

a blessing, it evidences to our minds what is abundantly stated elsewhere in Scripture, that nothing that we have or could offer to the Lord would be more acceptable in his sight than faith—faith in him, in his power, in his love and in his promises. Whoever will not exercise faith in these things cannot grow in knowledge of the Lord, cannot make development, cannot be overcomers, gaining the desired victory, for, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith," and "Without faith it is impossible to please God."—1 John 5:4; Heb. 11:6.

There is little that any of us possess that we could reasonably hope would be acceptable to God outside those mercies which he has bestowed upon us through Christ—faith, trust

in God, is one of those heart-qualities which we can bring to the Lord, that he will not despise; honesty of heart is another, humility, realizing our utter dependence upon him, and confessing it, is another. These various sentiments were expressed by the woman in the narrative, by her actions and by her words, and as these brought to her divine favor, even before it was due to come to the Gentiles, much more should our humility, faith and candor prevail and make us endeavor to do that which is pleasing to God, who has already accepted us in the Beloved, and with whom he is well-pleased in proportion to the measure of our accepting through the Lord all the exceeding riches of his grace, which he has promised to them that love, reverence, trust and obey him.

VOL. XXI

ALLEGHENY, PA., JULY 1, 1900

No. 13

"THE SERVANT OF THE LORD MUST NOT STRIVE, BUT BE GENTLE UNTO ALL"

2 TIMOTHY 2:24-26.

We commend this text and its context to the careful consideration of all—especially do the "Volunteers" need to remember it in connection with the service they are seeking to render to the Lord's true sheep still in Babylon. All thus engaged are "ministers" and "teachers" and hence amenable to the same instructions as Timothy.

Some have exposed themselves to rebuke and criticism *justly*, by intruding into church property uninvited. It is usually best to keep off the pavement fronting a church where there is any reason to think the service would give offence;—

and to apologize if asked to move off it. If possible it is desirable to keep at such a distance from the building as to avoid *seeming* to want to serve its attendants more than other passers-by.

Especially make sure that your heart is so full of the love of the Lord and his brethren that it will shine out in your face;—then it will not be necessary to urge your gift, but merely to say—Accept a *free* paper! Lay stress upon the word *free*, because some refuse thinking that either a *price* or *donation* will be expected in return.

"LOVE AS BRETHREN; BE SYMPATHETIC; BE COURTEOUS"

"Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and showeth favor to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."

1 PETER 3:8; 5:5, 6.

The Apostle has been addressing the elders of the church, exhorting them to give attention to the feeding of God's flock, and pointing out what should be the constraining influence to such a service. That they may feel his sympathy with them he points out that he also is an elder, and then warns them against a tendency, natural to all fallen humanity in any place of influence, to misconstrue their position, and to think of themselves as lords of God's heritage rather than as servants of the flock.

In our day, the natural tendency in this direction is greatly accentuated by the long established custom of all denominations of Christians to regard the ministers or servants of the church as of a different class from the others of the flock,—a class vested with authority from God, and not amenable to the same regulations which govern all the members of the body. But how great a mistake this is! The Apostle distinctly points out that a servant is not a ruler, that a servant has no authority. Indeed, so far as the true church is concerned, the only authority in it is the Lord, the Head of the church, and his Word, and the words of those whom he specially chose to be his mouth-piece, the apostles.

Where these speak, all of the body of Christ are to give attention to hear. Where these are silent, no one has authority to speak. And while an elder should be chosen to the position of serving and feeding the flock because of special aptness to teach (to point out the instructions of our Lord and the apostles upon any subject), and while such an elder should, therefore, in this way be specially helpful to the body of Christ in drawing the attention of all to the inspired authority of the Word, nevertheless any member of the body of Christ has the same privilege—not of exercising authority, but of calling the attention of his fellows to the Word of authority. The Apostle exhorts the elders that so far from in any manner or degree exercising a lordly or authoritative position in the church, they should rather be "*ensamples* to the flock." They should be examples in the matter of meekness, in the matter of patience, in the matter of brotherly kindness, in the matter of courtesy, so that the more any of the brethren would copy these elders the more would the spirit of the Lord prevail in the flock, and the fruits and graces of the spirit be manifested. On the contrary, we know that if the elder or leader of a little company of the Lord's people be self-assertive, dogmatic, imperious in manner, tone or look, the effect upon the company under his influence is to produce

bickerings, rivalries, ambitions, strifes as to who is greatest, etc.

Manifestly, whoever occupies the position of an elder amongst the Lord's people, however small the group may be, occupies a position fraught with responsibilities to the Lord and to the flock, as well as with besetments to himself. Great care should therefore be exercised by every company of the Lord's people, to so far as possible select for the position of leaders or elders in the church such persons as would not be likely to be injured by the privilege of service—such as occupying this post would indeed be ensamples of the flock in humility and in all of the graces of the Lord's spirit. It would seem to be with reference to the special trial of such as occupy this position of service in the church that the Apostle speaks, saying, "Be not many of you teachers, brethren, knowing that we [occupying such a position] shall receive, the severer testing."—James 3:1.

It may not be amiss that here we notice the fact that although the word "Elder" has the significance of "older," yet amongst the Lord's brethren it is not merely years of natural life that is to be taken into consideration; in the Lord's family we sometimes see "babes" with gray hairs. Nor can we even count eldership according to the number of years that have elapsed since the begetting of the spirit, for some grow rapidly and mature quickly; others who receive the truth permit the "thorns" of cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches to choke the word, and hence never get beyond the position of "babes,"—never bring forth the ripe fruits of the spirit.

Nor can we reckon this matter of relationship merely according to the degree of knowledge of the divine plan attained; for, as the Apostle assures us, it is possible for some to have much knowledge and yet be but "tinkling cymbals" according to the Lord's standpoint of estimation. While therefore an elder, in order to be "apt to teach," must have attained to some considerable degree of knowledge of the divine plan, nevertheless the real evidence of his fitness for the service of an elder must not be determined by his knowledge *merely*, but additionally must be measured by his growth in grace. So then such of the brethren in any place as possess clear knowledge of the divine plan and are "apt to teach," and who additionally give unmistakable evidence that they have grown in grace and are bearing in daily life the fruits of the spirit of the Lord, in considerable measure of maturity,

may be considered qualified to be elders;—and such may properly be chosen to the eldership by their brethren, regardless of their age according to the flesh.

According to the flesh Peter and several others of the apostles of our Lord were his elders, but according to the spirit our Lord is the Elder Brother of all accepted to the family of God. According to the flesh both Timothy and Titus were young men—young in years—so that the Apostle needed to write to one of them, "Let no man despise thy youth." (1 Tim. 4:12) And yet these young men the Apostle recognized as elders in the church, who, because of their *spiritual development and knowledge* of the divine plan, and *aptness* to teach, were well qualified to feed the flock of God and to be overseers in it—but not lords, not rulers, not masters, and not vested with any *authority*—merely privileged to call to the attention of the flock the voice of the great Shepherd and his twelve chosen assistants, and to lead them to the green pastures and still waters of divine truth.

It was after specially enjoining modesty and humility upon the ones most advanced and most capable of the flock that the Apostle, in the language of our text, urges that each one of the Lord's sheep, so far from seeking to be a leader in the sense of a ruler or lord or master, should seek to be subject one to another—to hear gladly from the humblest of the flock, and to be willing to yield his own preference, so far as his judgment and conscience would permit. A church operating under this spirit would not be likely to be rent with contention, for each would be so anxious for the interests of the cause and so willing to condescend to the wishes of others, that even the will of the majority would not be considered satisfactory, but rather all would seek, if possible, to reach such a modified conclusion as would meet with nearly or quite unanimous approval.

The Apostle most distinctly points out that the quality essential to such proper conduct on the part of elders and on the part of all, is humility. How beautiful is his exhortation, "Be clothed with humility." The thought would seem to be that outside of every other adornment of character, and covering all others, should be this robe of humble-mindedness, the opposite disposition to pride.

By way of clinching his argument, the Apostle reminds us of the principle upon which our Lord deals with his flock and with all;—that he disapproves of pride, and that all who are actuated by pride may be sure that the Lord, so far from receiving them, fellowshiping them, leading them, blessing them, will resist them, push them from him. The natural inference is that thus resisted of the Lord, the tendency of such as come under the influence of a spirit of pride and ambition will be not toward the truth nor toward any of the fruits and graces of the spirit, but further and further from these. "The Lord resisteth the proud, but supplies his favor to the humble." Come then, dear brethren, says the Apostle, let us cultivate this humility which the Lord so loves and appreciates and promises to reward. Let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt us in due time.

The Lord's mighty hand has not yet been stretched out to take hold of mankind in general and its affairs, to bring order out of confusion; but it is stretched out over his church, his flock. He has called us to be his "sheep," and we have responded and have put ourselves under his care, under his powerful hand for guidance, for direction, etc., that he may ultimately make us "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light," "joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

Seeing that we are under this mighty hand of God, and that too by our own volition, how shall we act? Shall we yield ourselves to his will, and permit him to "work in us both to will and to do his good pleasure" and our ultimate exaltation, or shall we resist the Lord's power, resist his Word of instruction, resist the example set us in the meek and lowly Lamb of God, and seek to exalt ourselves and to be somebodies, either in the world or in the church? Nay, let us remember that it would be folly to attempt to work against the divine arrangement; we might indeed to some extent seemingly succeed, and bring upon ourselves, and perhaps upon others also, more or less of separation from God through such resisting, on account of a wrong spirit; but in the end we should utterly fail of God's favors, both as respects the fellowship of the spirit now and the fellowship of glory by and by, for these he assures us will be bestowed only

upon the humble. Every proper incentive and inducement speaks to us, saying,—Humble yourself: become more like a little child, forgetful of self, devoid of selfish ambition: be actuated merely by a desire to serve the Lord, to serve his flock, and to serve his cause, the truth; forget self entirely.

Perhaps, as a result, the Lord may increase our opportunities and responsibilities in service in the present life, and perhaps he may not; but no matter for this. It is not for the present life that we are seeking and striving, but for the glory, honor and immortality which the Lord has promised to them that love him;—that love him so much that they hearken to his Word and seek to develop those elements of character which are pleasing in his sight, seeking to become more and more copies of God's dear Son.

The Apostle adds, "Casting all your care upon him." All true saints of God are care-full. They have an interest in the Lord's work; they have a care in respect to it. They cannot be indifferent to the interests of Zion. Altho their hearts and affections and cares have been lifted from a sectarian channel, it is only that they should be placed upon true people of spiritual Zion, whose names are written in heaven. Of course, therefore, every elder in the church must feel such a care, especially for the flock in connection with which he has been appointed to service, "to feed the flock of Christ:"—not to shear them, not to frighten them, not to club them, not to exercise authority and lordship over them, but to *feed* them.

This care, affecting the chosen elders (and all the elders or advanced ones in the church), altho it is a right sentiment in itself, might easily be so perverted as to be dangerous. The elders, either individually or collectively, might become so nervously careful of the flock as to destroy their own peace and joy in the holy spirit; and it might also lead them to take various improper steps, as in their over-zealous judgment necessary for the welfare of the flock. Many in times past have been led, under the influence of such a care, to in various ways take away the liberties of the flock in this or that or another matter: fearful that these liberties would be injurious to the cause. We see such a spirit of carefulness and over-solicitude marked prominently in the past by the various creeds and regulations and restraints put upon the Lord's flock, contrary to the Scriptures and to the liberty wherewith Christ makes free his people. The motive undoubtedly was in some respects a good one; the difficulty was that some Elders, some advanced sheep, caring for the interests of the flock, forgot that they were only *its servants*, and that they were not authorized to make any laws or restraints whatsoever for the flock. They forgot that the Lord himself is the Good Shepherd of his flock still, that he has not given over his care of it, nor his authority to anyone, to permit such to exercise lordship or to make laws of any kind for it, he having made all the laws and regulations necessary, and desiring that his sheep shall be free, with the liberty wherewith he made them free, in the fullest sense of the word.

The remedy for all such unauthorized over-carefulness for the interests of Zion is pointed out by the Apostle, saying,— "Casting all your care upon him [the Shepherd of the flock], for he careth for you [all]." Each sheep is to remember that the Shepherd's mighty hand (mighty power) is still in the midst of his people, and that because of his care we do not need to *overburden* ourselves with care, nor to feel that we must make *changes in his plans* and arrangements to meet what we might fancy to be new exigencies in the case. All such over-carefulness leads to fear, and fear indicates a lack of faith, a lack of confidence in the Shepherd; and is generally used by the great adversary as one of his most powerful levers to lead the Lord's people into a wrong course.

Let us all, then (all of the advanced or elder class), have a care for the flock; yea, a deep solicitude; but let us cast the weight of this care upon the Lord, and let our faith trust him that he who has been working out so grand and glorious a plan as his Word reveals to us now, "the plan of the ages," has made full provision for every feature, every circumstance, every condition; and let us thus be ready to co-operate with him in harmony with his Word, but not to run where we are not sent, nor in any manner to take our Lord's place, nor attempt to do his work. But only the humble-minded are likely to receive any lasting blessing, present or future, at the hands of our Lord; for he resisteth the proud and sheweth favor to the humble.

All will rejoice to know that the Philadelphia Convention, June 16-18, was a blessed success; so far as we have heard all who attended got a blessing, as we had hoped. Indeed, quite a few expressed themselves as so much refreshed and profited that, the Lord permitting, they would also attend the next Convention, at Chicago.

The attendance was about two hundred, except on Sunday, when it ran up to about four hundred. The three cities which have been leading in the "Volunteer" work were best represented at the Convention:—Boston 19, Washington City 13, Scranton 13. Thus it is always those most awake to note and use opportunities for serving the truth are the most blest of the Lord every way,—warmer in their love and service, they are less exposed to the besetments of the adversary: laying down their lives in the Lord's service in fulfilment of their covenant they are in the way which leads not only to fellowship in the sufferings of Christ but also in the glories to follow.

Nineteen states were represented—Maine, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kansas, Wisconsin, Nevada, California and District of Columbia:—and Great Britain was represented by Brother Randle, who, after doing a little further "Pilgrim" work here, will for a time make England his home and labor-field.

At the baptism service thirty-nine adults, after making a good public confession, symbolized their consecration to the Lord, even unto death, by immersion in water. It was an

impressive service to us all, and the entire congregation gave hearty thanks to God for the privilege of witnessing and participating. The janitor of the Baptist church remarked that not only had there never been such baptism service in that old church, but that never before had it contained a congregation all of whose faces were so happy looking. We were glad that the inner light of truth and its spirit of love was manifest to others. We trust that they took knowledge of us that we had been with Jesus and been "illuminated" by his holy spirit.

We cannot present the subjects discussed, but in a word would say,—It was the old, old story of God's love exhibited in Jesus, and the coming glory of the church and blessing of the world: the story that is as fresh as ever to all in heart-harmony with the Lord, and which daily becomes more precious in the light of present truth;—things new and old.

None, we believe, were more blessed than the Philadelphia brethren who so kindly and efficiently and generously entertained us. They provided a splendid hall for the meetings, paid for the use of the baptistry, looked after the arriving friends and saw to their comfort, and provided free entertainment for those of the visitors too poor to pay their own way. May rich blessings of spiritual kind be their reward for all their services to the Lord's body. By an oversight we neglected to call for a united vote of thanks from the convention; and as this was owing chiefly to the fact that the last meeting was a Question Meeting, we think to remedy the matter by having the closing service of future conventions a "Love Feast."

A USEFUL STONE VERSUS A STUMBLING STONE

MATT. 16:13-26.—JULY 22.

"If any man come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

Peter, the apostle, was a grand character, as this lesson well illustrates: yet, like all strong characters, he had proportionate opportunities and liabilities to misuse his strength for evil. This lesson, relating considerably to him, points a moral respecting the necessity for meekness, humility, and wise direction of those who possess strength of character.

The incidents of this lesson transpired toward the close of our Lord's ministry, probably about six months before his crucifixion. For about three years the Lord had, with his disciples, been proclaiming the kingdom near at hand and working miracles which testified that he was Jehovah's Anointed One. Meantime, his fame had of course spread in every direction. Herod, who had beheaded John the Baptist, seems to have started the suggestion that Jesus was John risen from the dead—probably having little information respecting Jesus while he had considerable knowledge of John. Others wishing to properly credit our Lord's wonderful works and mighty acts, claimed that he was the Elijah prophesied to precede Messiah's coming. Others thought of him as Jeremiah or some of the great prophets risen from the dead; but very few seemed to have thought of him as the Messiah,—expecting Messiah, when he would come, to be very kingly, very great, and of very high standing with the nation and the ruling class. They no doubt thought they greatly honored Jesus in crediting him with being the forerunner of the Messiah. And apparently our Lord had not particularly expressed the matter of his Messiahship during these years, leaving it rather to be recognized by those who should obtain the opening of the eyes of their understanding. He spoke of himself as the Son of God; he spoke of his relationship to the Father, and testified that his mighty works were done in the Father's name and power, but he said little, if anything, respecting his being the Messiah until now.

Now the proper time had come that the disciples should recognize definitely his office, and his question regarding what people in general said of him was merely to introduce the matter to the disciples, and give the opportunity to ask them, "Whom say ye that I am?" Then it was that Peter displayed not only the strength of his faith in the Lord, but also his own strength of character and his zeal, answering promptly, "Thou art the Christ [Hebrew, the Messiah], the Son of God—the Living." And altho we may safely assume that Peter spoke for all of the apostles, in harmony with our Lord's question, nevertheless, the fact that he was the spokesman would imply that he was the most thoroughly imbued with the sentiment that he expressed. His statement is quite comprehensive, too: not only did he recognize Jesus as the Messiah, but he recognized his divine authority and paternity, and while it is possible that Peter meant to say "the Son of the living God"—the Son of the God who is the author of

all life—yet it is probable that he meant more than this. It is probable that he meant, Thou art the Messiah, the Son of God, the Living One.—the one who has a right to life according to the law, while all others, being imperfect, are under condemnation of the law and under sentence of death.

Evidently it was a refreshment of heart to our Lord to have this full and frank statement from Peter. One, at least, of his disciples had profited by the lessons of the preceding three years, and had come to the point of full assurance of faith in him; and the others, while less expressive, were probably making progress nevertheless, and would be greatly helped and strengthened and built up by this good confession.

PETER A USEFUL STONE IN GOD'S HOUSE

Our Lord's response, "Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jona," does not so much signify, I wish or will grant a blessing upon you because of this confession, but rather, You have been blessed of God greatly in that you have been enabled to discern this great truth, hidden from so many. Flesh and blood (mankind in general) do not so believe, and could not have so taught you nor convinced you; you have been drawn of my Father in heaven, and through responding to the leadings of his providence the eyes of your understanding have been opened that you are thus able to see and appreciate this great truth.

Then followed a blessing, a prophecy of coming usefulness, partly, at least, the result of this good confession, as it was the result of a proper condition of heart;—"Thou art Peter [*petros*, a stone, a rock] and upon this rock [*petra*—this great stone or rocky mass—the great truth which you have confessed, namely, my Messiahship] will I build my church."

The Lord did not propose to build his church upon Peter, but upon the great truth which the Father had laid as a foundation for his plan and had revealed to Peter and which Peter had so nobly expressed. But Peter, indeed, might be one of the living stones of the spiritual temple erected upon this great foundation-fact. Peter himself gives us this interpretation of the matter in his Epistle (1 Pet. 2:4-7), assuring us that the whole church as a building of God is growing more and more complete through the addition of each member, who, as a living stone, is built up into and under the headship of Christ, the great chief corner-stone and capstone of the whole—the figure being that of a pyramid.—See MILLENNIAL DAWN, VOL. I., Chap. v.; VOL. III., Chap. x.

The same thought is given in the description of the New Jerusalem, in which Peter is represented by one of the Twelve Foundation Stones, the other apostles being equally foundation stones, and all the faithful in Christ being built upon the foundation of the divine plan, and upon the testimony of these twelve apostles. Rev. 21, see verse 12.

This was probably the first intimation the Lord had given of his intention to *build* a church, or that any period of time would elapse between the work he was then doing and the establishment of the kingdom. This was a gradual way of bringing great matters to the attention of the apostles,—matters which necessarily would conflict with many of the ideas and hopes that already had taken possession of their hearts.

It cannot be claimed that our Lord referred to any of the Christian sects when thus speaking of his church: all are forced to admit that these earthly systems are entirely ignored, not only in this statement, but in every other statement which our Lord ever made respecting his church. He never recognized more than one, nor did the apostles; and both Jesus and the apostles reckoned that every true sheep, every true grain, every wise virgin, and every faithful servant of this Gospel age would belong to the *one* church of Christ, of which the Apostle says that "their names are written in heaven." (Heb. 12:23) They need no earthly record, and such of them as are rightly informed will want no sectarian name, but will be thoroughly satisfied with the name of their Lord; and they will want no earthly creed-fences to separate them from each other, but will desire more and more to be one in *fact* and in *theory*.

The church of Rome, as being the oldest of all human church systems, claims the name of Christ, and holds that Peter was its founder, but it can produce no evidence to this effect, for there was no Roman Catholic church in existence until centuries after Peter's day. The primitive church, authorized by our Lord and built upon the testimony of the apostles and through their ministry, after the day of Pentecost, was a very different institution from any of the present-day man-made, creed-bound and clergy-lorded systems. We understand that the Lord is now calling his true people out of this Babylon or mixed condition of present-day "churchianity" into the light, the liberty, the fellowship, with him and with all who are his, which properly belongs to the one flock, which has but "one Lord, one faith, one baptism."

Our Lord's declaration that "the gates of hell [hades, the death state] shall not prevail against" his church, is worthy of careful notice, especially in view of his words following this declaration, to the effect that all who would be his disciples must follow him in sacrifice into death. This must have been an astounding thought to the apostles, as they had, so far from expecting death, expected some kind of transformation to glory, honor and immortality. Our Lord's declaration, therefore, that the gates of hell, the gates of the grave, shall not prevail against his church, signified not that his followers should not enter those portals of death, but that eventually those prison-doors of death would open,—would not be permitted forever to prevail against the faithful. As a matter of fact, the gates of hades did close over our dear Redeemer himself for portions of three days, but they did not prevail. On the contrary, God's power prevailed and he arose from the dead, he left the prison-house, he came forth a victor. And so likewise throughout this Gospel age, the gates of death closed behind the apostles one after another, and after all the faithful of the Lord's people, as well as others, and our Lord's assurance then is still comforting to his followers, that the prisonhouse of death, with its strong bars and gates, the grave, shall not prevail, shall not in the end conquer, but that he who was raised from the dead by the power of the Father will raise us up also, making us also victors over death and over the grave, so that eventually we can say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" But we cannot say this so long as we are subject to death, nor so long as we are under death's power; but only when the deliverance shall come in the resurrection.

Altho our Lord does not here speak of others than the church prevailing against the gates and bars of the tomb, he does elsewhere give us the assurance that through his prevailing and our subsequent prevailing through his name and assistance, ultimately the whole world of mankind, or so many of them, at least, as will accept of the favor, will be delivered from the power of death into perfection of life: and then shall be brought to pass, in the fullest, most absolute sense of the word, the prophecy just referred to. (Isa. 61:1-3) Adamic death and its victory over the human family will then be completely annulled, through the atonement accomplished by our Lord, and the restitution which he, with his church, will accomplish as a result. And any who shall fail of eternal life shall not fail because of the present prevalence of so-called Adamic death, but will be the victims of their own wilful sin, and will experience its penalty, the

second death, whose bars and gates will never open, and against which they can never prevail, for Christ dieth no more and will release none from the second death.—Rom. 6:9; 2 Thess. 1:9; Acts 3:23.

THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

The apostles, of course, could not understand our Lord's words at the time, as they did afterward, and as we now understand them. (John 7:39) Nevertheless, these various declarations respecting the future immediately followed, our Lord declaring, "I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." What a riddle this must have seemed to poor Peter and his associates! They would doubtless conclude that it meant that in view of Peter's confession he would make him grand treasurer of the kingdom, or something of that kind; and only in the light of their fulfilment in subsequent events can we judge accurately the meaning of these words. But looking through the experiences of Peter and the church, we find that there were two doors which required to be opened, and that Peter was used of the Lord in opening both of them, and hence that it was properly stated of him that he had the keys, the power, the opportunity, the authority to do the work in both instances, and he did it.

Our Lord himself did not open the door into the kingdom, in the full sense of the word. He merely called out faithful laborers, who should afterward in his name open wide the doors. Indeed, the doors into the kingdom could not be opened to any until first of all the great transaction of Calvary had been accomplished. Our Lord came to give himself a ransom for mankind, because a ransom was necessary before mankind could be released from the Adamic condemnation, or have any part either in the kingdom proper or in the hoped for blessing promised through the kingdom to all the families of the earth. Hence the apostles (whom the Father had specially given to Jesus, and of whom none were lost save the son of perdition, whose place was subsequently filled, through the Lord's appointment, by the Apostle Paul—John 17:12; Rom. 1:1), did not and could not receive recognition from the Father until after our Lord Jesus had finished his sacrifice and had arisen from the dead and had ascended up on high to appear in the presence of God on their behalf,—and on behalf of all men for whom he died. So soon as the sacrifice for man's sin was presented to the Father, the evidence of its acceptance was indicated to mankind by God's acceptance of the faithful apostles and of all who then were in the proper condition of heart, to the plane of sonship and their begetting of the holy spirit to a new nature,—and this was marked or indicated by the outpouring of the holy spirit at Pentecost, accompanied by "gifts" of the spirit.

It was then that Christ's kingdom was established in those who had received him; and then began the work of declaring the good tidings of great joy, which must eventually be to all people but which at first was restricted for three and a half years to fleshly Israel, in fulfilment of God's covenant with them, that favor should continue to the full end of seventy weeks mentioned by the prophet.—Dan. 9:24. See MILLENNIAL DAWN, VOL. II., Chap. III.

In this work of *opening the door* of the kingdom to Israel we find, according to the record, that Peter took the first, most prominent and initiatory part, as we read: "Peter, standing up with [the others of] the eleven, lifted up his voice and said." (Acts 2:14) Peter was the spokesman, Peter used the "*key*," Peter opened the door, the other apostles co-operating and assisting.

The other of the two "keys" was not used for three and a half years afterward, because not until then could the door of favor be opened to the Gentiles. But when the time came for opening the door, we find that it was Peter who was specially designated of the Lord to do it, being sent from Joppa to Cornelius, to tell him words which should be to the saving of his house—the opening to him of the privilege of membership in the kingdom of Christ, he being the first Gentile converted, the first one to whom the Lord authorized the preaching of the high calling of joint-heirship with Christ in his kingdom. And the Apostle Peter referred to this matter subsequently, saying, "Ye know how that a good while ago God made choice amongst us that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the Gospel."—Acts 10; 15:7.

BINDING AND LOOSING IN HEAVEN AND EARTH

Our Lord further said to Peter, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." This statement has given rise to the claim amongst Romanists that Peter was the first pope, and that he had an authority superior to the other apostles; but we find that very nearly the

same words were used to all the apostles as recorded by the same Evangelist. (Matt. 18:18) Again, a very similar declaration was made to them all, as recorded by John, saying, "Whosoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained." (John 20:23) We understand these declarations not to be general and applicable to all of the church, but chiefly to the apostles, on the strength of our Lord's words. (John 6:70; 15:16; Rev. 21:14) We deny that the popes of Rome, or any other persons, ever have been apostles, or ever have exercised apostolic authority. In a word, we deny the central claim of Romanism and Episcopacy, viz., "Apostolic Succession."

We understand this investment of Peter and the other apostles, with special authority to bind and to loose, to remit and to hold, to signify that God would specially control their utterances, so that their decisions and writings might properly be considered authoritative. Not that God bound himself to do and to decide according to the imperfect judgments of the apostles, but that he has guaranteed us that he would so guide and providentially overrule in the affairs and in the language of these chosen and faithful ones that his people might rely upon it that such things as the apostles fixed had the divine approval. For instance, it is at their mouth that we learn that we are justified from all sin through faith in the redemption; they did not make it so, but under divine direction they were guided in the stating of it so; and we may implicitly rely upon their statements, which, moreover, we find to be in full accord with the principles of righteousness and the various declarations of the divine Word.

They inform us also that certain sins can be remitted or forgiven—sins of weakness and of ignorance, traceable to our fallen nature, which we have received by heredity, and the penalty for which our Lord has already borne. They inform us also that other sins, viz., wilful sins, are not forgivable, and may be indeed sins unto death, unto the second death. And we see herein reasonableness also; for we perceive that Christ did not die for any except the Adamic transgression, and those sins which directly or indirectly may be traceable to it: and that wilful, deliberate transgressions cannot therefore be forgiven, but must be expiated—if committed with considerable light, but not full light, the expiating penalty may be "stripes," but if committed with full wilfulness and against full light the penalty could be nothing short of death—the second death.—1 John 5:16; Luke 12:47, 48; Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26, 27.

CAST NOT PEARLS BEFORE SWINE

Following this conversation with the disciples, our Lord charged them particularly not to make his Messiahship generally known to the people. This corroborates the thought that neither the disciples nor our Lord had previously been enunciating his Messiahship, but rather preaching that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, near at the door, without saying precisely who was to be the King. The command not to make the matter known was evidently because the result of such a program would have been to have aroused at least a party spirit amongst the people, some of whom accepted his miracles, etc., and would have espoused his cause, while others, with the Pharisees, would have opposed, and thus an insurrection would naturally have followed;—besides it would have interfered considerably with the program which our Lord saw marked out for him in the divine Word,—his death as the sin-offering. He did not need to proclaim his Messiahship, for he already knew, as he had stated, that whosoever the Father would draw would come, and that those not drawn of the Father, and not disposed to become his disciples, should not be specially drawn by the proclamation of his Messiahship and the prospects of the kingdom.

PETER A STUMBLING-STONE, AN ADVERSARY

Having prepared the minds of the disciples, by the foregoing declaration, that *hades*, death, would not be permitted to triumph over his church, etc., our Lord from that time forward began gradually to break to them information respecting his own decease and his resurrection from the dead. It was then that the same noble Peter forgot himself, as we would say, and undertook to correct the Lord and to outline for him other things. He was moved to this, not merely by selfish motives of prejudice and hopes of sharing in the kingdom, and avoiding the ignominy, but doubtless also by his love for the Lord and his desire to see him honored and exalted, rather than to be set at nought and killed. But, as on another occasion this noble Apostle said things "not knowing what he said," so now he evidently did not realize the import of his language, and how, if it were followed, it would mean to our Lord the rejection of the Father's plan and the

substitution thereof of a plan more agreeable to the flesh.

The text says that "Peter took him," and this we may understand to signify that Peter took him apart from the others—it was a private interview and exhortation, and no doubt Peter intended to bring in various supporting arguments; for instance, that the disciples would be discouraged with such talk, etc. However, he only "began," and did not get to finish his argument, the Master being so full of the spirit of loyalty to the Father and his plan that he could not even endure a suggestion to the contrary, and must needs hasten to repudiate such a disloyal suggestion. His answer was a severe rebuke to Peter, yet doubtless was a blessing to him so long as he lived, and probably helped him afterward to be much more modest in the matter of opposing his plan to that of the Lord.

When our Lord said, "Get thee behind me, Satan," he did not mean that he considered Peter possessed by the adversary; rather, the word Satan in the original is "adversary," and was properly used in respect to any person taking a position adverse or in opposition to another. The adversary is called Satan, that word being used for him as a proper name. Our Lord turned from Peter at this time, and addressed his words so that all the apostles might hear him, that the matter might be the more impressive and all the more a valuable lesson to them: that they might all know that their Master never compromised his Father's will in any sense or degree. "Get behind me, adversary; thou savorest [partakest] not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men"—you are viewing matters not from God's standpoint, but from the standpoint of fallible, fallen men.

So it is to-day, and ever has been with the church, the body of Christ; if they are intent upon following the footsteps of the Lord they must expect adversaries to arise who will seek to turn them away from the path of sacrifice and duty: to make it seem too difficult, or to attract their attention to other plans or methods less costly—more in harmony with the fleshly mind. We should remember the Master's course and take a similar one, and point out to these, if they be friends, and in the truth (and such they frequently are, as was Peter), that their influence is being exercised in a wrong direction, against the truth, against our best interests, against the divine plan and hence that they are not only adversaries to us, but also adversaries to the Lord. We should thus seek to reclaim them and to help them to walk in the same way with us,—instead of leaving the narrow way to follow their kindly meant but pernicious influence.

The word here rendered "offence" would more properly be translated, as in the Revised Version, "a stumbling block," or a stone of stumbling. Thus we see that it was the same Peter whose noble confession had so refreshed the Lord and blessed the disciples and himself, and who on this account was designated a stone, indicative of strong character, that was now, by reason of the same strength of character, strong-mindedness, strong will, in danger of becoming, not a stone in the Lord's temple but a stumbling stone. And should some of the Lord's people, strong in character, become stumbling stones to us, we have here our Lord's illustration of our proper course—to turn from them, refusing to be stumbled, refusing to be lead away from the consecration which we have made.

Our Lord took this occasion to lay pointedly before his disciples the fact that if they loved the present life, with its advantages, etc., more than the future one, with its present disadvantages, they had no business amongst his disciples: that anyone who would be his disciple should reckon self-denial, self-negation, absolutely necessary to discipleship; and should be prepared, with no uncertainty of mind or purpose, to follow after Jesus with a cross,—not a literal cross, but the crossing of human self-will with the divine will.

Then come the terms of discipleship very clearly stated. All who become disciples, and who hope for life in the kingdom, must expect to sacrifice the present life, and whoever does not sacrifice the present life shall not find that glorious eternal life which God has in reservation only for the overcomers. But, our Lord reasons, what would a man be advantaged were he to gain all of this world, all of its advantages and riches (which none could hope to do) if thereby he should lose his own being, his own soul, his life, his existence: or what would a man not be willing to give in exchange for the perpetuation of his life eternally. (The word *soul*, in this verse, is *psuche*, the same Greek word rendered *life* in the preceding verse.) Surely anyone possessed of a sound mind and able, therefore, to rightly weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the present life, as compared

with the eternal life in God's kingdom of righteousness, must confess that it would be a bad bargain to gain the whole world in every sense and to lose his own being.

It is in view of the logic of this argument that our Lord and the apostles urge all true followers of Christ to present

their bodies living sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God, and their reasonable service;—to lay down their lives for the brethren, that by these means they may attest their devotion to the Lord and attain to his kingdom and life everlasting.—Rom. 12:1; 1 John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15; Phil. 3:10, 11.

A VISION OF COMING GLORY

LUKE 9:28-36.—JULY 29.

"This is my beloved son—hear him."

Continuing his lessons to the apostles, showing them that his glory and kingdom could not come until after his suffering and death, our Lord declared, "There be some standing here who will not taste of death until they see the Son of Man coming in his royal majesty." (Matt. 16:28; 17:1) Then, six days later (or eight days, counting the one in which this was uttered and the one in which it was fulfilled) our Lord took Peter, James and John, the three apostles most advanced in faith and zeal, into a high mountain, and while praying with them the transfiguration scene of our lesson ensued.

It was a further lesson of instruction in harmony with what he had already explained, viz., that the Son of Man must be set at naught by the chief priests and the elders, and must be crucified, and must rise from the dead, ere he could enter into his glory;—the kingdom in which he had promised them a share. The transfiguration scene was therefore a picture or "vision" of the Lord's glory in his kingdom, and was intended to assure the apostles respecting the certainty of the kingdom, notwithstanding the apparent failure of all kingdom-hopes in our Lord's crucifixion. And this vision was doubtless essential as an assistant to the apostles' faith in Jesus as the promised Messiah, since the course of events which would follow in the next few months would be so different from everything that they had expected.

Peter, one of those present on this occasion, fully substantiates this view—that the transfiguration was a vision of Christ's dignity and glory in the kingdom—for writing respecting it he says: "We have not followed cunningly devised fables in making known to you the presence and power of our Lord Jesus, but were eye-witnesses of that majesty, for he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory—'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with him in the holy mount."—2 Pet. 1:16-18.

The several accounts show that our Lord entered into the mountain to pray, and that the apostles fell asleep during the prayer, but subsequently awakened and beheld the vision, the Master's face shining like the sun, and his garments glitteringly white, and in his company two persons who, for some reason, they recognized as Moses and Elijah, altho of course they had never seen either of these men, and would not have known them without assistance. These they overheard talking with the Lord, the subject of the conversation no doubt being intended for the ears of the disciples—to convince them that the matters which would occur before long in Jerusalem and on Mount Calvary would all be features of the divine plan, harmoniously working out the blessed results promised and longed for, through the kingdom. "They spoke of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem."

What is the interpretation of the picture? is a proper question. We reply, that it represented, first of all, that altho our Lord Jesus must suffer death, even the death of the cross, in harmony with the divine plan, "being made a curse for us" (Gal 3:13), nevertheless, he was still the Son of God, whose glorious majesty and kingly power would later on be fully shown forth. And Moses and Elijah, representing the Law and the Prophets, illustrate how the death of Christ was fully attested beforehand. Moses spoke of the sufferings of Christ in all the arrangements of the Law, its sacrifices, etc., and the prophets declared not only the coming glories, but also the sufferings which must precede them, as our Lord subsequently pointed out to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, saying, "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Messiah to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"—Luke 24:25-27.

Again, this picture may be understood to represent the kingdom during this Gospel age—the kingdom as recognized by the Lord's people, but not recognized by the world. In this view of the vision, our Lord's race shining as the sun, and his garments glistening white, would represent him in his

present condition, as no longer the man Christ Jesus, but the risen, glorified Son of the Highest, a spirit being. In this view of the matter, Moses might be understood to represent the faithful of the past ages, and Elijah the faithful of this Gospel age, the body of Christ in the flesh,* who are to be associated with him in the glory of the kingdom, and who meantime behold his glory with the eye of faith, and recognize the great transaction of Calvary as the basis for all kingdom hopes and blessings.

In harmony with this view is the fact that at the same time that this vision was taking place the other disciples of the twelve at the foot of the mountain were contending with the adversary, seeking to cast out the devil from the young man. Thus the Lord's people of the present time are still in the valley of conflict, still contending with the will of the flesh and the devil; yet their eyes of faith behold at the top of the mountain the glorious Lord, with all power in heaven and in earth, their Friend, their Teacher, and soon to be their deliverer, who will cause them to share in the glories of his kingdom into which he has already entered.

We have called this scene on the mountain a vision, and so indeed our Lord calls it, in the account given by Matthew (17:9): "As they came down from the mountain Jesus charged them saying, Tell the *vision* to no man until the Son of Man be risen from the dead." And indeed a vision was just as useful to the purpose as a reality could have been. Thus it was that the Lord showed many things later on to one of these three witnessing disciples on the Isle of Patmos. He showed him in vision, angels and thrones and crowns and multitudes and dragons, etc., in a manner which served the purpose equally as well as tho all those beasts, dragons, etc., had been actually created for the purpose. So in this vision: Our Lord's transfiguration was merely an *appearance*—*actually* he had undergone no change. He appeared like as spiritual beings are described, bright, shining like the sun, etc., yet he was not yet a spirit being, and did not become such until his resurrection from the dead; he was still "the man Christ Jesus." But in the "vision" his countenance and his garments were caused to *appear* to be bright, glistening, etc., and the *appearance* served every purpose. Likewise, Moses and Elijah appeared to be present, but they were not actually present, because it was merely a "vision." The Apostle distinctly informs us that Moses and Elijah and the others of the ancient worthies are not yet made perfect—and that they cannot be made perfect until after the church, the body of Christ, is complete and glorified with the Head, "God having provided some better thing for us, that *they* without us should not be made perfect."—Heb. 11:40; John 3:13; Acts 2:34.

As a part of the "vision" came a misty cloud of light, which enveloped the group, including the disciples, who were fearful as they entered the cloud. This cloud as a part of the vision, might properly be understood as saying to the apostles and to us, Altho the glory and majesty of the Lord Jesus are unquestionably his, as testified to by the Law and the Prophets, and as a result of his faithfulness unto death, nevertheless that glory will in a considerable measure be hidden, covered, obscured for a time, so that you will see your glorious Lord and King only with the eye of faith, which, altho more or less cloudy, will nevertheless be bright to those who look unto him. And the voice of God speaking in that cloud and testifying to Jesus as the Son of God, and instructing that we should hear and obey his word, would seem to represent how that all through this Gospel age, while the misty cloud surrounds the glory of the Lord, we will have great need to continually hearken to the Word of the Lord, and to repose faith in its declaration respecting the Son of God, our Redeemer.

After the vision the Lord and the apostles descended from the mount to engage in the duties of life—to complete the lessons of faith and obedience, battling against the world, the flesh and the devil; and yet, as the quotation from the Apostle Peter's letter clearly shows, the influence of this vision

* See MILLENNIAL DAWN, VOL. II, Chap. 8, "Elias Shall First Come."

continued with the apostles through coming days, as it still encourages us today. And may we not learn a lesson to the effect that as this vision was granted when Jesus and the disciples were at prayer, so all those who seek God in prayer may, to a large extent, with the eye of faith realize this same blessed vision of the kingdom—the glories to come—and may, to some extent, with the hearing of faith recognize the voice of God saying, “This is my beloved Son”—to some extent be enabled to realize that as members of the body of Christ their sacrifice must also be accomplished in actual death before they can enter into his glory, since it is written that “if we suffer with him we shall also reign with him.”

We cannot build tabernacles on the mountain heights

of faith and hope, and expect to dwell there in enraptured vision always. We must remember that the duties and trials of present experiences in conflicts with sin and with self and with the adversary are essential to our development and part of our covenant, but like the Master we should frequently seek the heavenly Father's blessing in prayer; and in proportion as we use this privilege will our hearts and our faces shine; and proportionately we will be enabled to “show forth the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light,” and who has shined by his grace into our hearts, “to give the light of the knowledge of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord.

LEAST AND GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM

MATT. 18:1-14.—AUGUST 5.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such [like] is the Kingdom of God.*”

The Golden Text chosen for this lesson is most inappropriate and misleading. It was spoken respecting children, and as indicating our Lord's sympathy and love for them. Indeed, we cannot think of any truly great man or woman who would not look upon childhood with loving sympathy and interest; and viewing the blank pages of the life represented in them be awakened to tender feelings respecting the trials and difficulties and disappointments which must lie before them in the path of life, and with hopes and good wishes respecting their possible victories and attainments of desirable characters, as a result of these experiences and conflicts. That Jesus loved children, yea, loved everything guileless and pure, is not to be questioned, and our Golden Text substantiates this conviction.

The kingdom of God will not be composed either wholly or in part of infants who died without either knowledge, experience or character attainments. Had such been God's purpose it would not have required nearly nineteen centuries to complete the “little flock” of “one hundred and forty-four thousand,” nor would it have been said that a good fight must be fought and victory achieved and graces of the spirit attained by “patient perseverance in well doing,” and that all in all it must be through much tribulation to the flesh, voluntarily and joyfully accepted, that any can enter into the kingdom. Infants can have no share under this Gospel call; but they will surely share the great world-blessing that will speedily follow the completion of the Church and its glorification as God's kingdom.

This text is misleading, in connection with this lesson, because in the latter the expression “little ones” is used in a figurative sense, not literally;—the Lord referring to his humble and trustful disciples as God's little ones, God's children, whom he pities and cherishes as do earthly parents their little ones. Nor is this an exceptional case, for we find that repeatedly in the Scriptures the young Christian and the less developed are likened to babes, to children. Thus the Apostle Paul exhorts: “Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit, in malice be ye children, but in understanding be ye men.” And the Apostle Peter exhorts the brethren, “As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby.”—1 Cor. 14:20; 1 Peter 2:2.

It was apparently after the journey back from the Mount of Transfiguration to Capernaum that the discourse of this lesson occurred. Comparing the accounts as given by Mark and Luke, we gather that the apostles on the way had a discussion respecting who of their number were the greatest, and who would be the greatest or most honored in the kingdom which the Lord had promised and in which they hoped to share. This discussion quite probably was instigated by the fact that only three of their number had been specially favored by being with the Lord in the mount. The discussion between them, altho carried on probably in subdued tones, not intended for the ears of Jesus, had become animated as the various sides and claims were advocated. It was a little later that our Lord inquired of them what had been the subject of their earnest and animated converse as they followed him in the way. According to Luke's account they were reticent, not liking to answer his question and to tell of their dispute, no doubt feeling rather ashamed of it. But, realizing that they could not hide the matter from the Lord, and some of them evidently anxious to have his decisive word on the subject, they asked him to settle the question for them.

Our Lord desired just such an opportunity for presenting to his faithful ones a needed lesson along this line; and according to his usual custom he illustrated it. Calling a little

child, and seating it in the midst, he made the astounding declaration that only such as would become childlike could enter the kingdom at all. As natural men, and most of them rather unlearned, the disciples had no doubt been aiming as far as possible from childlike simplicity, and striving rather to assume the dignity of mind and of bearing which would suggest itself to the natural man as being appropriate to those who hoped soon to share regal honors in the kingdom of God. What astonishment it must have caused them to learn that the Lord was looking rather for simplicity, meekness, teachableness, child-likeness, than for astuteness, wisdom, dignity, etc.!

Yet our Lord's words were not merely a condemnation of the spirit which they had been cultivating, but a lesson of instruction regarding a change in this respect, his words intimating not merely the possibility, but the necessity of a change of course on the part of those who desired a share in his kingdom. If, instead of reading our Lord's words as in the Common Version, “Except ye be converted,” we read them as in the Revised Version, “Except ye turn,” more will get the true thought our Lord wished his followers to learn, the word “convert” having lost its primary meaning to many by reason of misuse. They must turn their ideas on the subject, and study and practice lessons in the opposite direction—lessons of meekness, of humility, of child-likeness: and our Lord's declaration that those who attain to the greatest development in meekness and simplicity of heart will be greatest in the kingdom, implies that those who strive after simplicity and meekness will be granted a share in the kingdom, but that none who are self-seeking and boastful will have part or lot in this matter.

Having thus defined the humble-minded and unostentatious amongst his followers as those upon whom he would bestow the highest honors and dignities of the kingdom, Jesus proceeded to give a general lesson respecting such “little ones” of his followers, saying that all who receive such humble disciples in his name will be reckoned as having received him, and whoever stumbles or injures one of these humble or “little ones” will thereby commit a crime so serious that it would be better for him to have lost his life—better that a mill-stone were fastened to his neck and he be cast into the sea, and thus all hope of saving his life effectually destroyed—better that this great calamity should come upon one than that he should do an injury to one of the Lord's “little ones”—one of the humblest of the disciples, child-like, meek, following in the way of the Lord.

As we thus see how great a value the Lord places upon humility it should encourage all true disciples to cultivate this quality daily, that thus they might grow more and more guileless, honest, truly humble, and in the sight of the great King become more and more great, more and more fit for the high exaltations of the kingdom to come. Seeing that without this meekness none can enter into this kingdom, we need not wonder that the Scriptures everywhere exhort the Lord's people to humility—“Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God [now] that he may exalt you in due time” in the kingdom. Yet notwithstanding all these exhortations of the Scriptures the perversity of human nature seems to be such that those who become the Lord's people and who engage to run in his way seem to find more trouble, more to contend against, in this matter than in any other. And some who feel themselves to be little enough seem very anxious that others of the brethren shall esteem them very highly. Would to God that all of the Lord's dear people, and especially all who seem to be leaders, and who have some natural qualifica-

tions for leading, and helpfulness in the church, would study well this lesson, and learn from it how to advance themselves in the Lord's favor, and how to be truly great according to his standard, which alone shall prevail.

The word rendered "offend" in verse 6 and onward would be better rendered "stumbled," the thought being that of placing a stumbling-block in the path. The Lord intimates most distinctly that there will be plenty of such stumbling-blocks in the way of those who are truly his, and that, too, in proportion as they are "little"—humble. He declares it necessary that these difficulties, these trials, these "offences," shall come. It is necessary, because it is the divine will that all the elect church shall be thoroughly tested and developed in character, that thus they may become strong characters, copies of God's dear Son, willing to suffer for the truth's sake, and that gladly, joyfully, the loss of earthly things, that thereby they might please the Father which is in heaven,—thus developing humility and obedience, that by and by they may be ready for the exaltation which he has promised to those only who faithfully follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

Yet however necessary that the stumbling-blocks shall be in the way, and that the church, the body of Christ, shall be tested thereby, this does not lighten the responsibility of those who, as the agents of the adversary, lend themselves to his influence in placing those stumbling-blocks before the feet of the saints; and our Lord's words, without indicating exactly the nature of their punishment, assure us positively that such evil-doers will have a reward from him who says, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay."

In all probability many today are putting stumbling-blocks before the Lord's little ones, his faithful little flock, who do not realize what they are doing,—just as Peter unconsciously became a stumbling stone, a rock of offence, to the Master, when he attempted to dissuade him from the performance of his consecration vow. Those who place stumbling-blocks before the Lord's "little ones" now similarly seek to lead them from the narrow path of full consecration and self-sacrifice—seeking to persuade them that another and an easier way, a way less humbling to the natural man, a way more politic, more crafty, more wise, according to the course of this world than the narrow way, is just as good as or a great deal better than the narrow way. Such testings are necessary, and it is also necessary that all who do not walk closely in the footprints of the Savior shall be sifted out, for the Lord seeketh only a little flock,—all of them copies of his dear Son. But there is a great responsibility upon those who aid in turning aside any of the flock—who to any extent are stumbling-blocks, causes of stumbling or "offence" in the pathway of the Lord's people.

Following this line of thought, that offences or trials and testings must come to all, our Lord urges that tho these tests mean the sacrifice of pleasure or hopes or aims or customs or privileges, precious to us as a right eye or a right hand, or useful to us as our foot, they must nevertheless be overcome, if we would enter into the kingdom. This is another way of saying what he at another time expressed in the words, "Through much tribulation shall ye enter the kingdom." Whoever has gotten the thought that the kingdom is to be granted merely on condition of *believing* in Jesus has gotten a wrong thought that is not imparted by the Scriptures. Faith is necessary to our justification, before we can do anything in the nature of self-sacrifice that

God could accept; but whoever stops with the faith without the works, without the self-sacrifice, loses every hope and privilege in connection with the kingdom. To attain it we must "strive," must "fight the good fight," must "endure hardness as good soldiers," must be willing to cut off, not only sinful pleasures, but all things that would interfere with our full devotion to the Lord's service and our fulfillment of our covenant to be dead with him; must "work out our salvation with fear and trembling,"—assisted by divine grace sufficient for every time of need, and by the exceeding great and precious promises of God's Word working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

We are not to understand that any may be lacking a foot or a hand or an eye in the kingdom; but rather we should understand that as the offending eye represents besetments which appeal to our natural tastes as beautiful and likely to charm and attract us to earthly things, and as the offending hand would represent the doing of things that would be contrary to our highest spiritual interests, and as the offending foot would represent the going into forbidden paths of sin or self-gratification, so the lopping off of these would properly signify that it would be better that we should enter the life eternal and into the share in the kingdom without having enjoyed certain earthly privileges and gratifications, than that having enjoyed all the earthly gratifications we should thereby have missed our calling and failed to make our election sure.

The "everlasting fire" and the "hell-fire" mentioned are equally symbolical with the other parts of the figure, and undoubtedly refer to the destruction which is the wages of sin to be visited upon wilful sinners—"everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." That fire is used here and elsewhere in the Scriptures to represent not torture, but destruction, is clearly set forth in a pamphlet entitled, "What say the Scriptures About Hell?"

Branching out further along the same lines, our Lord gives the general caution to us all: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones"—these humble ones that belong to the Lord. They may seem humble and insignificant when viewed from the worldly standpoint, but they are God's friends; yea, they are God's children, for whom he cares; and hence whoever does injury to them is insulting and antagonizing their Father which is in heaven. Moreover, our Lord assures us that each of his little ones, his faithful, humble little flock, have a constant representation in the Father's presence. There is a guardian angel for each of the Lord's people, and we are to get the thought that there is no delay in the bringing of any and everything which pertains to their welfare and interest before the attention of the great King. What a thought is here for those who are inclined to be heady and to despise or in any manner override or mistreat the humble ones of the body of Christ! And what a lesson is here also for the humble ones—that they are the special objects of divine care and providence, for whom, therefore, all things must work well, because they belong to the Lord!

The remaining four verses seem not to be properly a part of this lesson, and inasmuch as they will come up in another lesson later on and in their proper connection, we omit the discussion of them here.

* We will supply these free to applicants who so request

BATTLING FOR THE TRUTH

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL:—At a recent meeting of the church here the 28th chapter of Isaiah was brought up, and it seemed plain to us that this is an exact description of the condition of the nominal church of the present time, from the prophets and seers, who err in vision, down to the tables which are full of vomit, the bed which has become too short and the covering which is too narrow.—See MILLENNIAL DAWN Index references.

Now in regard to that part of the chapter which refers to those who drive back the battle to the gate, the thought was expressed that possibly this might refer to the present "volunteer" work, and that the volunteers are pressing back the battle to the gate, and that the word "gate" might possibly be a symbol of dominion, representing Satan's stronghold, and that this stronghold is the doctrine of eternal torture, against which doctrine the present ammunition of the volunteers seems to be specially directed. Then again it was thought that this gate (or doctrine) might represent the restraint which the enemy has exercised over the race of man-

kind during all these centuries, lest the glorious light of the gospel should shine into their hearts.

Do you think the interpretation correct? And if so, do you not think that if the attention of the brethren were called to this chapter at the present time it would serve to strengthen those who are already in the volunteer service and encourage others to enlist, inasmuch as the same chapter promises strength to those who drive the battle back? With best wishes,

Yours in the service of the King,

CONRAD KUEHN—Ohio.

[In reply: We certainly do understand this chapter to portray events of our day; and while all true soldiers of the cross are now battling for the truth against error we concede that none are doing more valiant service than are the "volunteers." Nor do we know of any other service or method so likely to yield the desired results.

As to turning the battle at the gate it might be viewed