can have no part in restitution. Since that which is vitalized is made alive, justification that is vitalized is said to be unto life, for one's future existence depends upon his retaining that justification after our Lord's merit has been imputed. Abraham's justification, on the contrary, was not unto life, but only to fellowship with God. Christ had not died in Abraham's day and, therefore, merit could not have been imputed to any one.

By means of the various steps by which God has led us to himself we reach the fulness and completeness of justification. That justification is vitalized by Jesus, who imputes to us a sufficiency of his merit to cover our deficiency. At the same moment God accepts that sacrifice which has already been offered to him through the Advocate. This acceptance is indicated by the begetting of the holy Spirit.

The one thus covered with the imputed merit of Christ and begotten of the holy Spirit is thenceforth a new creature. (2 Cor. 5:17) If he continues faithful to his consecration vow, he will ultimately be presented to the Father as a member of

the bride class. Those who fail to keep their vow will be put through severe trials, great tribulation, which will eventually prepare them for a lesser place than they would have had if they had kept their robes unspotted.

During this Gospel age only those who have presented their bodies as living sacrifices are given the holy Spirit. This power operates in their lives for their development as new creatures, to bring them into harmony with God and to prepare them for membership in the body of Christ.

SANCTIFICATION A GRADUAL PROCESS

In the early stages of the church there were "gifts of the Spirit," necessary to the inauguration of the church. These gifts of the Spirit ceased, however, as soon as the church had been established and the New Testament had been completed. We no longer have the gift of healing, of speaking with tongues, etc., but we have something more valuable than are gifts. These were for the infantile condition of the church. Instead, we have today the fruits of the holy Spirit, which are developed and matured gradually as the result of labor.

In some characters the period of maturing fruit of good size and flavor is longer than in others. Nevertheless, as surely as we receive the holy Spirit into good and honest hearts and are submissive to the prunings of the Great Husbandman, so surely shall we bear large, luscious fruit in due time. The fruits of the Spirit, the Apostle says, are manifest; that is, they can be seen in our lives. They are meekness, self-control, faith, goodness, gentleness, long-suffering, brotherly-kindness and love.

At the beginning of our existence as new creatures the fruits of the holy Spirit germinate within us, but these must grow to maturity. We must bear fruit. The Lord says, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away"—cuts it off—"and every branch that beareth fruit, he pruneth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." (John 15:2) There is more or less pain in the prunings and testings of loyalty and obedience, but every manifestation of obedience helps to prepare us for membership in the bride class.

The work of actual justification and of actual sanctification and growth in grace is gradual. Completeness will be attained only in the first resurrection, for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. 15:50) Those who will constitute the first resurrection are the blessed ones—the holy ones, who have cultivated the fruits and graces of the Spirit. As St. Peter tells us, "Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness love. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren [idle] nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."—2 Peter 1:5-8.

GETHSEMANE!

Gethsemane! The garden's lonely shade the world's
Redeemer sought that night. He went alone to pray
For grace and strength to drink the last drop in his cup.
Great souls crave solitude in sorrow's hour! Not e'en
His well-beloved three might share the sacredness
Of that deep woe,—he bade them tarry, while he went
A little farther on, and fell upon his face.

* * * * *

Gethsemane! A solitary place, apart,
No mortal feet may press in sympathy that dark,
Erimsoned earth. No human hand the fevered brow
May cool, no other heart can share its agony,

No voice but God's may break the solemn silence there,—
A place where every soul must drink alone the cup
The Father's hand hath poured, and given to his child.

Gethsemane! A desert place, alone, apart?
Ah, no! The anguished heart doth never cry in vain
To him who marks the smallest sparrow when it falls,
For he shall send his angel with the message, "Fear
Thou not, for I am with thee! I will ne'er forsake,
Nor let thee fail! My right hand shall uphold, my love,
My power shall keep thee, even to the bitter end!"

GERTRUDE W. SEIBERT.

SOUTHERN CONVENTION TOUR

At the suggestion of the newspaper syndicate which handles our weekly discourses through about 1,500 newspapers, we made a visit to Colon, Panama and Havana, in order that the discourses might come from those points bearing a measure of local color. Incidentally, we arranged for other meetings, as follows:

Jacksonville, Fla., Feb. 16th and 17th.—A convention of Bible Students gathered here on the 15th, to the number of about 200. They reported having had a splendid season of spiritual refreshment prior to our arrival, and that our coming in no wise diminished their joy and zeal.

We gave one public discourse at the Duval Theater. We had excellent attention. Crowds were turned away, unable to gain admittance. We hope that some good was accomplished—that some of the Lord's people were refreshed and strengthened in spirit; and that others, not consecrated, were enabled to see a light attractive to their hearts, which may

bless them in after-days, leading them to righteousness and the Golden Rule, if not to the grand climax of full consecration to the Lord.

At Colon and Panama we gave public addresses, on Feb. 22d and 23d. In both instances the theaters were packed in a way not permitted in the United States. At Colon it was estimated that about 600 stood during the service, while many hundreds were turned away. At Panama we gave additionally an address to the Bible Students, numbering about 100. They came from different parts of the Canal Zone. Nine-tenths of the attendance of the interested in those parts are colored, very few being white.

Kingston, Jamaica, we reached Feb. 25th. We found a large convention already in session, crowding Collegiate Hall—about 600—nearly all colored. These gathered from various parts of the island, and represented one-half of the interested there. Some of these dear friends spent nearly all that they