

This is thy finished work,
Thy own most glorious plan;
And this the wondrous love thou'st shown
Toward sinful, fallen man.

Oh, Israel's God! How great art thou!
What wisdom, love and grace
The eye of faith will always find
When we thy dealings trace!

—Mrs. Jennie M. Stratton.

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VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER

A GLOOMY OUTLOOK

President Eliot, of Harvard University, takes a rather gloomy view of the future outlook. He says that "churches, courts and legislatures command less respect and have less influence now than thirty years ago." He thinks the church has degenerated into poetic generalities or to ritualistic pomp. He notes in the judiciary a decline in personal merit and in public estimation. "Legislative bodies," says the president of Harvard, "have fallen into popular contempt." But, gloomy as all this is, he does not despair of his country. While the years have been laying successive layers of black paint on the religious bodies, on the judges of our courts, and on the lawmakers, there is still one ray of light shining through the gloom. For meanwhile, the school has become more powerful, "and education is the one agency for promoting intelligence and righteousness which has gained strength in the last half century."

"CHURCH PERIL—GROUND BEING LOST"

Dr. George C. Lorimer, the noted Boston preacher, now pastor of the Madison Avenue Baptist church, says the Protestant church is in peril; that the dangers are from within, not without; that the church is losing hold on intelligent thought. In his Sunday sermon he said:

"Every now and then certain things are said which betray an uneasy feeling as to the future stability and supremacy of Protestantism.

"But whatever may be said of the gloomy outlook, it is not due, as many suppose, to the hostility of Romanism. The Papacy has its own troubles.

"The present perils of our faith are not primarily from without. They are from within, and they are similar to those which endangered the standing and usefulness of the Galatian church.

"Romanism is dogmatic. She has come to the front as the champion of the Bible against the destructive critics, and as the defender of the sacred mysteries against the naturalism of the rationalists, while we have fallen into the cheap and idle fashion of decrying doctrine; and we fail to see that as we drift from the *theologia sacra* we are losing our hold on intelligent thought.

"An additional peril springs from the present spirit of Protestantism. The peril is that genuine Christians may desire to make their churches centres of social influence rather than sources of regenerating power. Protestantism today suffers from worldliness.

"Diminished congregations and depleted treasuries are other danger signs."—*N. Y. Journal*.

WATER AGAIN FLOWS IN THE POOL OF SILOAM

"For over ten years the Pool of Siloam has been only a name. Visitors to Palestine who have seen this historic spot of late years have found that its healing waters have vanished. Just recently the waters of Siloam have been made to flow once again, and there has been great rejoicing in the Holy Land. It appears that Jerusalem has been especially short of water of late, and it occurred to some of the inhabitants of Siloam to try to find out whether the spring which used to supply the pool was really dry. Tons of accumulated rubbish were cleared away, and after about a month's work the spring was found. The excavators discovered behind some fallen rocks an old aqueduct running into the valley of the Chadrone, and into this aqueduct the beautiful, cool, clear water had run and been wasting for years."

ZIONISM'S PROSPECTS AS SEEN BY THE N. Y. TRIBUNE

"Has the Zionist movement any prospect of attaining its end?"

"Very little. It looks as though the scornful indifference of the intellectual and wealthy among the Jews were sufficient to promptly dissipate their co-religionists' dream of returning to the promised land. The latter, to be sure, have in their favor the greater number and faith, but against these are arrayed the rationalists, for whom the true Messiah is the French Revolution that brought them emancipation; the prudence of the rabbis, proclaiming that henceforth the Jews have no other country but that of their birth (declaration of the grand rabbis of France, England, Austria, Hungary, at the Congress of Basle, 1897); the money dealers, without whom nothing can be done, and who are not willing to exchange their banks, their industries, their palaces, for the barren and poor soil of Palestine; the politicians, for whom the integrity of the Ottoman Empire has become a dogma, and who would not permit a Jewish state to rise in the midst of the Sultan's Asiatic dominions. All these powers of the modern world, rationalism, wealth, politics, are barring the way of those simple minded, pious souls who persist in striving for a redemption of Israel, who dream of a temple other than the Exchange and who long for the promised land with all the ardor of the Jews of the Babylonian captivity."

* * *

Just so! Worldly wisdom fails to discern some matters even while they are transpiring. The *Watch Tower* and *Dawn* pointed out the present Zionist movement from God's Word long before its founders thought of it. Ever since 1878, when Israel's "double" of chastisement expired, the land has been preparing for the people and the people for the land. In God's due time, and that soon, they will come together. Meantime persecutions in various lands are the prods, the "staff" of their Shepherd, to awaken them and direct their hearts toward the promises of which they are heirs.—Rom. 11:26-29.

ZIONISM FROM A LITERARY JEW'S STANDPOINT

To the Editor *N. Y. Journal*:

I am not a prophet, but it certainly seems to me that without the Zionist movement, and without persecution from without, isolated Jewish communities have no sufficient seeds of permanence in a world whose civilization is already built up on Old Testament lines. Unfortunately, persecution is still unfailing, especially in Russia and Roumania, and fortunately Zionism is making great strides. Nineteen hundred and one will be memorable as the year in which the ruler of Palestine—the Sultan of Turkey—received Dr. Herzl, and will end characteristically with the fifth Zionist congress. Every congress shows an augmentation in enthusiasm and in the prospects of what seemed five years ago to be the mad vision of a dreamer of the Ghetto. In striking the racial chord Dr. Herzl has struck the chord which rings truest, and there is no doubt the brotherhood of Israel contains the elements of a political force. When even America is beginning to exclude Jewish emigrants, there will be no place left for the sole of their foot but Palestine, and thus forces external and internal are beginning to coincide and work together for good—the evil force of persecution, the righteous force of Zionism. Faithfully yours,

I. ZANGWILL.

GOD'S MESSAGE ON PEACE

Psa. 34:14. "Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it."

Heb. 12:14. "Follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord."

Rom. 14:17. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

Rom. 14:19. "Follow after the things which make for peace and things wherewith one may edify another."

Rom. 12:18. "Live peaceably with all men."

1 Cor. 14:33. "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace."

1 Cor. 7:15. "God has called us to peace."

1 Tim. 2:2. "Lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."

Jas. 3:17. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure then peaceable."

Isa. 26:3. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee."

Prov. 10:7. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

1 Thes. 5:13. "Be at peace among yourselves."

2 Cor. 13:11. "Be of one mind, live in peace and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

Mark 9:50. "Have *peace* one with another."

Job 22:21. "Acquaint now thyself with God and be at *peace*: thereby good shall come unto thee."

Jas. 3:18. "The fruit of righteousness is sown in *peace* of them that make *peace*."

2 Tim. 2:22. "Follow righteousness, faith, charity, *peace* with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

Col. 3:15. "Let the *peace* of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body."

Eph. 4:3. "Keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of *peace*."

Rom. 10:15. "Preach the gospel of *peace*."

Rom. 8:6. "To be spiritually minded is life and *peace*."

Zech. 8:19. "Love the truth and *peace*."

Prov. 12:20. "Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil; but to the counsellors of *peace* is joy."

Psa. 119:165. "Great *peace* have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them."

Psa. 37:37. "Mark the perfect man and behold the upright: for the end of that man is *peace*."

Psa. 37:11. "The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in abundance of *peace*."

2 Peter 3:13, 14. "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in *peace*, without spot and blameless."

Rom. 14:18. "*He that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men.*"

PERSECUTION RIGHTLY RECEIVED

ACTS 5:33-42.—FEB. 16.

"*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*"—Matt. 5:10.

We saw, in a previous lesson, Peter and John before the Sanhedrin, and the subsequent growth of the church in numbers and in the graces of the holy spirit, including joy and peace with God and with each other and with fellow-men. The Lord's blessing upon the apostles, through the gifts of the holy spirit, enabled them to heal the sick, and at the same time to declare that the work was done by the power of Jesus, whom the rulers had crucified; but whom God had raised from the dead, and who was now in heavenly glory, a prince, a Savior, a glorified High Priest, ready and willing to grant forgiveness of sins and the blessing of the holy spirit to those who would accept.

For a time the chief priests and their associates in religious power, ignored the new movement and the fact that it reflected against them; but by and by they were aroused, and used the power at their hand for the arrest of the apostles; at the command of the chief ones the latter were put into prison. The account says they had "indignation"—margin, "envy." Thus the truth, in whatever way presented, has either a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death, according to the heart-conditions of those coming under its influence. In the present case the simplicity of the apostles, their earnestness in presenting their message, their power and kindness in respect to the healing of disease and casting out of devils, and their evident sincerity, had a right influence upon all "Israelites indeed;" but the formal, perfunctory Israelites, in favored positions of honor and affluence, were provoked to hatred and envy; envy because of a power over the people which they could not exercise; hatred because of a feeling that these teachings were assailing and weakening their influence, and tending to break down the religious system which they represented.

So, too, we see matters today in nominal spiritual Israel. The spirit of sectarianism is jealous and envious, and resents and opposes whatever is not in accord with it;—fearful of its own fall,—realizing continually the weakness of its own position. On the contrary, now as ever, the truth, presented in simplicity and under the guidance of the holy spirit, will appeal to all who are in a right attitude of heart, all Israelites indeed, all whose eyes of understanding are open to see the inconsistencies of sectarianism and formalism. Sectarian leaders in our day have not the power to imprison those toward whom they feel enmity; nevertheless, having the same spirit as their prototypes, they manifest it to the extent of their ability. For instance; during the "volunteer" service in Allegheny—in which brethren and sisters quietly and pleasantly tendered tracts and booklets free to Christian people on Sunday—some of the modern Pharisees and Sadducees were envious, and manifested their envy as nearly as possibly after the manner described in our lesson. Some of the preachers *commanded* their congregations not to take the pamphlets, and heaped abuse and scandalous epithets upon God's faithful children, whose only object in the matter was to serve his cause, and to feed his flock. A committee of preachers waited upon the city officials and endeavored to have their coöperation—to secure the arrest and imprisonment of the brethren and sisters unless they would cease to preach this "Gospel of the kingdom," and let them alone to continue their blinding and deceiving of the Lord's flock. They perceive that the truth is against them; against their positions; against their false theologies. They perceive that the truth has Scriptural support, which they cannot answer; and they fear lest it should "turn the world upside down," and that, in the melee, they would lose some of their dignity, honor of men and good

salaries. As one of them declared, "My bread is not buttered on that side!"

The city officials desirous of being on good terms with influential citizens, called at our office, rehearsed the facts, and notified us to discontinue the work. We replied that we are living in the United States, and not in Russia; and that there is no law here yet, against giving men booklets, any more than against giving them bank-bills, if they desire to take them, and if the procedure is conducted in a quiet, orderly manner. We assured them that if there were any breaches of the peace they would not come from the distributors, and explained further that those who engaged in this volunteer service were as truly preaching the Gospel by the printed page as were those who taught orally inside the church buildings; and further, that the real objection was, that our friends were circulating the *true* gospel, "good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people," while those inside the churches were deceiving their confiding flocks, misrepresenting God's character and plan, and withal reaping goodly rewards for their evil services;—whereas our friends, the volunteers, were preaching the true gospel without money and without price;—seeking to educate the people in a knowledge of God and of his plan, as revealed in the Scriptures. The civil authorities readily saw the justice of our position, and there was no interference. Is not this a case of the blind seeing better than those who boast of having escaped from blindness?

The Lord's power was wonderfully manifested in the early days, not only in the healing of the sick, but afterwards in the deliverance of the apostles from imprisonment. The angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them forth; instructing them to proceed in the proclamation of the truth as before. The apostles and early church at this time almost walked by sight; for, under such conditions, faith would be very secondary. However, we see that the object of this was the establishment of the church upon broad, sure foundations. Subsequently the miraculous features were withdrawn, and are still withdrawn; frequently the Lord's people have been imprisoned and otherwise mistreated throughout the age, without any special physical deliverance,—even as the miraculous gift of healing also passed away. We walk by faith, not by sight; we can see the spiritual healings and casting out of evil spirits progress, but are not granted physical demonstrations; and if imprisoned or otherwise despitely used, our consolations must be those of the heart, grasped by the arms of our faith.

The next morning, on the assembling of the Sanhedrin (also termed the Senate), when it was found that the apostles were not in the prison, but boldly teaching as before in the Temple, the chief priests found matters more complicated; and fearing the influence of such miracles upon the minds of the people, they caused the next arrest of the apostles to be made with great leniency, bringing them before the Sanhedrin. Thus another opportunity was afforded God's servants to testify, and to the chief priests and rulers to hear a strictly gospel sermon; and the speaker failed not to impress the same points as on previous occasions. What an opportunity this would have been for honest men, Israelites indeed! What a blessing it might have brought them! But being in an evil condition of heart they were merely angered, embittered, "cut to the heart."

Their words betray the source of their fear, when they said to the apostles: "We have already forbidden you to teach the people, but instead of obeying us you have 'filled Jerusalem with your doctrines' (teachings), and you evidently in-

tend to bring upon us the ill-will of those who receive your teachings, by charging us with the blood of this Jesus. They feared not only for the safety of their sectarian systems, but they had a personal fear as well. And so we believe it is with the chief priests, scribes and Pharisees of today; they feel not only a necessity for supporting their various denominational structures, but, additionally, they realize that their personal standing is at stake. In proportion as what we present as the truth is accepted by the people, the ministers of the nominal churches are seen to be false teachers, false prophets, deceivers, who ignorantly or wilfully have woefully misrepresented the divine character and plan.

However, if the chief priests, etc., had only understood matters better they would not have been so alarmed. They would have realized that the apostles and their teachings would influence only a comparatively small number;—that the large majority of Israelites were such only in name; drawing nigh to God in outward forms and lip service, but far from him in heart. The same is true today. The preachers of Babylon need have little fear that the true Gospel will affect the majority of their hearers in the least. On the contrary, now, as at the first advent, only such as “have an ear to hear” will hear, can hear; the remainder will continue under the leading of their blind guides, until, by and by, both shall fall into the ditch of general doubt and unbelief here, as their prototypes did in the trouble which closed the Jewish age. Subsequent events proved that, altho the apostles filled Jerusalem with their doctrine (teachings), a comparatively small number were ready and able and willing to receive the good messages, as the Apostle and the Prophet declare.—Isa. 10:22; Rom. 9:27.

Gamaliel was a great teacher amongst the Jews. It will be remembered that the Apostle Paul, as Saul of Tarsus, was one of his pupils. Gamaliel was a member of the Sanhedrin, and present on the occasion of this trial, and his wise counsel turned aside the murderous intentions of the chief priests toward the apostles. His wise and moderate language draws our esteem, and it swayed fully those who heard him say:—“Refrain from these men and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men it will come to nought; but if it be of God ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to be fighting against God.” We must esteem these words as merely worldly wisdom, and their author not as an Israelite indeed, but simply prudent and, possibly, a just man. So today, we find men in the councils of the nominal church and in the civil councils who are broad-minded, wise and liberally disposed. This does not mean, however, that these, any more than Gamaliel, are Israelites indeed. They are noble-minded, and should have our respect accordingly; but we are not to be surprised if we find that they do not accept the truth, and that they are not of the “little flock.” We are to remember, on the contrary, the inspired word—that not many great or wise or mighty hath God chosen, but “chiefly the poor of this world, rich in faith, to be heirs of the kingdom.” (1 Cor. 1:26-29; Jas 2:5) We would like to press this point, because we have found at times that some of the Lord’s people who have received the truth themselves are more or less stumbled by the fact that they see good, honorable, noble people who seem to have no ear to hear the truth, and no heart to accept discipleship amongst the Lord’s people under the terms of his discipleship—full consecration, even unto death. The number of wise, learned people who are willing to become fools, in the estimation of men, for Christ’s sake, is exceedingly small now, as ever.

The Sanhedrin warned the apostles to preach no more in this name,—the name of Jesus—and sentenced them to be whipped. Thus they would discredit the ministers of the new teaching in the eyes of the many, for then, as now, the majority of people were disposed to look to their leaders, and to accept their judgment as superior. It is well indeed that wise, true leaders should be appreciated and acknowledged and followed; but it is a lesson that all need to learn, that the Lord is the real leader and commander of all those who claim to be his people; and that while looking to leaders of ability for guidance and for help, all of the Lord’s people need to look beyond the leader also to the Lord; and to have their senses exercised in respect to the righteousness, the justice, the truthfulness, of the advice and example of their leaders.

REJOICING IN TRIBULATION

As the apostles departed, at liberty, altho sore from the thirteen strokes of a three-tailed whip (“forty stripes save one”) they doubtless remembered our Lord’s words, “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.” So far from being cast down, their experiences, because rightly received, made them stronger in the Lord. They were again

before the people to teach, but in no wrong attitude. They did not threaten the scribes and Pharisees, reviling them as corrupt, etc., nor did they bemoan their fate, thinking it strange that the Lord should permit these fiery trials to come upon them. No; they were true soldiers of the cross; they knew that they had enlisted in the Lord’s army for service, and not merely for dress parade. They realized that present lessons and experiences were under providential guidance, and would work out for their good. They suffered pain—we are not to suppose that a miracle was performed to hinder their feeling the lashes, else there would have been no merit in endurance;—but their faith so firmly grasped the situation, and the Lord’s word of promise, that we read, “They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his Name.”

The world is full of grumblers, and with good cause often; as the Apostle remarks. “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together.” But as he also declares, “We, who have the first-fruits of the spirit, groan *within* ourselves.” The Lord’s people are not to parade their difficulties, bemoaning their lot; on the contrary, they have the throne of grace, and the instructions of the Word of God teaching them why present evil conditions are permitted at all; and how and when and why the time is nearing in which all tears will be wiped off all faces, and there shall be no more sighing and crying and dying. Instead therefore, of groaning before the world they should rejoice and show forth the praises of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. Our sympathy for the poor world without these advantages should so bestir us to tell them the gospel, that our own woes would be smothered;—partially forgotten. And if faithfulness to the Lord and his truth brings us extra hardships, as it did to the apostles, this, also, is a cause for rejoicing as it was with them. The Master instructed us that we should first have sat down and counted the cost of discipleship, so that thereafter none of the things coming to us as his disciples would move us. True, we may all have in our natural dispositions a tendency to repine, to grumble, to bemoan afflictions which come to us, even in the service of the truth; but as we become more and more developed in the heavenly character the Lord surely will expect of us that we shall gradually attain more and more to that standard which he sets for us; in which the trials and difficulties of the present will be more than offset, more than over-balanced by his gracious promises, and by the witness of his spirit, that all these things are working together for good to us,—working out for us the greater glory by preparing us therefor. The developed Christian will surely find himself counting present trials and difficulties, even though severe to the natural man, to be but “light afflictions, not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

The record is that the apostles so rejoiced that the threatenings of the Sanhedrin were powerless to stop them from declaring the good tidings—they preached not only in the Temple, but in their homes,—wherever they had opportunity. And so it must be with the same message in all those who receive it now, as well as then. They do not need to be “called” by a large salary to the ministry of the truth; but without any salaries, and even with the wages of tribulation, stripes and imprisonment, they rejoice in the privilege saying, “He hath put a new song into my mouth;—even his loving kindness.”

We must again call attention to the attitude of the apostles—their boldness and their meekness. They knew well the Lord’s regulation, that his people should be “subject to the powers that be,” and that they “should not speak evil of the rulers of their people;” and following this instruction we find that while stating the truth very plainly their words contain nothing of venom or bitterness or threat. No wonder that the people took note of them, that they had been with Jesus! At the same time, in respect to religious matters they recognized a higher law, and that the same God who directed that they should be subject to the powers that be, had given them a message of peace and joy and blessing which was to be declared everywhere. They could not permit the civil power nor the religious power of their time to hinder their obedience to God in this matter.

So it should be with us today; we are to be strictly law-abiding, speaking no evil of the government, nor of its servants: if God sees fit to permit them, that is reason enough why we should be subject to them. When his time shall come he will institute his own King upon his own throne, and we shall rejoice thereat; but meantime we can have neither part nor lot with those who defame the laws and defame the rulers. We may see various things which our consciences and judgment of the Lord’s Word indicate to us are seriously wrong; yet

we are to remember that even the poorest government in the world is far superior to anarchy, and our sentiments are to be always on the law-abiding side of every question. This, however, must not hinder us from defending the truth and its interests whenever they are assailed;—in love, and with the wisdom from above. If the Lord has opened a door of opportunity for us for the promulgation of the truth, and if, in his providence, the laws are favorable, we are to use the opportunities, and to protest against any obstruction of them—yet not with bitterness. (For instance, our appeal from illegal Postoffice rulings.) If special privileges then are closed to us, we are to submit, remembering that no power could prevail against us except as God would permit it. But, like the apostles, we are to continue to use our talents, our tongues, our pens, in the service of the truth, in making known the good tidings of great joy, wholly regardless of what this obedience to God shall cost us in the way of earthly interests.

While touching this subject we urge upon all of our readers to copy the methods of the apostles in their quiet, forceful speaking of the truth. Rarely have we found much good to result from boisterous argument; and frequently it has, to

our knowledge, resulted in evil. Those who seem to need boisterous argument evidently have not an ear for the truth, and should be let alone. If the Lord's servants adopt such methods they are likely not only to do no good to their hearers, but evil, and especially likely to do injury to their own hearts. The spirit of strife is not the spirit of the Lord: his spirit is described in the Scriptures as "the meek and quiet spirit," not the contentious, boastful, arrogant spirit; and whoever attempts to serve the truth and to spread it abroad in boisterous argument and boastful manner, is doing injury to the cause as well as to himself and his hearer.

The truth was impressed by the plain, simple statement of the facts of the case, by men whose hearts had been cleansed by the truth and whose lives were irreproachably moral—whose conduct demonstrated their honesty, whose joy and rejoicing proved that they had in them the new mind of the holy Spirit making them glad. It was by these manifestations of the spirit and power of the truth that the Lord was glorified, and that the hearers were blessed; and so it will be today, and we should order our conduct and words and sentiments accordingly.

THE WORD OF GOD OUR SPIRITUAL FOOD

BY ARCHBISHOP LEIGHTON (ABOUT A. D., 1675.)

This is the end of the ministry, that you may be brought unto Christ, that you may be led to the sweet pastures and pleasant streams of the Gospel; that you may be spiritually fed, and may grow in that heavenly life, which is here begun in all those in whom it shall hereafter be perfected.

As the milk that infants draw from the breast, is most connatural food to them, being of that same substance that nourished them in the womb; so when they are brought forth, that food follows them as it were for their supply in that way that is provided in nature for it; by certain veins it ascends into the breasts, and is there fitted for them, and they are by nature directed to find it there. Thus as a Christian begins to live by the power of the Word, he is by the nature of that spiritual life directed to that same Word as his nourishment.

Whereas natural men cannot love spiritual things for themselves, desire not the Word for its own sweetness, but would have it sauced with such conceits as possibly spoil the simplicity of it; or at the best love to hear it for the wit, and learning, which, without any wrongful mixture of it, they find in one delivering it more than another. But the natural and genuine appetite of the children of God, is to the Word, for itself, and only as milk, "sincere milk;" and where they find it so, from whomsoever, or in what way soever delivered unto them, they feed upon it with delight.

Desire the Word, not that you may only hear it; that is to fall very far short of its true end; yea, it is to take the beginning of the work for the end of it. The ear is indeed the mouth of the mind, by which it receives the Word (as Elihu compares it, Job 34:3), but meat that goes no further than the mouth (you know) cannot nourish. Neither ought this desire of the Word to be only to satisfy a custom; it were an exceeding folly to make so superficial a thing the end of so serious a work.

Again, to hear it only to stop the mouth of conscience, that it may not clamor more for the gross impiety of condemning it; this is to hear it not out of desire, but out of fear. To desire it only for some present pleasure and delight that a man may find in it, is not the due use and end of it; that there is delight in it, may help commend it to those that find it so, and so be a means to advance the end; but the end it is not.

To seek no more but a present delight that vanisheth with the sound of the words, that die in the air, is not to desire the Word as meat, but as music, as God tells the prophet Ezekiel of his people. "And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well upon an instrument; for they hear thy words, and they do them not."

To desire the Word for the increase of knowledge, although this is necessary and commendable, and being rightly qualified, is a part of spiritual accretion, yet take it as going no further, it is not the true end of the Word. Nor is the venting of that knowledge in speech and frequent discourse of the Word and the divine truths that are in it; which, where it is governed with Christian prudence, is not to be despised, but commended: yet certainly the highest knowledge, and the most frequent and skilful speaking of the Word, severed from the growth here mentioned, misses the true end of the word. If any one's head or tongue should

grow apace, and all the rest stay at a stand, it would certainly make him a monster; and they are no other, that are knowing and discoursing Christians, and grow daily in that, but not at all in holiness of heart and life, which is the proper growth of the children of God.

And as we ought in preaching, so you in hearing, to propound this end to yourselves, that you may be spiritually refreshed, and walk in the strength of that divine nourishment. Is this your purpose when you come hither? Inquire of your own hearts, and see what you seek, and what you find, in the public ordinances of God's house. Certainly the most do not so much as think on the due intendment of them, aim at no end, and therefore can attain none; seek nothing; but sit out their hour, asleep or awake, as it may happen, or, possibly, some seek to be delighted for the time, as the Lord tells the prophet, "to hear as it were a pleasant song," if the gifts and strain of the speaker be anything pleasing.

Or, it may be, they want to gain some new notions, to add somewhat to their stock of knowledge, either that they may be enabled for discourse, or, simply, that they may know. Some, it may be, go a little further; they like to be stirred and moved for the time, and to have some touch of good affection kindled in them; but this lasts but for a while, till their other thoughts and affairs get in, and smother and quench it; and they are not careful to blow it up and improve it. How many, when they have been a little affected with the Word, go out and fall into other discourses and thoughts, and either take in their affairs secretly, as it were, under their cloak, and their hearts keep a conference with them; or if they forbear this, yet, as soon as they go out, plunge themselves over head and ears in the world, and lose all which might have any way advantaged their spiritual condition. It may be, one will say, "It was a good sermon." Is that to the purpose? But what think you it hath for your praise or dispraise? Instead of saying "Oh! how well was that spoken," you should say, "Oh! how hard is repentance! how sweet a thing is faith! how excellent the love of Jesus Christ!" That were your best and most real commendation of the sermon, with true benefit to yourselves.

How sounds it to many of us at least, but as a well contrived story, whose use is to amuse us, and possibly delight us a little, and there is an end?—and indeed no end, for this turns the most serious and most glorious of all messages into an empty sound. If we keep awake, and give it a hearing, it is much; but for anything further, how few deeply beforehand consider, "I have a dead heart; therefore will I go unto the Word of life, that it may be quickened; it is frozen. I will go and lay it before the warm beams of that sun that shines in the gospel: my corruptions are mighty and strong, and grace, if there be any in my heart, is exceeding weak: but there is in the gospel a power to weaken and kill sin, and to strengthen grace: and this being the intent of my wise God in appointing it, it shall be my desire and purpose in resorting to it, to find it to me according to his gracious intendment; to have faith in my Christ, the fountain of my life, more strengthened, and made more active in drawing from him; to have my heart more refined and spiritualized, and to have the sluice of repentance opened, and my affections to divine things enlarged; more hatred of sin, and more love of God and Communion with him."

DECISION IN CHARACTER BUILDING

"How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God follow him, but, if Baal, follow him."—1 Kings 18:21.

Multitudes are in an undecided condition of mind, not only as respects the worship of God, and as respects their faith, but also in regard to the common affairs of life. They are not devoid of good intentions, good resolutions, hopes and ambitions; but these are rather vague and shapeless. Their thoughts, their intentions, have not crystalized. As a result they are making little progress and accomplishing little good, either in or for themselves or others. Even worldly people who manifest great decision in business and social and moral matters lack decision in religious affairs.

The poet has truly said, "Life is real, life is earnest; and the grave is not the goal;" but the difficulty with many is that they have not even so good a goal as the grave would be. If they could even have that before their mind as an end; if they could even think of how they would wish to terminate their lives eventually, and leave some luminous foot prints in the sands of time that would be helpful to others and an honor to themselves, it would be very much better, indeed, than to pass through life with no aim, no wish, no thought, except to eat, to drink, to sleep, to gratify earthly tastes. We believe that it is even much better that men set their ambition upon money or fame or some other object, than to have no fixed purpose before them in life; yet money and fame and such matters end with the grave, and the Lord's consecrated people, inspired by new hopes, new aims, new ambitions, beyond the grave, have much advantage every way over all others.

Nevertheless, even those who have been so highly favored of God that the eyes of their understanding have been opened,—that they have caught glimpses of the glorious things in reservation for the Lord's faithful, are frequently lax and measurably indifferent to these wonderful things which should induce them to zeal and inspire them with courage and strength. What is the difficulty? Why do they not accomplish more? The answer frequently should be that it is because of indecision. They should decide promptly, but they hesitate—holding important questions in abeyance, and continuing to balance and to weigh matters which they already determined are *right*. They halt between two opinions; they hesitate to take the Lord's Word fully and entirely and to walk boldly forward in the right direction, even when they clearly discern the footsteps of Jesus and the proper course for them as his followers. As one point after another comes up and is thus set aside indefinitely, the whole Christian course of that individual is stagnated and fresh duties and privileges as they appear, are stopped in the way by the muddle of mind which unsettled questions of years produce; thus indecision has more or less hindered them all their lives. By and by there is such an accumulation of undecided points and matters that they feel the case is almost hopeless, become discouraged, grow cold, indifferent, and perhaps fall completely away from the faith and its service.

For all such our text is especially appropriate. We want to decide, first of all, who is our Master, who is our God; then, having concluded, we want to decide promptly that his servants we should and will be. The Master warned us of the impossibility of any other course being satisfactory, saying, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Attempt to do so will make us and all with whom we are particularly identified unhappy. Almost everyone will acknowledge that there is a Supreme Being, and that it is the duty of his creatures, to serve and obey him. The whole question then should be, not as to obedience and service, but merely, Who is our God? We see many of the worshipers of Baal, Mammon, energetic in their service, and we should feel ashamed if we who, by the grace of God, know the true God and his gracious plan, are not as zealous, as persevering, as energetic, as are the servants of error. "What manner of persons ought we to be?" We ought most positively to be committed to that which we believe to be the truth, and we ought to be most zealous in its service.

A part of the mistake is in the exercise of a wrong kind of caution;—proper enough in respect to earthly affairs, in which we have to guard our interests against unscrupulous fellows; but out of place, impedimenta, in our dealings with God. This wrong caution says,—Do nothing, until you see how it will all end;—I must walk by mental sight at least. But this kind of worldly wisdom will not do, in dealing with God. He makes the rules by which we may approach him and progress in his favor. One of his rules is, that every item of truth we learn must be accepted and acted upon before we are ready for more. They that receive the truth in the love of it, will surely serve it with all the decision they can command and acquire;—piece by piece, as they receive it. They who on receiving truth balance it and ponder long whether

it will not ultimately cost too much, thus give evidence that their love for the *truth* is not great enough,—that it is mixed with selfishness. Such must cultivate love of the truth until it outweighs all other things, else they will not be fit for the kingdom. The Lord's charge against those who are about to fall in the present testing time, is that,—They received not the truth in the love of it.—2 Thes. 2:10-12.

"CHOOSE YE THIS DAY"

After Israel had reached the promised land, Joshua sought to bring them to such a point of decision. He called them together, recited to them the Lord's favor and blessing enjoyed thus far, and expressed himself in noble language, saying, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve; . . . as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Josh. 24:15) So, dear friends, we who realize that the Lord has been blessing, guiding and sustaining us in the past, should come to a full, positive *decision* as respects our course of life. We should not be content for one moment longer to go along indefinitely, serving whiles the Lord, and whiles Mammon (selfishness). We should settle the matter at once, and for all time, that we will be the Lord's.

The very fact of coming to a positive decision is a great blessing, and a great help in the formation of character. Every time we come to a decision, on any question, it strengthens mind and character and makes us that much more ready for another test—along some other line, perhaps. One decision for the right prepares the way for others in the same direction, just as hesitancy, indecision upon one point prepares us for hesitancy upon all points, and more or less stops our Christian progress and character-building.

We are not advocating rashness—the doing of something without a reasonable, proper amount of consideration. But we are urging upon the Lord's people the cultivation of promptness, decision of mind, in respect to questions we have sufficiently examined. Some things may of necessity require pondering, but many things in life require no such delay to reach a proper decision. The majority of the questions which present themselves before the bar of our minds could be decided in a moment; and the less time we take in reaching a decision on such problems the better for us, and for the upbuilding of proper character in this regard.

We need to have some touchstone, as it were, some matter which will help us to decide, which will enable the mind to reach a decision quickly. This touchstone should be *God's will*; so that to perceive the Lord's will in respect to any question would be to settle it—as quickly as discerned. There should be no thought of opposing the divine will. There should be no temporizing, no haggling to see what a thing would cost, once we discern that it is the Lord's will. There should be no further question about the rejection of any matter which we discern to be contrary to the Lord's will; no matter how enticing, no matter how much of profit or of advantage there may be connected therewith.

Ability to decide quickly, and to decide always on the right side, what the Lord's will is, requires some experience and discipline; but the sooner we begin the sooner we will become proficient; the more energetically we set ourselves to know the Lord's will and to do it, and to show him by our promptness that we delight to do his will, the better and the quicker will we find our characters established on proper lines.

There are many gods presenting their claims to us, and seeking our reverence. To some, perhaps to the vast majority, self is the most prominent idol and false god; to others it is fame; to others the family; to others wealth. But all these false gods are more or less related, and the one name, Mammon, selfishness, is appropriate to them all. It requires not a great deal of discernment to decide that none of these ambitions is worthy of us, and that the worship of our hearts and the sacrifices of life should all be to the true God.

TODAY IF YOU SHOULD HEAR HIS VOICE, OBEY!

The Scriptures appeal to us along these lines of prompt decision, and it is because these appeals are neglected, not obeyed, that many of the Lord's people are so lean and so undeveloped, both in knowledge and in character. Mark the appeal, "Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." The suggestion is that the matter be not put off for another day. We cannot tell how distinctly we will hear the voice of the Lord's providence speaking to us tomorrow. On the contrary, we know that even as we may become accustomed to an earthly call, or an earthly alarm, so that by and by it would cease to awaken us, so our spiritual ears become accustomed to the important messages reaching them from the Lord's Word. They will have less and less weight and influence, and will become less and less helpful to us in proportion as we neglect them and fail to act upon them. Does

not this explain the fact that some who have newly come into the truth, are farther along both in faith and good works than some whose ears were blest long ago?

We are still in the beginning of a new year and a new century, and now is a favorable time for us to make good resolutions. One of these should surely be that henceforth we will cultivate decision of character;—that when we hear the voice of the Lord we will respond promptly. So that when we see a work of the Lord, which we have the privilege of attending to, it will be performed not only willingly and well, but also speedily. "The Lord loveth a *cheerful* giver"—a prompt giver;—not merely as respects money matters, as this text is generally applied, but in respect to all of our little offerings and sacrifices to him and for his cause' sake. If we would be pleasing to the Lord and grow in his favor and in nearness to him, we must bring our hearts more and more into the condition that he approves, that he loves, viz., heartiness, cheerfulness, promptness in every service we may render. The trouble with many Christians is, that they have not thoroughly learned what a great privilege we of this Gospel age enjoy,—in being permitted to present our little sacrifices and self-denials to the Lord, under the assurance that our imperfect works shall be acceptable through Christ to God.

We have all noted with pleasure the wonderful success of that wonderful Apostle Paul. It is well, therefore, that we shall note that one of the chief elements contributing to the success of his apostleship was this element of character—decision. Mark how this quality of his shines out in the statement, "This one thing I do," etc. He had only one real aim or purpose in life, toward which he was bending all his energies. He had cast aside all others as weights and hindrances, and as not being worthy to be compared with this one service, so high in its point of privilege. The one thing he did was to serve the Lord, to serve the brethren, to serve the truth. All other matters were secondary to this. If he could accomplish this one thing the results would be so blessed, so happy, both now and everlastingly, that he could afford to count all other things and objects and aims as loss and

cross and not worthy of comparison.—Phil. 3:7, 8, 13, 14.

This is the spirit that all of the Lord's overcoming people should have. All do not have this character or quality of disposition by nature; but in proportion as we lack, the Lord will reckon to us of his own merit to compensate, if he finds in us the spirit, the will, the disposition, to thus follow the example of Jesus and the apostles and all the faithful. If we are weak in this respect, lacking in this quality of decision and firmness of character, we need to be more alert, and to go the more frequently to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and to find grace to help. But those who are naturally weak, and who yet have tried this matter according to the lines here laid down,—who have sought to cultivate this principle of character and decision and firmness for the right, give abundant testimony that the Lord is their helper and that in thus following the directions of his Word and the examples of faithfulness, they have become strong in the Lord and in power of his might. May this be a blessed year for all the faithful in Christ Jesus, along the lines of character-building, energy and firmness for the right and for the truth, as God grants us to see these.

Let us not forget that it is just such a class that the Lord is seeking, to be the bride and joint-heir of his Son. He is not looking for those who are perfect in this respect; for there is weakness along this line throughout the whole human family; there is none perfect in this or in other respects, none fit for the kingdom by nature. It will encourage us, perhaps to remember that the Lord is taking the weak things of the world and making them strong, and that in proportion as we submit our wills to his will we are transformed by the renewing of our minds, and that he thus works in us to will and to do his good pleasure in the establishment of strong, decisive characters, through the promises of his Word. To it, as represented in Jesus, he exhorts us to look, while we endeavor to run with patience the race set before us, trusting in him who has redeemed us and called us and who has promised to be our ever-present helper in every time of need.

DEACON STEPHEN, CHRISTIAN MARTYR

ACTS 6:7-15.—FEB. 23.

"Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul."

Stephen may be acknowledged the second Christian martyr—for surely our Lord Jesus was the first. We must begin with the first verse of our lesson-chapter in order to trace the history of this worthy soldier of the cross. An emergency arose in the church, calling for a force of seven deacons to look after various temporal matters, and Stephen was one of these seven, all of whom were chosen by the congregation, not by the apostles, as men of honest reputation, wise, and full of the holy spirit. This incident suggests to us the loose character of the organization of the early church. It had not cast-iron rules and laws, except that the Lord, the Redeemer, was the Head of the church, and that none could be recognized as members thereto except as they recognized him as their Saviour and Lord, and made consecration to him, receiving his spirit, and recognized as of his appointment and of the holy spirit's designation his specially chosen apostles, as the authorized instructors of the church. Aside from this, the necessities of each case seem to have guided: and yet, we may safely presume that in all the arrangements in the church, as well as in the teachings of the apostles, the holy spirit directed;—for the benefit also of those believing on the Lord through their word, throughout the entire age.

In a previous lesson we saw that a measure of communism was early established in the church; but the incidents of this lesson clearly imply that it was only limited, and not a complete division of property. It was evidently the intention of the early church to provide for the poor of their number who were without means of livelihood. Prominent amongst those provided for, if not the only ones, were widows without income; such at that time must have been comparatively helpless and dependent upon charity, since there were so few opportunities for earning a living, especially amongst women.

We are not to suppose that there was any intentional partiality or neglect of the Grecian more than of the Hebrew women. Apparently it was unintentional and possibly arose from the fact that the apostles, native-born, appreciated more keenly the needs of the native widows than of the foreign-born. These were all Jewesses, of course, whether born in Palestine or born in Greece. Up to this time the Gospel had not been sent to others,—Gentiles. No doubt there was some reasonable cause for the murmur. In any event the apostles

manifested their honesty of purpose in the matter by promptly instituting measures for the correction of the difficulty. There is a lesson in this for all of the Lord's people: if difficulties arise, based upon temporal questions, likely to sprout a "root of bitterness" or to cause a schism in the church, the proper course would be to throw the responsibility upon the shoulders of the whole congregation—to ask for the election of some of the number who could give the matter better attention, and see that all were justly dealt with. We are not to forget that in this as in other ways the Lord has clearly indicated that the *church as a whole* is under his supervision, his care, and that it is therefore proper that the general affairs of the church be conducted by the *congregation* and not by one man, nor by a clerical class.

No doubt some of these chosen for the serving of tables—the money collection and the food distribution—were representative of the Grecian brethren who knowing the peculiarities of the Grecian customs, would be the better able to see to the welfare of the Grecian widows. It is here that we get acquainted with Stephen, as one of the seven chosen deacons. The word "deacon" signifies runner, attendant, servant. The "elders" of the church were more particularly chosen according to their Christian character and aptness to teach, while the deacons were chosen according to Christian character and aptness in business affairs. In both instances, however, the Christian character, the holiness of spirit and wisdom were primary considerations. So with the Lord's people today: those chosen to any part of the service should first of all be recognized as the best and the wisest of the number—the possession of a holy, meek and quiet spirit, of great value, being carefully considered—then natural abilities.

In Stephen's case we see an illustration of the Lord's methods of advancing his people step by step in his service: (1) He was honored with a knowledge of the truth: faithful in his acceptance of it, and zealous towards the Lord, he ere long manifested these qualities; and under the guidance of the holy spirit, was chosen a deacon. (2) Faithfulness in this, serving tables, prepared him for further opportunities, and (3) we find him exercising the gift of healing and performing signs in attestation of his *ministry of the truth*; which implies that he had actually attained to the position of an elder in the church tho' the apostles residing in Jeru-

saalem, perhaps, made an unnecessary election of elders,—for they were all elders. (1 Pet. 5:1) Stephen was so full of the spirit of the truth and devotion to its service that he had the high honor (4) of being the first one of the brethren to follow the Master's footsteps in a sacrificial death. Here surely was an advancement in service and its honor that may well quicken and energize all of the Lord's people to greater efforts to serve and please the same Master. He who thus accepted the consecrated Stephen, and advanced him step by step in his service, is ready and willing today to take and use those who are similarly consecrated, and burning with heavenly zeal. He is willing to make of such burning and shining lights in the church, if they in turn are willing to suffer with him, that they may also be glorified together in due time.—Rom. 8:17.

Stephen's faith and power and opportunities for service came to him along the same lines as faith and power have come to the Lord's people since—whole-hearted devotion to the Lord, to his people and to his truth. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Had Stephen been self-seeking and ambitious for honor of men or of the brethren we may be sure we would have heard little of him, unless, like Ananias, his approbateness had resulted in his being made an example of evil-doing. This is a danger which besets every brother chosen by the church to any service. Hence the apostle's caution, "Be not many of you teachers brethren." Hence the necessity that the church choose for its servants only those of humble mind; and the need of care amongst these servants that they fall not into the snare of the adversary, and after having preached to others, themselves become cast-aways.—Jas. 3:1; 1 Tim. 3:6, 7; 1 Cor. 9:27.

Stephen in preaching got into a debate with some of his day, and was more than a match for them. As we read, "They were not able to withstand the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake." We are not to suppose that Stephen was the greatest of all orators, nor even that he had no peers amongst those with whom he disputed. In this case the adage was well applied, "Thrice armed is he who hath his quarrel just." It was because Stephen had the truth, the right side of the controversy, and because God was with him, that he was more than a match for any of his adversaries.

The same God is still with his people; and the Lord's Word, therefore, is still worthy of all acceptance,—“I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your adversaries shall be able to gainsay or resist.” (Luke 21:15) Do we not see this same principle illustrated today, when humble ones amongst the Lord's people are more than a match for all their adversaries? The truth being powerful, prevails, though it is not always acknowledged to prevail, even as it was not acknowledged by Stephen's enemies.

We are not advocating public debating of the truth. We believe that debates, as a rule, accomplish little good; because the opponents of the truth are apt to conduct their arguments unfairly, deceptively—apt to strive for victory, rather than to strive for the truth. However, there are cases today, like this case of Stephen's, in which the opponents of the truth are the aggressors; and in such cases those who have the truth are not to be ashamed of it, nor fearful, but to trust in the promise of the Lord for words and wisdom for the occasion. We are not given a report of the discussion, but from what we know of Stephen's character, so well illustrated in the discourse subsequently delivered, we cannot escape the conviction that he spoke to his opponents in a kind, generous, reasonable manner—that he neither ranted nor stormed nor endeavored to throw a dust of false arguments. He had the truth, which is sharper than a two-edged sword, and we may be sure that he spoke the truth "in love," according to the apostolic command.—Eph. 4:15.

Stephen's disputants were evidently of the Grecian Jews, and Stephen himself was also probably of this class. Possibly Saul of Tarsus, afterwards the Apostle Paul, was amongst those who disputed with him, as he himself tells us that he was a sort of ringleader amongst those who killed him. (Acts 22:20) We cannot help wondering to what extent young Saul, the lawyer, instructed by Gamaliel, and an adept in logic, may have taken some lessons and caught some ideas from Stephen's reasoning—not enough, however, to make transformation of his career.

It was Stephen's turn to be called before the Sanhedrin, that he might give the leaders of his people a gospel sermon, the basis of which was Jesus and the resurrection. His opponents who could not down him in argument, were determined to destroy him; and like other zealots, deluded by superstition, they were nevertheless influenced by their higher principles to desire to accomplish his destruction *legally*—that is to say, with a form of law. Alas, how many people

now, as well as then, of comparatively noble mind, succeed in "deceiving their own selves" into thinking that a wrong becomes a virtue, becomes right, if to any extent they can wrap it in the folds of the law! The Lord's people need to have the *spirit* of the law, the *spirit* of justice, the *spirit* of righteousness: without this even the best balanced minds may be led astray under the pressure of zeal, superstition, or error.

The doctors of the law and members of the Sanhedrin (Saul of Tarsus is supposed to have been a member) did not wish to be parties directly to the charges, nor to seem to be interested in the destruction of a noble man. They therefore procured others to give testimony that would be of the kind desired—testimony upon which it would be possible for their distorted judgments and consciences to render a death verdict. Strangely enough, the second martyr, like the first, was convicted of blasphemy against God and against the Temple, and without any more foundation for the charges than in the case of his illustrious Master. Of course the charges were distorted, and yet there was a measure of truth in them. Just how much allowance should be made for those who convicted the Lord and Stephen on such evidence is perhaps difficult for us to judge. Nor is it necessary, because the judgment of such matters is not yet put into our hands. The Lord alone knows to what extent the prejudiced mind was unable to discern the truth, and to what extent the adversary succeeded in blinding the judgment, so as to make the light appear darkness, the truth appear error.

Doubtless, as Stephen heard the charges against him, and noticed the advancement of the case, he mentally remarked the correspondence between these charges against him and those upon which his Master was convicted. We may be sure that some such thoughts were passing through his mind when his face was so wonderfully lit up with the indwelling joy, that it is recorded that all sitting in the Sanhedrin "looking steadfastly on him saw his face, as it had been the face of an angel." But even an angelic face could not move such hearts, some of the same, doubtless, that had sat in condemnation of the Master himself. Seemingly, Stephen's witness was fruitless, so far as his auditors were concerned; the same might have been said respecting our Master's trial and testimony. And yet, as the latter bore fruit on the day of Pentecost and afterward, so, doubtless, Stephen's testimony bore fruit subsequently. Who can say that that beaming and angelic face was not one of the "pricks" against which Saul of Tarsus had been contending for some time, when the Lord interrupted him enroute to Damascus?

Who can tell that experiences connected with this martyrdom may not have been valuable not only to Saul, but to others? At all events, it was Stephen's duty, as it is our duty, to be faithful under all circumstances, under all conditions, regardless of whether appearances indicate the accomplishment of much, or of little good. We are to remember that the Lord's work is in his own hands, and that our part is to be faithful to him and to the truth, to the extent of our opportunities.

The Editor would like, for himself and for all the pilgrims, and for all the elders of the church everywhere, and for all the brethren who speak at all, publicly or privately, in the name of Jesus, that Stephen's beaming face might be impressed upon our memories. If it is, and if every time we stand forth before men publicly or privately, as the representatives of our Lord, we could so realize his blessing and our privilege as his servants, that it would fill our hearts and beam forth from our faces, in gladness, in thankfulness, for the privilege of serving, then indeed we would have the highest degree of blessing to ourselves, and doubtless also would bring the largest degree of blessing to all those whose hearts would be prepared for the truth, and also for those not yet ready for it, but who are under the Lord's discipline and guidance, in preparation for it, as was Saul of Tarsus.

Our Golden Text is very appropriate in this connection. It is well that the Lord's people, especially when they come into trying positions on account of their infidelity to the truth, should remember these, the Master's words. Men may kill our bodies, or they may speak evil of them, or spitefully use them otherwise; but it is beyond their power to injure us as new creatures, or to ruin our prospects as respects the future life. That life which the Lord has promised to his faithful,—the resurrection life,—is beyond the power of man. It is the eternal, the invaluable life. If we gain it, no matter what the cost may be, as respects the present life, and mortal-body condition, we shall have made a great bargain, we shall have gained a great prize. All who really appreciate it see it to be a "pearl of great price," for which they, like the Master, are willing to lay down all,—to sell all that they have that they may obtain it.