

CONFESSION OF SIN ESSENTIAL TO FORGIVENESS

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."—1 John 1:9.

The Apostle John is not here addressing the world of unbelievers, unjustified persons, "sinners" in the ordinary sense of the word. On the contrary, he is addressing the justified and sanctified in Christ Jesus; and he classes himself with these, using the plural pronoun "we." The frequent mistake of applying this and similar passages to sinners in general has been injurious in two important particulars:

First. It has been injurious to the unregenerate, in that it has given some the impression that there is no difference between the church and the world; and that all alike have access to God in prayer and for the forgiveness of daily trespasses. It has thus hindered some from realizing the necessity of faith in the atonement, and from definitely entering into covenant relationship with the Lord under the terms of the grace covenant—the covenant of sacrifice. (Psalm 50:5) On the contrary, all should be informed of the fact that repentance and a positive acceptance of Christ as their personal Savior are absolutely necessary before they can be "accepted in the Beloved," and be treated as "sons of God," and enjoy the privileges of this relationship—prayer, fellowship with God, divine care, or providential oversight of their affairs and interests, and the favor of forgiveness of daily trespasses through the merit of the great High Priest, Jesus Christ the Righteous.

Second. This oversight has had an injurious effect upon some Christians, who have gone to the extreme of claiming that they can never commit sin, after their past sins have been graciously forgiven by the Lord, and after they have entered into covenant relationship. Hence we have the very wrong views and teachings of so-called "perfectionists" who claim, not merely that they are reckonedly perfect now, but that they are actually perfect in all their thoughts, words and deeds—**DECEIVING THEMSELVES** and laying themselves liable to many grievous errors, as the Apostle declares in connection with our text.

BASIS OF TRUE FELLOWSHIP

The Apostle John in writing this Epistle clearly states his object, saying, "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." It is a noteworthy fact that the vast majority of Christians never experience the fulness of joy, peace and blessing that they might possess. Too many are content with simply diluted first principles of the doctrine of Christ. Therefore, as the Apostle Paul declares, such are merely "babes in Christ." (1 Corinthians 3:1, 2; Hebrews 5:12-14) Of course, they have a blessing in any relationship to the Lord, but they have not the fulness of joy which would be theirs if they progressed in grace and in knowledge to the full stature of a man in Christ. The object of the Apostle's writing them was to stir up the pure minds of believers to an appreciation and enjoyment of their privileges, that thereby they might grow and develop.

The Apostle follows the example of our Lord Jesus in symbolizing truth and righteousness as light, and sin and every evil as so much of opposing darkness. God himself thus considered would be the very perfection of Light—"in him is no darkness," no sin, no imperfection. With this thought before the mind, the Apostle points out that any growth of fellowship with God to which we may aspire must be along the lines of goodness, purity, and that it would be sin for us to say to others or to imagine in our own hearts that we are walking with God and having fellowship with him, if our course of life is dark, a sinful one. Such are merely deceiving themselves and others. They are not deceiving God, and they are not getting the blessings enjoyed by those who "walk in the light."

Moreover, to the extent that we walk in the light and in harmony and fellowship with God, we shall find ourselves in fellowship with all others who are like-minded. So then, if we do not "love the brethren whom we have seen," so as to be able to have fellowship and spiritual pleasure with them, it would be an indication that we are not wholly in harmony and fellowship with God.

But who are the "brethren"? Our Lord tells us that not all who profess his name are true brethren. He says, "Not every one that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven [be recognized as his brethren and joint-heirs], but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." We thus see that it is by our deeds, and not merely by our professions, that we are accepted of the Lord. Again, he says, "Who are my brethren? . . . Verily, I say unto you, he that

doeth the will of my Father, the same is my brother."—Matthew 7:21; 12:48-50.

We are not, therefore, to anticipate "fellowship" with all who name the name of Christ as a proof of fellowship with the Father, and that we are in the light. We are merely to anticipate this true fellowship with those who are earnestly seeking to do the Father's will to serve his cause and exemplify the instructions of his Word, in their deeds as well as in their professions. Between all such there must be, whether hidden or open, a bond of fellowship and union. That bond is the one faith and one baptism into the one Lord.

SHORTCOMINGS AND FAULTS ARE SINS

But while this fellowship between us and our Lord and all who have his spirit is based upon our walking in the light, our following in his footsteps to the extent of our ability, nevertheless it does not imply absolute freedom from the imperfections of sin. Although under our grace covenant arrangement nothing is charged up to us as sin except in proportion as it has been wilfully done, nevertheless, because of the manifold temptations and the weaknesses of our flesh, the result of inherited predisposition toward sin, it is impossible for us to avoid shortcomings and faults. These may properly be termed sins, as in our text; for "sin is a transgression of the Law," however unintentional it may be.

But the divine arrangement under the grace covenant, on behalf of the Lord's people, is that these unintentional faults and shortcomings need not be charged up against us as sins; but may instead be cleansed away upon our application to the great High Priest, through the merit of the precious blood. Thus it is that the blood of Jesus Christ our Lord cleanseth us from all sin—keeps us clean from sin, if we continually make application for forgiveness, because of realization of imperfections of our flesh.

AN INSIDIOUS SNARE OF THE ADVERSARY

Further on in this Epistle, the Apostle uses the word "sin" in a different sense from the above, saying, "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen him nor [even] known him. . . . He that committeth sin is of the devil. . . . Whosoever is begotten of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God." Again he says: "We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."—1 John 3:6-9; 5:18.

In these passages the Apostle uses the word "sin" in its full or absolute sense, meaning wilful sin, deliberate sin, intentional sin—not merely shortcomings and faults, due largely or wholly to the imperfections of the flesh, inherited from our ancestors. No one, the Apostle assures us, who has been begotten of the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of holiness and truth, could have any sympathy with sin so as to wilfully, knowingly and intentionally engage therein. All who so love sin and wilfully do it and approve it after they have a knowledge of the truth, are children of darkness, who love darkness and who thus show that they have the spirit, or disposition of Satan.

INJUSTICE TO THE BRETHREN INEXCUSABLE

At first thought, many may be inclined to say, "Well, I am in no danger of that sin; for I am sure that I would not commit sin wilfully, intentionally, designedly." But let us notice, dear friends, that there is a way in which sins may come upon us without being at the time a wilful sin, but which later might become wilful sin. For instance, any transgression committed, either in total ignorance or with only a partial acquiescence of our wills, might become a full, wilful, deliberate sin afterward, if we should come to a clear knowledge of the truth respecting the subject, and fail to repent of it to the Lord and to undo so far as is in our power the wrong toward our fellow-creatures. To consent to a sin clearly and fully understood simply because at the time of its committal we were in ignorance, and to refuse to make amends for it, and thus endorse the sin intelligently, would appear to make of it a willful sin.

With this view of the matter, the children of God cannot afford to sanction in their own minds even the slightest injustice or untruth toward each other, or toward any. The essence of this thought is found in our Lord's command: "If thou comest to the altar [if we have anything to offer to the Lord, either of service or of worship or of thanks], and

there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee [that some one has been wronged by you, either in word or thought or act] leave there thy gift before the altar [do not think that it will be acceptable to God while in your heart or outwardly you are practising injustice toward others]; first go and be reconciled to thy brother [make amends to him, apologies, explanations in full, of whatever injury you have done him], and then come and offer thy gift [assured that in such an attitude of heart the Lord Almighty will be pleased to accept your gift].—Matthew 5:23, 24.

In describing those who sin wilfully, the Apostle Paul uses very strong, figurative language, declaring that inasmuch as they are in heart-sympathy with sin, and not in opposition to it, they are the opponents of the Son of God, who was so out of sympathy with sin in its every form that he laid down his life to redeem us from its power and curse. The Apostle declares that such wilful sinners may be esteemed as the enemies of Christ, who really trample him and his goodness and love under their feet, figuratively, disdaining his mercy and favor as well as his instruction in righteousness. He says that inasmuch as they were once sanctified, as a result of their faith in the precious blood and its cleansing from sin, their turning now into harmony with sin would imply that they now disesteem the atoning blood, counting it not a sacred thing, but common—these do despite to the spirit of divine favor which had held out to them freedom from the yoke of sin and ultimate release from its penalty, death, and the attainment, as the Lord's people, of the crown of life eternal.—Hebrews 10:26-29.

CONFESSION OF SIN PRECEDES FORGIVENESS

But let us return to the consideration of the other use of the word "sin" as found in our context, and apply the terms to the faults and imperfections which God's people are zealously striving against, seeking to stamp out of their mortal bodies, and against which they are continually fighting a good fight and coming off conquerors, and more than conquerors, through him who loved them and bought them with his precious blood. The Apostle intimates that there is danger that some will go to the extreme of denying that they have any faults, and thus deceive themselves and get into a snare of the adversary.

It may be asked, What difference can it make if they are seeking to live godly, whether they claim to live perfectly, or admit that they are imperfect and apply continually for cleansing through the precious blood? We reply that it makes a great deal of difference. Only as we confess our sins can they be forgiven. Consequently, those who deny that they have any sins, faults, imperfections, have a great load of them uncanceled, unforgiven, charged up against them; and because of this they would be accounted unworthy to be taken further along in the path of light, under the lead of the holy Spirit, into the heights and depths and lengths and breadths of the love and wisdom of God, revealed in his Word as meat in due season for the household of faith.

Thus we see that there is but one proper course of faith and conduct in which we may have a complete fellowship with the Lord. Those who take any other course are making God a liar; and he would not fellowship with them, but will leave them to the darkness of their own way. Can we wonder, then, that so many are in darkness and lack evidences of fellowship with God when we see how few confess their faults and seek to overcome them and to be cleansed in the only way of divine appointment and approval?

These things are written not to cultivate in us the thought that we may sin with impunity, may be overtaken with faults through carelessness and inattention to the divine Word, and then go to the Lord for forgiveness. Quite to the contrary, these assurances of divine favor and willingness to forgive are designed to have upon our hearts a mellowing influence which will make us all the more careful to avoid sin and to maintain fellowship with him who is the perfection of light and holiness. "These things are written that we sin not"—that we become not boastful of self, self-righteous, self-justified, and thus abominable in the Lord's sight; but that, fleeing from our weaknesses and imperfections, we lay hold upon the grace of God in Christ for their forgiveness, and for grace and strength to fight a good fight against sin.

OUR TEXT APPLIES TO THE CHURCH

"If any man [in Christ] sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." Here again "any man" does not refer to those who are out of Christ, but to those

who are under the terms and conditions of the covenant of grace. Such alone are addressed in this epistle. The world has no Advocate with the Father, because it has not accepted Christ; and he is the Advocate only for those who have accepted him and who are striving to overcome sin.

Our Advocate is more than an advocate, more than a representative at the bar of divine justice, interested in our welfare and forgiveness; he is in addition the One who gave himself for us, who at Calvary finished the work of providing a propitiation (satisfaction) for our sins. This is the reason why we may come "with boldness [confidence] to the throne of grace," not only realizing that God is for us, and that the Lord Jesus sympathizes with us, and is our Advocate, but also and especially realizing the merit of the sacrifice which he has already deposited with justice, and which he fully imputed on behalf of all who love and obey him, upon their acceptance of the Father's terms.

But, says the Apostles, "He is the propitiation not only for our sins [the church's sins], but also for the sins of the whole world." What does this mean? Is he the Advocate for the whole world? No. The world has not been called and drawn to holiness and truth. During the present age "no man can come unto Christ except the Father draw him." At present the drawing influence of the truth is extended only to "him that hath an ear to hear." The great mass of mankind have never in any sense of the word heard of the grace of God and of the propitiation and forgiveness provided for all in Christ. Indeed, it is a remarkably small number who "have tasted that the Lord is gracious."

Yet so surely as the propitiation is "for the sins of the whole world," just so surely shall every member of the race of mankind be brought to a knowledge of the fact, and to an opportunity to avail himself of the provided blessing. It is to this end that the great Millennial age has been promised and is being prepared; and it is concerning that age of blessing to "all the families of the earth" that the Lord declares through the Prophet, "In that day the blind eyes shall be opened and the deaf ears shall be unstopped." It is of that time that the Lord Jesus also declared, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." It is by virtue of his having been lifted up as the Propitiation, the Sin-offering, "for the sins of the whole world," that our glorified Lord will eventually be privileged to be the Judge of the world and to grant forgiveness, reconciliation and restitution to all who will heartily obey him; while "whosoever will not obey that prophet will be cut off from among the people"—in the second death.—Acts 3:23.

THE TEST OF OBEDIENCE

As the drawing now done by the Father is not a compulsion, but merely a constraining by the truth, through a knowledge of it, so the drawing of the Millennial age upon the world of mankind will not be a compulsion, but merely the influence of righteousness and truth constraining toward love for righteousness and thus to the reward of righteousness—eternal life.

The Apostle seems to intimate in the Epistle from which our text is taken that quite a good number may claim an intimate knowledge of God falsely. Hence with great plainness of speech he informs us that, "He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." It is thus very evident that the Apostle does not mean merely a knowledge about God, but an intimate knowledge of God, implying fellowship and communion with him. He then gives us a test by which we may judge accordingly whether or not we are new creatures in the Lord and have the love of God developed in us to any extent. The test is obedience. In proportion as we keep the Lord's Word, in like proportion the love of God is perfected in us; for if we have received the mind of Christ, the holy Spirit, the spirit of God, the effect will be to cause us to will and do his good pleasure—to the extent of ability.

This ability should be continually on the increase year by year. And although we may not hope to be perfected until we shall be "changed" and granted our new resurrection bodies, nevertheless, all the while we may keep so close to the Lord in the spirit of our minds that we may have continual fellowship with him, and by confessing our faults and seeking his forgiveness we may continue to the end of our journey clean from sin, even though we must still acknowledge the imperfections of the flesh—that in our flesh dwelleth no perfection.

ORDINATIONS—TRUE AND FALSE

The word ordination, as applied to the Christian ministry, seems to be very imperfectly comprehended by the majority of

people—including ministers. The ceremony practised by some Christian people in connection with the appointment of their

ministers—such as laying on of hands, etc.—is not ordination, but merely a ceremony connected with the ordination. The word ordination signifies simply the setting apart, authorization or appointment, to some particular work or office.

The proper thought connected with ordination is that which the Bible gives when we read that the Apostle "ordained elders in every church." (Acts 14:23) Similarly, amongst the Lord's people today, Elders are chosen, or appointed, or authorized, by the congregation by the stretching forth of their hands—by the congregational vote. Every elder and every deacon scripturally chosen by the vote, "the stretching forth of the hand" (not by laying on of hands), is thus ordained, or appointed, or authorized, to serve in the capacity indicated.

In thus ordaining elders and deacons, the Lord's people are instructed that they are to seek to know the mind of the Lord. Their voting for and electing one of the brethren to be a deacon or an elder implies that they believe that such a person possesses the divinely indicated qualifications for the service. No one should be voted for who does not give evidence of having received the begetting of the holy Spirit, which is the divine authorization to preach or to teach, as set forth in Isaiah 61:1.

All of the Lord's spirit-begotten people are ordained in this general way to speak in the Master's name the wonderful Words of Life, according to their opportunities. But when a congregation of such ordained, spirit-begotten children of God chooses from its midst some to be elders, others to be deacons, it implies that they consider the ones chosen to be especially qualified, "apt to teach"—ensamples to the brethren in word, in conduct.—1 Tim. 3:2-4.

The wrong thought respecting ordination is the one which ignores the divine anointing (Isaiah 61:1), and which merely looks to the education and the talents of the one elected. Thus ignoring the divine test, many today are serving as ministers and elders in the church of Christ who would make no profession of being spirit-begotten and who give no outward evidence thereof. Such are not properly ordained Ministers of God, and their church ordination gives no divine blessing or power.

The most erroneous thought respecting ordination is that held by the three oldest Christian denominations—the Roman Catholic, the Episcopal Church of England, and the Greek Catholic Church. With these ancient churches, ordination has a different meaning entirely. They claim to have apostolic succession of authority—that originally only the apostles had a right to teach or to preach, and that any other teachers or preachers needed to get authorization and divine power from the hands of the apostles. They claim that before the apostles died, there was a special order of bishops ordained in the church; and that apostolic power and authority passed to those bishops, and has thus come down to our day and is possessed by the bishops of these denominations. They claim that only such as they ordain are Christian ministers.

In a word, these three ancient churches have set aside entirely the divine ordination, the anointing of the holy Spirit, and substituted an authorization through a so-called "apostolic succession" of power and authority. Not only did Jesus tell us that there were only twelve apostles, but Revelation 2:2 points out this grievous error of those who claim to be apostles and are not, but do lie.

SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

The above condensed statement of what is really meant by the ordaining of Christian ministers should be read over repeatedly until fully comprehended. Then the following questions and answers will be better understood.

(1) Are all elders and deacons chosen by congregations of God's people to be considered divinely ordained?

No, no one can be considered divinely ordained who has not received the begetting of the holy Spirit. For a congregation to ordain any one who does not profess to be fully consecrated to God and to have received the begetting of the holy Spirit is for them to do what they have not been authorized by the Lord to do. The person thus chosen would be merely the representative of the church thus ordaining him, but would not be a representative of the Lord.

But for a congregation to recognize the Lord's authorization of a brother, and to recognize further his aptness to teach and his possession of the qualities fitting him for service according to the divine Word, means the giving to that brother of a proper election or ordination to be the representative of the congregation in the name of the Lord. No brother should attempt to serve a company of the Lord's people without their request, and their request or their vote constitutes their appointment of him to that service—in other words,

their ordination of him, or appointment, for the service, whether for a day or a year.

(2) If it is proper that all elders and deacons should thus be ordained and should not attempt to serve regularly, without ordination, what did St. Paul mean when he declared that he was an Apostle not of men nor by men, but by the Lord Jesus Christ?—Galatians 1:1.

No man or congregation is competent to appoint or elect an apostle. No congregational vote would make one of the brethren an apostle. That is a special office or function which is of divine appointment solely. Thus the Lord Jesus appointed only twelve apostles—"twelve apostles of the Lamb"—St. Paul taking the place of Judas, who lost his apostleship. (Rev. 21:14; Psalm 109:8; Acts 1:20) It is in this particular that the Church of Rome, the Church of England, and the Greek Church do violence to the principles of God's Word, in that they claim to make, but do not really make, apostolic bishops—bishops possessed of apostolic power and authority.

St. Paul did not desire us to understand that he took no notice of earthly appointment, except in respect to his apostolic office. On the contrary, the church at Antioch ordained Paul and Barnabas and afterwards Paul and Silas, to be their representatives and apparently at their expense to carry the message to others. The Antioch church did not ordain the Apostle Paul to be an apostle, but ordained him to be their missionary; and he accepted their ordination and rendered reports to them, as the account in Acts shows.—Acts 14:26-28.

(3) Does the WATCH TOWER BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY ever "ordain" ministers or representatives in connection with the harvest work?

It does. All the pilgrims are thus ordained, appointed, or set apart for the special work of the ministry. Keep in memory always that ceremony is not ordination, but that appointment and direction are ordination. The Society ordains, authorizes, directs the course of the pilgrims who are its representatives as well as the representatives of the Lord and his Word.

(4) Has the WATCH TOWER BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY the right to withdraw ordination from a pilgrim brother?

Yes, surely! If it has the power to appoint and direct, it has power also to withdraw its past appointment and direction.

(5) Would the withdrawal of the Society's appointment or ordination mean that the pilgrim thus suspended from its service would have no right to preach thereafter?

Surely not! In withdrawing its appointment from a pilgrim the Society would merely be indicating that for some reason it no longer was represented by that pilgrim, and that it no longer was responsible for him or his teachings or his conduct or his maintenance. The pilgrim brother thus dropped from the pilgrim list might still be a brother and be so esteemed by the Society, but might not be any longer considered a suitable person to represent the Society, either by reason of showing some weakness of character or some lack of the aptness to teach or some other reason which the Society would believe should not be encouraged, or for which it would not wish to be held responsible, or for various reasons, illness, etc.

(6) What is the meaning of V. D. M., and what would be signified by the conferring of the V. D. M. degree?

The title V. D. M. is a very old one. Indeed, it has been out of use so long that comparatively few know its meaning. The three letters represent the Latin words, *Verbi Dei Minister*. The English of this is, "Minister of the Divine Word." When, during the dark ages, the divine Word fell into disuse and creeds were substituted, this title was generally lost and ignored. There were no ministers of the divine Word; for the divine Word was not preached, but, instead, the creeds of men. Instead of these simple words so expressive of the proper thought in connection with all the Lord's public servants, we today have high-sounding titles, such as Reverend and Doctor of Divinity, which are quite unscriptural. To confer the degree of MINISTERS OF THE DIVINE WORD would not mean to ordain, but merely imply that the Society in giving this degree had looked into the reputation, and so far as possible into the character and especially into the doctrinal development of the person to whom the degree was given, and that he was in the estimation of the examining board found worthy of being called a minister of the divine Word.

(7) Are there any such ministers of the divine Word now?

Yes, assuredly! Every pilgrim sent out by the Society is sent out as a minister of the divine Word, not a minister of creeds, nor of "isms," but purely and simply a minister of the Word of God. And in every case where a congregation of

the Lord's people has elected a consecrated, spirit-begotten child of God to be an elder, they have by their election ordained, or set apart, or indicated, that elder as being a minister of the divine Word—one who serves, distributes, dispenses the truth of God's Word.

(8) What is the object of the Society in getting out a list of questions with the intimation that the person who could answer those questions in a manner satisfactory to the Society would be considered a MINISTER OF THE DIVINE WORD?

Those questions are designed to fill a long-felt want. The questions are quite unsectarian; they are all Scriptural. The Society desires to know from the pilgrims who are now in the service, or from any others who may at any time represent the Society as pilgrims, what are their thoughts, their sentiments and their understanding as respects these fundamental questions appertaining to the Gospel of Christ. Any brother not willing to answer those questions would be considered to be confused in his mind, unstable, and hence not qualified to teach—not "apt to teach." This would not imply that he might not still be a brother, but that he would not be considered a brother suitable for the pilgrim service. Neither would it mean that the brother must not preach, but merely that the Society would not recommend him as an exponent of the divine Word.

Any brother willing to answer the questions, but showing considerable confusion in his replies, would to us indicate that he needed further instruction before he could properly represent the Society and what the Society believes to be the truth respecting God's Word. Such a brother would properly be brought to Brooklyn and have an opportunity to participate for a time in other features of the service, as well as in the Bible study classes held at every meal time; and, by fullest liberty, have an opportunity of asking any kind of questions

on subjects connected with the truth, that thus the whole matter might be thoroughly regulated and clearly seen and understood.

A FRIENDLY SUGGESTION

Many of the sisters in the Bethel Family, learning about the questions, made a special request that they might have a list of these and give their answers, with a view to practise and instruction which they might thus derive. Elders and deacons in various classes have similarly requested the questions. We believe that it would be profitable for all of the classes of Bible students everywhere, if they would choose to eldership such as could answer these questions so as to be worthy of the Society's V. D. M. degree. This might make a good many changes amongst the elders, but we believe that they would be profitable changes. Furthermore, we believe that all elders earnestly desiring to teach the truth, and the truth only, would be glad to have the very assistance which these questions would bring to them.

We have been surprised, sometimes, how careless some of the dear friends seem to be in respect to those whom they elect or ordain as elders—often novices, contrary to the direction of the Lord's Word, thus doing harm both to the novice and to the class. (1 Timothy 3:1-7) Next to the importance of the election of only a consecrated, spirit-begotten child of God to eldership should be the question—To what extent has he availed himself of the privileges of study, information? It is our thought that it is unwise to choose as an elder any brother who has not read at least once the entire six volumes of STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES, or who is not a regular WATCH TOWER reader. Let it be borne in mind that the Society exercises no authority, makes no criticism, but merely gives advice; and that in the interest of the Lord's cause and the Lord's people.

ST. PAUL'S SORROWS AND JOYS

SEPTEMBER 3.—2 CORINTHIANS 11:21-33.

ST. PAUL THE HERO—HIS LOYALTY, FAITHFULNESS, ENDURANCE—HE SUFFERED FOR CHRIST'S SAKE—AND FOR THE BRETHREN'S SAKE—IN THAT HE DELIGHTED TO CARRY THE MESSAGE OF GOD'S GRACE—WHY THE ENUMERATION OF HIS SUFFERINGS IN THIS LESSON—SURELY "A CHOSEN VESSEL!"

"My grace is sufficient for thee; for my power is made perfect in weakness."—2 Corinthians 12:9.

What a wonderful man was St. Paul! Doubtless the secret of his brilliancy lay in the fact that he so fully gave himself up to God—to do, not his own will, but the Father's will—that the Lord could use him as an apostle, as a mouthpiece, as a servant, to a greater extent than he ever used any other man, perhaps. In this we are not implying that St. Paul was greater than his Master. Our Lord had only three and one half years of service, while St. Paul had a long ministry—a long period of service for God and for the church. Besides, it was not possible for the Master to go into the details of the divine plan; for even his devoted followers, including the apostles, were natural men, who did not receive the begetting of the holy Spirit until Pentecost. Hence we read that Jesus' teachings were chiefly in parables and dark sayings.—1 Cor. 2:14; Matt. 13:10-17.

On one occasion the Master declared to his disciples, "I have many things to tell you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; . . . and will show you things to come." (John 16:12, 13) There were no such limitations on St. Paul and the other apostles. Their epistles were addressed to the saints of God in various quarters, to whom they wrote freely upon every feature of the great subject—the divine plan of salvation. Some of their writings were along lines that they declared were suitable for "babes" in Christ, and others were "strong meat"—the deeper things of the divine plan. (Hebrews 5:13, 14; 1 Peter 2:1-3) But they wrote only to the spirit-begotten, not to the worldly.

ST. PAUL'S QUALIFICATIONS

It is not strange that the adversary was able to stir up some little sectarianism even in the primitive church, as St. Paul remarked, criticizing it: Some said that they were of Paul; some, that they were of Apollos; some, that they were of Peter. (1 Corinthians 1:11-13; 3:1-7) But all such partisan sentiment the Apostle rebuked, reminding them that not one of these teachers had died for them; and that they should all be Christians, taking none other name than that of the Master. This same spirit manifested itself otherwise, too. The apostles needed to grow in grace and in knowledge, as well as did the remainder of the household of faith; and although they had special blessings of the Lord, yet they did not all have the same length of vision at the same time.

St. Paul, the most learned of the twelve, the one who

took the place of Judas, had naturally the best opportunity for breadth of thought. True, as Saul of Tarsus, he had showed himself to be very narrow and bigoted in his warfare against Christ and his followers. But after his eyes of understanding had been opened, and after he had become a spirit-begotten new creature, St. Paul manifested a wonderful insight into the things divine. Explaining this insight, he declared that he had visions and revelations more than had all the other apostles of the Lord together.—2 Corinthians 12:1, 7, 11, 12.

All this was in harmony with what the Lord had said respecting him: "He is a chosen vessel unto me. . . . I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." (Acts 9:15, 16) Naturally, the Lord could use a well-talented man, a well-educated man, who had fully given up his own will, to better advantage than he could use an illiterate man; and of some of the remainder of the apostles it is written that even the multitude perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant. (Acts 4:13) Not so with St. Paul, however. He had education and a wonderful breadth of mind. All the spirit-begotten children of God, able to understand the deep things of the Bible, are surely amazed at the logic, the wisdom and the power of St. Paul's writings! We know of nothing in the world that will compare with them.

Pushed to the front as the Lord's mouthpiece to the Gentiles, St. Paul's mind grasped more quickly than did the minds of the other apostles, the things pertaining to the new dispensation; and he perceived that the Gentiles were to be fellow-heirs with the Jews in the kingdom privileges. (Ephesians 3:1-12; Colossians 1:25-27) Naturally, some thought that St. Paul was going too far; and the argument was raised that he was not one of the twelve, that he was not to be ranked as an apostle, etc.

However willing St. Paul might have been to be nothing and to let others take their own estimate of him, nevertheless he felt a duty toward the truth. This led him to tell us in no uncertain terms that he had full proof of his apostleship, and that he was not a whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles in the understanding of the divine program—yea, that to him more than to all the others the Lord had revealed more of those things to come of which our Lord Jesus had spoken.—John 16:13; 2 Corinthians 11:5; Galatians 2:2-10; etc.

HIS SUFFERINGS FOR CHRIST

St. Paul labored hard with the church at Corinth; and to have them fail to make proper progress in the truth because they thought of him as an incompetent teacher seemed to him to be a pity. Hence in our lesson he is doing what he styles "foolish boasting." He did not approve of boasting; and yet for the sake of his hearers, he would inform them along certain lines. And how glad we are that the holy Spirit so directed the Apostle, that we also may know him better and may fully appreciate his loving loyalty to the King of kings and the fact that he was the chosen vessel of the Lord for the communication of the truth even to the household of today!

But the Apostle did not boast about himself—about his talents, about his oratory, about how the people were spell-bound, about how many people recognized his ability, etc. No; he rather would boast of the things which others would think to be for his shame. He would tell them what God's providence had permitted him to suffer for the truth's sake—scourging, whipping with rods, imprisonment, perils of the deep, perils from false brethren, perils from the heathen. To him these things were the marks of divine love and favor, and bore witness also that he was a lover of the Lord and his righteousness, and that he had been willing to suffer for the Lord's sake, for the truth's sake.

Thus seen this lesson is a very valuable portion of the Word of the Lord. It gives us information which we find in no other quarter. It sets before us crisply a picture of a soldier of the cross and what he endured. It says to us, "Be thou faithful unto death"—follow in the footsteps of Jesus and this noble follower of his—boast not in yourself, but in the Lord and in your privileges of service in connection with his truth.

THE SECRET OF HIS SUCCESS

By and by will come the time when the noble St. Paul and the less prominent of the Lord's followers will all be received by him into eternal glory, and be presented before the Father without spot or blemish. (Ephesians 5:25-30) But we may be sure that every one in that glorious company will have been a faithful soldier; not a deserter, not ashamed of the Lord, not ashamed of his truth. Of such the Master declares that he will not be ashamed, but will confess their names before the Father and his holy angels.—Matthew 10:32, 33.

The secret of the Apostle's endurance of so great privations—scourging, imprisonment, buffetings of various kinds—is presented to us in the words of our golden text. The Lord's grace was sufficient. The Lord's power was made perfect in his weakness. And is this not the secret of every successful Christian life? Was it not even so of our Master—that the Father's spirit in him, his reliance upon the Father, and his looking for the light of the Father's countenance, were indeed the power of God working in our Savior to will and to do the Father's good pleasure?

The same is true with every follower of the Lord since his day. The Master truly said of his followers, "Without me ye can do nothing." (John 15:5) It is the divine power which operates through our Lord Jesus, through the Word of truth, through the followers of Jesus; and this power can operate in the weakest members of the body of Christ as well as in the strongest. The Lord's grace is sufficient for all and for every time of need. We are not to forget, however, that this great sufficiency is not poured out upon the Lord's people unconditionally, but in answer to their appreciation of their need and their prayerful request for grace divine in every time of need.

MILITARY DUTY EXEMPTIONS IN BRITAIN

Our London Quince writes: "We are trying to get our regular office helpers and the elders of the I. B. S. A. meetings exempted from military service. The War Office is agreeable to having the case stated before the Civil Courts soon. At present, about 60 brethren are in prison for refusing military orders; about 60 have been exempted so long as they do work considered of national importance; about 20 have joined the non-combatant corps arranged for by the Government. You will see by these figures that the majority of the brethren involved declined to accept military authority. The above figures refer only to single men. The married men's compulsion is only beginning to come into operation. These also will appeal for exemption; but it remains to be seen whether they will refuse to accept the non-combatant corps and, by so doing, forfeit the allowance provided for the wives and children of soldiers. The situation is certainly trying. Some of our brethren, eight at least, were taken to France, and afterwards sentenced to be shot for disobedience. The sentence was reduced to ten years penal servitude, and we have just learned that they are now in civil prisons in England.

The military powers seem to care little for the civil authorities. These experiences are doing good to the church as a whole, by sending it to prayer and causing an increased exercise of love and sympathy. No doubt, too, all this is a stiffening process in preparation for harder and darker days to come."

We wish our dear brethren of the warring nations to know of the loving sympathy of their dear brethren of the neutral countries. Surely, many prayers are ascending from brethren of the I. B. S. A. everywhere! Examples of loyalty to the King of kings are everywhere having a strengthening and stimulating effect.

We quite agree with the proposal to gain exemption for class elders as ministers under the laws. This does not mean that we recognize a "clergy" class as distinct from a "laity" class in Christ's church, "All ye are brethren"—all are ministers (servants) of Christ. But if one law excuses some brethren, and another law or arrangement excuses other brethren, and if no law excuses still others, it is for us to obtain for each other all that the laws permit us to have.

THE ARREST OF ST. PAUL

[Paragraphs 9 and 10 of this article were reprinted from article entitled "Suffering as Christians" published in issue of May 1, 1903. The remainder was reprinted from article entitled "Christ's Ambassador a Prisoner" published in issue of October 1, 1909. Please see the articles named.]

ST. PAUL A PRISONER IN THE CASTLE

[Paragraph 1-4 of this article entitled "Christ's Ambassador a Prisoner" published in issue of October 1, 1909. The remainder, excepting the paragraph below, was reprinted from article entitled "Suffering as Christians" published in issue of May 1, 1903. Please see the articles named.]

In this experience of St. Paul there is a lesson for us that when undergoing trials and difficulties, however much we realize that they could not come to us without the Lord's permission, nevertheless we are at liberty to use any legitimate means for our own deliverance—even St. Paul took advantage of his Roman citizenship. God had provided him in advance with that measure of protection; and it would have been culpable negligence on his part not to use it, and to expect the Lord to deliver him in some miraculous manner.

How often we find in the pages of history that violence and unreason have been manifested in the name of religion and for the defense of various sects! How utterly foreign to all such conduct is what St. Paul designates "the spirit of a

sound mind"—the spirit of reason, justice—not to mention the spirit of generosity, loving-kindness and tender mercy! As the sight of the foolishness and the brutishness of a drunken person should act as a great temperance lesson in every right-minded man and woman, so such a scene as this depicted in today's study, whether recognized by our natural eyes or mentally seen through the printed page, should be a lasting lesson against anything so brutish and unreasonable. Let every instance of religious bigotry and fanatical violence speak to our hearts a lesson in the opposite direction, and fix in us resolutions that by the grace of God we will never be thus foolish, thus, wicked, but contrariwise will become the more gentle, the more kind, the more Christ-like, as the days go by.

THE MESSIANIC REIGN

"Lo! in the clouds of Heaven appears
God's well-beloved Son.
He brings a train of brighter years,
His Kingdom is begun.
He comes a guilty world to bless
With mercy, truth and righteousness.

"O Father! haste the promised hour
When at His feet shall lie
All rule, authority and power

Beneath the ample sky;
When He shall reign from pole to pole,
The Lord of every ransomed soul;

"When all shall heed the words He said,
Amid their daily cares,
And by the loving life He led,
Shall strive to pattern theirs
When He who conquered death shall win
The mightier conquest over Sin."

THE DIVINE SCROLL—WHO IS WORTHY TO LOOK THEREIN?

"Who is worthy?"—Revelation 5:2.

The words of our text are a part of the proclamation represented as being made throughout heaven: "Who is worthy to open the book [the scroll], and to loose the seals thereof?" The book in this case seems symbolically not to represent the Bible, but the divine plan, with its times and seasons. The Bible is indeed a record, but God had the plan before the Bible was written. He had this plan from the very beginning. He had not disclosed it to the angels—not even to the Logos. Nor did he disclose its time features fully to our Lord Jesus while he was in the flesh. And after his resurrection Jesus spoke of these times and seasons as things "which the Father hath put in his own power."—Acts 1:7.

The fact that God had a plan relating to the fallen race had been intimated to Abraham. God had declared to Abraham unconditionally that he would bless the world of mankind. He also pointed out later in the types and shadows of the Law certain features of the way by which he would bless the world. He declared that there would be a Redeemer; but who the Redeemer would be was kept a secret. Although both angels and men desired to know they were not permitted the knowledge. The prophets spoke by inspiration some things concerning this Redeemer, but they knew not the meaning thereof.

In due time the Logos was sent forth. He was a loyal Son before he was sent. He undertook to do the Father's will, not yet knowing what it would cost to be the Messiah; for God had kept these things secret. He manifested his faith, his trust. He delighted to do the Father's will, even to the taking of a lower nature. And so he humbled himself from the glorious condition in which he was and took upon himself the human nature, became a man—a perfect man, not a sinful man. Our Lord did this in order to carry out the great program which the Father had in his own mind and which he had not revealed to any other.

When Jesus reached the age of thirty years, the earliest age at which he could present himself to God, under the Law, he went to Jordan and made a consecration of himself with the determination to do everything that was in the Father's plan—every thing that typically and prophetically had been written in the holy Scriptures concerning himself. "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God;" "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart," were his expression, as recorded.—Hebrews 10:7, 9; Psalm 40:6-8.

This was our Lord's consecration. His human nature became his sacrifice. He laid down his life. He did not finish laying it down at Jordan; but so far as his will was concerned, it was given there. He there became the Priest, the great High Priest, his flesh being typed by the bullock of sin-offering, sacrificed on Israel's yearly day of atonement. During the three and a half years of his ministry he carried out this sacrifice satisfactorily. And everything that the Father had given him to do was finished at the cross.

THE DEEP THINGS UNFOLDED AT JORDAN

Our Lord Jesus received the anointing of the holy Spirit when he came up out of the water at his baptism. Then the heavens were opened unto him. The higher things which he had not previously understood became clear. The Scriptures were unfolded to his view. He knew that he was going up to Jerusalem to be crucified. He knew that he would be betrayed by one of his chosen disciples, and he knew which of them would be the betrayer. He knew these things because he had been begotten of the holy Spirit and accepted of God as a Son on the divine plane.

During these three and a half years he was the Messiah, the Sent of God. He was the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. He had sacrificed his will, but this was not sufficient. God wished him to sacrifice not only his will, but actually to lay down his human life. And God purposed to prove him by certain crucial tests. So he was "tempted in all points like as we

are; yet without sin." When all his testings were completed at his death on the cross, God gave him a name to which all should bow, both in heaven and in earth.

Here the words of our text find their answer. The inquiry compassed the period from before Jesus came into the world up to his resurrection from the grave. God had given the most honorable One of all the host of heaven the first opportunity to prove his worthiness to loose the scroll of God's great plan, and to fulfill its provisions. He was given this opportunity because, as the First-born of Jehovah, he had the right to the first privilege of service. And he did not allow the privilege to go by. He accepted it. He was faithful. He humbled himself to human nature, and thus he became the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, of which tribe he was born as a man. He did not have this title in his position as Logos. It was as the Son of Mary that he was the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David.

PROCLAIMED WORTHY BY THE ANGELS

Our Lord's worthiness was not then proven. It was not until he cried with his dying breath, "It is finished!" that the demonstration was complete. All the way down from Adam to Jesus no one had been found worthy to open the great scroll. But Jesus was now found worthy. Speaking in vision of the three and a half years during which our Lord is represented as slain, John the Revelator says, "I beheld and lo, a freshly slain Lamb!" And the voices of myriads of angels were heard proclaiming, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."—Revelation 5:12.

Jesus had not proven himself worthy of this great honor when he made his consecration, but when he had finished his course in death he was then worthy to receive glory, honor and power. After his resurrection and ascension the scroll was given into his hands to be opened. This means that the divine plan as a whole was here made known to him—for he already had knowledge of much of this—but all things were given him to unloose. There had been some things that our Lord did not know. He had said, "Of that day and hour [of his second coming] knoweth no man; no, not the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but my Father only." (Mark 13:32) A part of the plan was written on the outside of the scroll, and a part was written on the inside. The things that were sealed were not proper to be understood by our Redeemer until he had received the all-power, after his resurrection. The execution of God's plan was then given into his hands.

GRADUAL OPENING OF THE SEALS

The opening of the seals has progressed during all the Gospel age. The whole plan of God is represented in this book—the scroll. It has required all of the present age and will require all of the next age to complete the plan. The plan of God includes the "restitution of all things spoken." We are now able to see these wonderful things and to tell about them, because each of the seals as it has been opened has made the plan a little clearer. We may suppose that the Lord Jesus was made aware of all its features after his ascension to the presence of Jehovah. We who are God's people are seeking to know these things more and more fully. The Master declared that as the Father revealed them unto him, so would he reveal them unto us; but this revelation has been gradual, as the successive seals have been broken.

Brethren, beloved in Christ, realizing that our God has hitherto counted us worthy to look upon the wondrous scroll of his great plan, which has been unsealed for us by Jesus our Lord, let us continue to prove ourselves worthy to look therein and to comprehend the glorious things of his Word, by faithfulness, obedience and loyalty to this plan in everything! Let our appreciation continually increase for our wondrous privilege in being permitted to share this blessed ministry of bearing divine truth to other hungry hearts, that they also may rejoice in the Lord and in the power of his might!

NORFOLK CONVENTION A SUCCESS

We had hoped for a thousand Bible students at the Norfolk, Va., Convention, but had a splendid season of refreshment with the approximately six hundred (625) who did attend. After all, it is not numbers, but soul-fellowship which makes a convention a success. And when it is remembered that this season twelve general conventions have been provided, instead of one as formerly, it is not surprising that the attendance at each is considerably less. Besides we have had scores of one-day conventions. One effect of this scattering the conventions is that many dear Bible students have been privileged to attend a Bible Students' convention for the first time. Their soul-satisfaction, their spiritual joy overflows from eyes and lips. Truly we are having times of refreshing—spiritual!

Norfolk has been no exception to the rule. The Lord met with his people! It was good to be there! We knew this before our arrival—from letters and post-cards, saying, "The best yet," "the best ever," etc. But it is always so to the spiritually minded and grateful hearted children of God.

The program was faithfully carried out on the different days as follows:

Saturday,	July 22.....	"Enrollment Day"
Sunday,	" 23.....	"Our Captain"
Monday,	" 24.....	"Soldiers of Christ"
Tuesday,	" 25.....	"Our Warfare"
Wednesday,	" 26.....	"Our Sacrifices"
Thursday,	" 27.....	"Our Triumph"
Friday,	" 28.....	"Our Peace"
Saturday,	" 29.....	"Our Home"
Sunday,	" 30.....	"Our Government"

Pilgrim Brothers Burgess, MacMillan, Graham, Thornton, Meggison, Barber, Thorn, Wright, Herr, Toole and Johnson gave addresses on the topics named. Brothers Baerlein and Meggison served acceptably as Chairmen.

The Editor conducted a Question Meeting and had a children's Consecration Service on the 29th, and on Sunday the 30th closed the convention with an address, on "Jehovah's Government," and a love feast. Then came the service for the public at 3 p. m., topic, "The World on Fire." About 1,300 were present.

OUR VOW UNTO THE LORD

BELOVED BROTHER RUSSELL:—

It is on my mind to write you respecting some of the experiences I am having with the Vow. Long ago I reported to you my own experiences therewith. Whatever mistake I once made in respect to resisting the Vow God long ago overruled for my good, and it seems has since blessed the experiences to the good of some others. For no one can think of an objection to the Vow which the devil had not previously suggested to my mind.

Recently an intelligent brother and sister were hesitating to take the Vow because, as they said, they were afraid they could not keep it inviolate. I pointed out that God does not expect anything unreasonable, though he will not accept less than our best efforts. They saw the point, and both took the Vow immediately.

In commending the Vow, I show that the Lord had manifestly directed you in formulating it. I note the seven clauses, and call attention to the fact that seven in Scripture usage is a designation of completeness, perfection. I point out that this could not have just "happened," any more than you "happened" to write *THE STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES*.

I next show the Vow is made to the heavenly Father, and not to Brother Russell in any sense, and is but a reiteration, an emphasis, of our original vow of consecration—"Thy will be done in my mortal body." It is all expressed there. The special designations you use are but reminders of this all-important thought—"Thy will be done in my mortal body," and any who do not want the Lord's will done in their mortal bodies should never have covenanted to that effect in the beginning. Surely every consecrated child of God desires that the heavenly Father's rule should "come into his heart more and more," and that the divine will should have a sanctifying influence upon his life constantly!

I do not neglect to lay stress upon the fact that the adversary of God does not want the heavenly Father's will done in our "mortal bodies," and the reason therefor; while in the Vow is a condensation of many texts of Scripture given us for the express purpose of helping us into the kingdom. I sometimes thus contrast the work of the "two Masters."

Furthermore, I endeavor to point the attention of the dear friends to the solid Scriptural basis upon which the entire structure rests, the foundation for every thought embraced

in the Vow. In extreme cases I present many texts to this intent. Sometimes their eyes open with surprise when they finally see how simple the whole matter is, yet how incontrovertible!

Frequently I ask upon whose strength they relied when they made their vow of consecration; then remind them that while the arm of flesh will fail, The Everlasting Arm, never. So in the strength of the Lord is this Vow to be taken, keeping before their minds the fact of Satan's activity, his stealth, his wiles, his purpose to deceive. Then I further ask what disadvantage could possibly come to any one from a firm resolve to be more "on the alert to resist" every encroachment of sin, the influence of Satan, and suggest that the only "reasonable way" to combat these is the divinely-appointed way.

All must agree that they would be greatly assisted in developing a Christlike character by "more carefully scrutinizing their thoughts and words and doings," and that a firm resolve to do this, a vow to do so, of necessity must be assistful in attaining the desired end. The All-seeing Eye notes everything, even our very thoughts. To stand approved, I point out, we must have assistance. Through the Vow, this is pledged in a very special sense—"Ask and ye shall receive." In the Vow we are in the strictest sense asking in advance for "help in time of need," for protection from "the snares of the fowler," while vowing that we will be on the "alert" against these.

In the final analysis, what can be found against the Vow? Absolutely nothing—save the objections aroused by Satan, who is the adversary of God, the Opponent of Righteousness, the enemy of truth, the railer against purity, the hater of everything good. Praise the Lord for the Vow! Surely none has ever taken it in the right spirit without realizing that increased blessings have come to his own head and heart!

May God bless you richly for this, as well as for all other features of your great labor of love! Truly, God is with you! O how keenly do I realize this, and how deeply do I appreciate the fact! My heart is filled with gratitude, thrilled with joy, by every evidence of the heavenly Father's loving provisions for our every need. Verily, I am amazed at divine goodness to us-ward!

Your humble brother, by his grace, W. M. WISDOM.

INTERESTING LETTERS

A VOICE FROM LONDON OFFICE

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL:—

My love towards the Father, Our Lord, his blessed truth, and you his servant increases as time advances. (Philippians 1:3, 4) I am indeed grateful for the truth, and do not know just how to express my thankfulness. It is the one thing worth living for.

Speaking particularly of the share in the great harvest work on this side of the Atlantic, which it has been my joy to participate in, let me remind you that when the DRAMA work in London closed down, it was arranged that half my time would be spent on pilgrim work; this continued for just a year, when the preparation of the Debenture Bonds on the one hand and the opening up of the conscription question on the other, so encroached upon my time that I have made no journeys since the middle of April. The Military Service Act, and its application, has proved to be so complex and

difficult of comprehension that the office here has perforce become quite an inquiry bureau, and the work is in my hands, although I consult freely with my colleagues over matters of importance, and all correspondence is open for their inspection. You will find enclosed a copy of a petition which has just been sent to Premier Asquith with 5,500 signatures. This was arranged to meet an evident call on the part of the brethren generally. There are probably 50 brethren in detention at the present time; with this you will find a list of those known to us who are consistently refusing to obey Military commands and are suffering more or less severely in consequence. As the Act has now been extended to include married men of military age (18 to 40), it will affect many more of our brethren in the immediate future.

As we have no pilgrim brother now, this department is very quiet; it would be nice to know what you think about this, in view of the peculiar times we live in. Brother Smed-

ley does a journey now and again as he can afford it, and Brother Hemery has just completed a trip in Scotland; this is the only trip he has taken for many months. Brother Crawford cannot spare the time from the office, as he has many details to look after, and is short of help at times.

The Newspaper Department is reduced to one Brother now—Brother Cormack; there are just over 30 papers publishing the Sermons at the present time. It is quite likely that this number will be greatly reduced shortly owing to the increasingly high price of paper.

The foregoing are the departments under my special care at present. Seeing, however, that Brother Hart is leaving us for India, the DRAMA work will be added, I presume, although this is only a small matter just now, only one exhibition, apart from Scotland, being in hand.

The easing off of the DRAMA, and the losing of our brothers on account of the Military Act, has affected the output of volumes seriously. The volunteer work progresses satisfactorily on the whole, but the question of paper is a serious difficulty. The class extension work is proving satisfactory in London, but little is moving elsewhere. We are by no means busy in the office apart from the Military question.

The Tabernacle congregation continues satisfactory—I would think possibly 250 to 300 mornings and 450 to 550 at night. Many of the brethren would enjoy a wider range of speakers. There seems rather a tendency to form Sunday meetings within the area formerly reserved to the Tabernacle; not within one hour's journey, however. This movement probably arises partly on account of traveling expenses and partly to the dark streets at night, for no lights are allowed on our streets now and every window must be screened. The question naturally arises whether these gatherings would not better be separate ecclesias, for the members thus in attendance range from 50 to 150. I do not know whether this question has been brought before you or not. There are 19 elders at the Tabernacle now and nearly 60 deacons.

The working staff consists of six brothers and daughter Bertha, who does my stenographic work again. The house-keeping department consists of five sisters, including Brother Hemery's mother. At the present time there are 12 of us sleeping in the house, which includes my eldest son, who will be going abroad as a Cable telegraphist shortly. Sister Shearn with Daisy and Joe are down at Ealing, an hour's run, where I have taken a furnished cottage for six months.

Am glad to hear that the work continues to progress satisfactorily in America. The conditions amongst the people here show signs of a change—not particularly by way of opposition of the truth, but of affairs altogether different to the immediate past, which all thinking people can see.

Bertha joins me in fond love to you and to all the beloved brethren with you. We pray always for you all that the peace of God continue to guard your hearts until we see his face!

Your brother in his service, H. J. SHEARN.

FROM A FORMER MINISTER TO A FRIEND

DEAR BROTHER ————:

Your encouraging and much appreciated letter of 20th inst. was received today. It is gratifying to know that there are some scattered over the country everywhere who are witnesses to the truth, and of course, I suppose it is natural to appreciate a word of sympathy and encouragement.

In common with yourself I certainly feel that I am to be congratulated upon the gracious fact that God, in the abundance of his mercy and goodness, has permitted the light of truth to shine in and dispel what I now clearly perceive to have been the grossest of ignorance on my part. The thing that puzzles me is the fact that I have been a fairly close Bible student for the past fifteen years, and have always tried to maintain an open attitude of mind to the truth at all times, and yet failed to grasp the CENTRAL and FUNDAMENTAL truths of God's great plan for blessing all the families of the earth, for surely this is in full accord with what we might most reasonably expect from "the God of all grace!" There are only two possible solutions to the problem so far as I can see, and it may be that they are not two, but one, viz.: That I have always read the Bible with a preconceived idea of what the Bible taught, and thus read a meaning into the Bible that was really not there; or that the time had not till recently come when God intended me to get the whole truth; and as I have intimated, I built up the wall against a right understanding of the Scriptures, and God had his own time for removing it.

With reference to your other congratulation upon the stand I have taken, I fear that I must disagree with you so far as to say that I do not think I could possibly claim any credit for taking a stand for the truth when I have, in the

ultimate sense, EVERYTHING to gain by so doing, and NOTHING of importance to lose thereby. It is true that I have lost the esteem and support of many whom I had considered Christian people, and also my position in the Baptist Church. But like St. Paul I consider all things well lost for Christ's sake.

I had hoped that the reputation I have enjoyed for ordinary intelligence, firmness and freedom from fanaticism, together with the influence I have gained in ———, and especially in my own congregation after three years of association with them, would have gained me a hearing and have given me the opportunity of placing not only the truth, but the Bible evidence of that truth before my people and led them to investigate for themselves, and that I should have the privilege of leading my whole congregation into the glorious light of God's ONE PLAN, but it seems that it is not to be so, as my resignation has already been requested, and I shall render the same on next Monday evening to take effect at any time that the church may choose. But I thank the Lord that in the three weeks that I have been permitted to present these things, I can even now see some of the seed germinating and rapidly taking root that shall in the near future produce a goodly "mustard stalk" in whose branches the dove of peace may find lodging.

I find that so long as I was a "sound Baptist" I was quite an authority among them, but now I am just a common "Russellite" in their estimation, and not worthy of a hearing, so I am requested to resign and get out. I fully realize that when I am put out of this church for "heresy" the doors of every church in this denomination—as well as those of all of the others—are firmly closed against me. Well, so be it! I remember that Christ and his apostles were thrust out of the synagogues for preaching the truth, so I will be in good company, even though I shall probably, like St. Paul, be obliged to "make tents" for a living, and preach the GOOD NEWS from "Mars Hill."

One thing I will do before I go, not through spite or ill feeling—for the Lord knows I pity rather than scourge—but rather in vindication of the truth, I will force this congregation to either excommunicate me from their fellowship or to acknowledge that I am right in the things I have proclaimed. Like St. Paul, if I am beaten publicly and thrust into prison, I will not be taken out privately, but let them "come and fetch me out." I will do this, not for any personal reason, but PURELY upon the ground that I believe the time is ripe to take every opportunity that is legitimately offered for calling attention to Bible truth so long left covered by the dust of Romish error and traditions.

One thing I am determined upon, I WILL NOT preach again the vile slander against my Lord that the doctrine of eternal torture heaps upon his HOLY NAME; no, not for \$600.00 a month, much less for the paltry \$60.00 I have been getting. And no more will I hold my peace on the GOOD NEWS of God's plan of ransom and restitution, though I have to preach it on the street corners and from public halls. This is my determination. May the heavenly Father grant me the grace and strength to execute it. Pray for me to that end, and "that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel; for which I am an ambassador in bonds; that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."

I cannot properly express my gratitude to good Bro. ——— for his interest on my behalf in presenting me with a set of the STUDIES.

Again thanking you for your hearty words of encouragement and fellowship in the truth, I trust always to remain
Your brother in Christ,

OBJECTORS SING, "STAND UP, STAND UP FOR JESUS!"

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL:—

We read with special delight this morning in June 1 WATCH TOWER your recapitulation of those wonderful events in the years when the Lord graciously provided "line upon line" of the basis of what we now know as the truth. It does our hearts good to ponder over these things and examine our foundations again and find they are rock-bed ones and immovable. As we read the details we take fresh encouragement in the hope that the Lord is yet going to show further developments through the same channel. We trust so.

A new phase of experience has been entered into in this country—an experience specially trying to the younger members of the "body," many of whom are undergoing terms of imprisonment with more or less of hard labor. Many a mother's heart is wrung with the severity with which her loved lads are treated; yet we hear from these same lads glowing accounts of the goodness and faithfulness of our Father and barely a hint of complaint, although we know they are sorely tried. One contingent (a day or two since,