

merely carry out the provisions of that covenant, which promises that they shall have the privileges of restitution. If they avail themselves of the opportunity they shall have eternal life.

At that time, the right to human life will have passed out of the hands of our Lord as Redeemer, and will all, thenceforth, be represented in the Covenant itself, which guarantees all the things that God declared man should have. The stony heart of mankind will give place to a heart of flesh; and all who will live up to the terms of this covenant shall have

eternal life. During the Millennial age the New Covenant will represent the life-rights laid down by our Lord. Whoever fails to observe that Law will receive chastisements. By this arrangement Christ, as Mediator of the New Covenant, will for a thousand years dispense the blessings. During this Gospel age our Lord keeps the right to life under his own control in order to give it to justice as the ransom-price for the world's sins, for the redemption of the world. As soon as he gives up this right at the end of this age, justice relinquishes it, and mankind receives it, as shown foregoing.

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WAS JUDAS A HYPOCRITE?

It is difficult for any noble minded person to read the account of Judas' course without feeling a sense of righteous indignation—a disgust for the baseness of character which could thus betray, for thirty pieces of silver, the one whom he recognized as the noblest of men, whether or not he was sure that Jesus was the Messiah. It may not be amiss here to reflect that Judas did not reach this depth of iniquity suddenly, but rather that the disposition toward unrighteousness had grown upon him during the three years of his intimacy with the Master, when the reverse disposition should have had control.

At the time he was chosen to be an Apostle he was evidently a good man, so far as outward appearance, at least, was concerned; and his name, which signifies "Praise," would seem to indicate that his parents had been of a religious cast of mind and had wished and, so to speak, had prophesied of him that he would be a messenger of God to sound forth his praise. And what a privilege and opportunity he enjoyed in this direction!

From the meager mentionings of the Gospel records we may reasonably infer that the beginning of his downfall was the harboring of a love of money. Instead of rebuking this wrong spirit and seeking, on the contrary, to cultivate generosity, love and benevolence, he permitted selfishness to have control, more or less, in his heart and life. We may surmise that he chose the office of treasurer for the little company, whereas, had he been sufficiently alive to his own weakness, his proper course would have been to refuse it, realizing that already he had too much love of money, and that the handling of the funds might prove a temptation to him. But on the contrary, he sought and obtained the office, and carried the bag with the money put therein; and the Apostle John tells us that he was a thief. (John 12:6.) This passion for money, like all other abnormal propensities of our fallen nature, grew stronger as it was encouraged and cultivated, until finally it knew no bounds and he was ready to sell his loving Master, Messiah, for thirty pieces of silver!

Probably Judas had made the same profession of consecration as did the other disciples: "Lo, we have left all to follow thee; what, therefore, shall we have?" And, with the others, he had left all, and perhaps, in a certain way, was very sincere and recognized that this was the Messiah. But Judas had a business turn of mind. He wished to be associated with such a great kingdom as the Messiah would set up. So there was a measure of selfishness connected with his consecration. Perhaps this is true with all of us. We are all sure that the Lord has a kingdom and we hope to have a share in it. But this thought should be secondary. Our merit should be of a higher order than merely a desire for reward for service.

As treasurer of the disciples Judas looked out to get a good share for himself, to "feather his own nest." In the case of the ointment used for our Lord by Mary, he said, That ointment is worth a great deal of money, and it should have been put into the treasury instead of being poured on Jesus' head. "This he said because he was a thief and carried the bag."

So it seems that this spirit of avarice grew upon him. As matters progressed he began to see that things were not reaching the culmination for which he had hoped and looked. Probably he was one of those who said, at least in his heart, "If thou do these things, do them publicly, so that others may see." This would seem to have been the spirit of Judas and of many others. They wanted Jesus to do the things that would establish him with the people. We can imagine their saying, "Ask some thousands to come and see the raising of some one from the dead, and have a good demonstration," etc. But nothing of this kind was done. Each miracle was performed by our Lord in a quiet way.

Probably Judas began to think that Jesus could not manage affairs nearly so well as if he would allow Judas to "coach" him a little. As time passed, he began to keep

some of the money. Perhaps he thought, "Now things are not coming out very well. I will keep some of this money for the disciples and Jesus for a rainy day." But he was really thinking about Judas.

THE NECESSITY OF JUDGING OURSELVES

By following a similar course of reasoning many people persuade themselves that they are trying to help others, when really they are looking out for their own interests. Hence there is a necessity for judging ourselves. The new creature should get the old creature into a corner and cross-question him: "Why do you act thus and so? Are you sure that you did not have some selfish motive in this matter?" If Judas had thus examined himself it would have been better for him. But not having done so, he drifted farther and farther away from a right spirit. Finally he went to the chief priests and said, "What would you give me if I were to give Jesus over?" They said, So much. Then he turned the matter over in his mind for several hours. So when he was in the "upper chamber" his mind was abstracted, and he sat quietly watching what the others were doing.

When our Lord washed the feet of his apostles, before partaking of the Passover supper, he intimated that as they had bathed (in accordance with the Jewish requirement of the putting away of all filth at the beginning of the Passover season) they merely needed now the rinsing of their feet, the cleansing of the members that had come in contact with the earth. "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet to be clean every whit." (R. V.) Our Lord added, referring to Judas, "Ye are clean, but not all." This expression shows us very clearly that he had in mind a higher cleansing, of which this washing of their feet and their previous bath were but the figures.

The Lord knew that the hearts of his disciples were loyal. He had accepted them as his disciples and had reckonedly imputed to them the merit of his sacrifice as a covering of their blemishes, the full testimony of which would be given them by and by at Pentecost, the holy Spirit testifying that the Father had accepted the Lord's atoning sacrifice on their behalf. There was one, however, of the number whose heart was not clean. Our Lord did not pass him by, but washed the feet of Judas with the rest, knowing the while of his perfidy, and that he had already bargained with the chief priests and was merely awaiting the opportune moment for the carrying out of his malevolent scheme.

Our Lord's words, although not understood by the rest, must have been appreciated by Judas, as were his subsequent words. Our Lord went so far as to quote the very prophecy which marked Judas and his disloyalty, his violation of even the common hospitality. (Psa. 41:9.) None of these things moved Judas; none of these things appealed to his heart in such a manner as to change his course. We have thus strong evidence of the wilful intention which marked his crime and makes clear the meaning of our Lord's words when he called him the "son of perdition," and declared that it would have been better for him if he had never been born.

"MINE OWN FAMILIAR FRIEND HATH LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME"

While they were at supper Jesus, appearing very sorrowful, gave as an explanation that it would be one of his own chosen twelve that would betray him and thus become accessory to his death—one of those who dipped with him in the dish, partaking of the same supper, the same bread, the same roasted lamb. Then he pointed out that although this was all written (Psa. 41:9), and thus no alteration would be made in respect to the divine plan, nevertheless it signified a very gross breach of friendship—one sad to contemplate. It really made no difference to the Lord, so far as his intention and his consecration were concerned, whether he were apprehended by the rulers without any betrayal, or whether betrayed by a comparative stranger or by a disciple. The fact would make no change in the divine arrangement; but it was a cause of great sorrow to the Lord that the traitor should be one who had been a bosom friend and disciple.

Amongst the Jews and Arabs deceit and betrayal were not uncommon; but there was a code of honor recognized according to which no one would eat the food of the person whom he sought in any wise to injure. As food was seasoned with salt, it was probably this custom, of being faithful to those with whom one ate, that was known as the "covenant of salt"—the covenant of faithfulness. To succeed in having an enemy eat at one's table or partake of one's food seasoned with salt was amongst that people equivalent to a pledge of lasting friendship—that he would never do his host injury. Apparently Judas was so lacking of a proper spirit that he did not even acknowledge and obey the custom of his time—to be loyal and faithful to the one whose bread he ate, of whose salt he partook; hence our Lord's words, "He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me."

When Jesus passed the sop to Judas, he perhaps understood in some measure our Lord's meaning; but the other disciples did not understand. They thought that Jesus was telling Judas to get in his proper provisions before the stores would be closed. But Judas may have thought thus: "Jesus has intimated that I will betray him. I had not intended to do this, but now I will show him. I know, of course, that he can get away from those officers; but I am treasurer of this company, and I will show him something. While I do not believe they could ever take him, yet the experience will be a good lesson. He will see henceforth that it will be better for him to go ahead. This thing has been dallying too long. It needs a business push behind it. So here goes!" Thus Judas reasoned, and he carried out his part. No doubt Judas expected that Jesus would escape. Not for a moment did he expect that Jesus would suffer; for when he found that his plan had been carried out and that Jesus would be crucified, he went and hanged himself, and then fell headlong, at the breaking of the rope.

"BETTER FOR THAT MAN IF HE HAD NOT BEEN BORN"

Jesus testified that his death would not be a victory on the part of his betrayer and his enemies, but in harmony with what had been written of him by the prophets. Nor are we to consider that Judas was simply fulfilling a prophecy irrespective of his own responsibility, his own wilfulness in the matter. Such a thought is negatived by our Lord's statement, "Woe unto the man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."

This statement implies to us that, from the Lord's standpoint, Judas had already experienced so large a measure of knowledge and opportunity for better things that his responsibility for his act was complete, and that there would be no hope for him at any time in the future. These words leave no question, we think, that Judas had already enjoyed his full share of the great atonement work through the intimate association with our Lord and the abundant opportunities he had of coming into a clear knowledge of the truth, and the corresponding responsibilities. From our standpoint Judas sinned against great light. Evidently his was the "sin unto death"—the "second death." Hence, aside from any future existence, we are to consider that his life was a useless, wasted one, and that its joys did not overbalance its sorrows and anguish when to the latter were added his despair and suicide. Judas' end was a sad one. Every suicide, by his act, confesses his wish that he had never been born.

While Judas lived prior to Pentecost, we are to remember that he was one of the twelve upon whom Jesus had specially conferred a measure of his spirit—such a measure as enabled him, with the others, to perform miracles of healing, casting out devils, etc., in the name of the Lord, as his representative, using his power. The position of Judas, therefore, was one of special closeness to the Lord and to his personal instruction, both by precept and example. We remember our Lord's words to his disciples, "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom; but to them that are without these things are spoken in parables."

All this privilege, opportunity, knowledge, contact, made Judas specially responsible. But his crime would have been inexcusable had it been against any ordinary person, and it was seriously intensified by being a crime against him who spake and acted as never man spake or acted before. From this standpoint our Lord's declaration that Judas was the "son of perdition" seems to have special import or weight, as implying that Judas had enjoyed a sufficiency of light and knowledge of righteousness to constitute a trial, and that his deliberate sin against such light and knowledge meant the second death.

But while hating such a character, loathing it, despising it, and seeking to go as far as possible in an opposite direc-

tion in our own characters, we are not to overlook the fact that there are amongst the Lord's professed disciples some who, in a less degree, commit a crime very similar to that of Judas; they sell their Lord, they betray him, while professing to love him! True, this cannot today be done in the same literal and personal manner, but the spirit of it may be seen occasionally, we regret to say; we find some who really believe in Jesus, some who have consecrated their lives to be his followers; some who have been engaged in the ministry of his truth, as Judas was there, but who are willing to sell the Lord for a mess of pottage—for good things of this present life—for a salary, for social position, for honor amongst men, for popularity and titles; who are willing to sell even their lips, as Judas did; so that while professing to honor and serve the Lord they are willing to join with those who misrepresent his character, his plan, his Word—willing to join with those who seek to assassinate the Lord.

Ah, how well it is that each one ask himself the question raised upon the night of the Supper, "Lord, is it I?" And let none be too ready to excuse himself; but let each search earnestly his own heart and life and conduct to see that he is not in any way sacrificing the truth and the life for any consideration whatever.

More than thirty years ago we were inclined to think that all must come to a full knowledge of all truth ere they could be liable to the second death; but we have come to the conclusion from the general tenor of the Scriptures that this is not the Lord's view and plan. On the contrary, deliberate and intelligent rejection of the first principles of the Gospel seems to imply an unfitness for further favors, on the ground that he that is unfaithful in that which is least would be unfaithful also in more.

Adam's knowledge of the divine plan was very slight; yet his disobedience brought the death penalty. The real grounds for sympathy and hope for the masses is the Apostle's statement that Satan has blinded their minds, misinterpreted the facts. (2 Cor. 4:4.) All such will by and by "see out of obscurity" when Satan shall be bound—during the Millennium.

We confess little hope for the scribes and Pharisees who, when they could find no other fault, ascribed our Lord's good works to the devil. As for Judas' tears—they were no better than those of Esau. (Heb. 12:17.) His remorse led him, not to a renewed or reformed life, but to self-destruction.—Heb. 6:6.

PETER, THE IMPULSIVE—JUDAS, THE DISLOYAL

While Judas betrayed our Lord, another disciple, an intimate friend and companion, denied him. Peter's case we remember well. A good man, of strong character, he realized not his danger, and hence was not prepared for the arts of Satan, by which he was placed in so trying a position that his boasted courage fled, his wonted strength of character vanished, and he denied his Lord even with profanity! What a lesson to us of human frailty! How we ourselves might be overtaken and ensnared by the wiles of the devil! How much each one needs to watch and pray lest he enter into temptation—lest he succumb to temptation! How much we need to remember the prayer the Lord gave us for an example: "Abandon us not in temptation, but deliver us from the evil one!"

That was a fateful time for Judas! If the adversary could so juggle, deceive and mislead the true-hearted Peter, because he was off his guard in watching and praying, what might he not expect he would be able to accomplish with Judas, whose heart was not right, who was selfish, self-seeking, ambitious, covetous! We do not wonder that Satan's victory over Judas was soon accomplished—that he fell quickly into the snare of the adversary, and lent his heart and energy to the betrayal of the Master, for thirty pieces of silver! His case was very different from that of Peter, the loyal, the true, for the moment bewildered, off guard and fearful. Although the danger was the same in either case, their hearts were in different conditions.

Is it not so with all the Lord's followers? Is not this the secret of the results of temptation as they surely come to each one of us? The Judas class of today and always are those who, when temptation comes, receive it, entertain it, enter into the spirit of the ambition or otherwise strong allurements, and are swallowed up by it. The Peter class has also been with us ever since; and today even the true-hearted, not sufficiently watching and praying and on guard against the adversary's allurements, are at times taken unawares, and for a moment dishonor, not only the Lord, but their own hearts and consciences also.

The difference between these two classes is in the heart condition; the Peter class do those things which they do not wish to do, and their difficulty lies evidently in the weaknesses

of their flesh, in the power of the adversary, and in their failure to lay hold upon the help which the Lord has promised, the succor in their time of need.

The Judas class, on the contrary, are those whose hearts are not loyal, but selfish, and who, therefore, enter into the adversary's schemes heartily, and are not, in their wrong course, going contrary to their own wills, but in harmony therewith. The difference in God's sight is seen in that, although both Peter and Judas were penitent, the one was accepted back to divine favor, but the other was not. The one who was merely entrapped, but who at heart was not disloyal, was restored and blessed; the other, though not without conscience, as shown by his later remorse, was without the genuine loyalty of heart which in the Lord's sight is indispensable, and the absence of which, considering Judas' intimate acquaintance with the Lord, was inexcusable.

The Lord's words to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:31, 32), give us the assurance that, because of this difference in the hearts of the two men, our Lord could properly be the Advocate of the one before the Father, but not the Advocate of the other. He could stand for and represent the one who at heart was loyal to him, however weak his flesh, however careless he might have been of the divine provision for his protection. He was still one of the Lord's sheep, and therefore subject to the Shepherd's care. He was still of the Lord's members, subject to the oversight and interest of the Head. He was still a member of the Lord's espoused virgin church, whom our Lord loved and for whom he gave his life and for whom, therefore, He might properly make supplication as the betrothed Bridegroom.

But in the case of Judas, his heart being alienated through selfishness, any appreciation and love which he possessed for the Lord at the beginning of his ministry had evidently died, swallowed up of selfishness and ambition; and into that heart, thus fully withdrawn from the Lord, we are told that Satan entered. By thus willingly withdrawing his heart and strength and consecration from the Lord, and lending the same by deliberate intention to self-seeking, he became a tool of the adversary. As our Master said, "It must needs be that offenses come (that he should be crucified), but woe unto that man by whom the offense cometh!"

THE HARVEST A TIME OF SEPARATION

Although we know in advance that none of the Lord's disciples, true at heart, will be plucked out of His hands by the adversary, nevertheless we fancy that we can sympathize to some extent with our Lord's feelings when he exhorted the disciples, "Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation."

True, Jesus knew who it was that should betray him, and was, therefore, neither surprised nor disconcerted because of Judas' course; and yet, undoubtedly, the thought that one who had eaten bread with Him should "lift up his heel against him" (John 13:18) must have had a saddening effect upon our dear Master, who could assuredly have pity for even his bitterest enemies as well as those who, Peter like, fail at first to withstand the adversary's assault, but who subsequently are recovered by divine mercy and aid.

Since the body of Christ is one, and since our Lord declares that whatsoever is done to one of the least of his members is done unto him, it follows that the Judas class and the Peter class, all down through the Gospel Age to the present moment, have been betraying or denying the Lord in proportion as they have betrayed or denied his members. We, therefore, should note the significance of his statement to Peter, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not!"

For all of the Peter class the Lord is the Head, the Representative, the Advocate before the Father. Without his aid, without his appearance for us and the application to us of the merit of his own sacrifice, none of us could stand; all would be judged unworthy, unfit to have part or lot in the great blessings which the Lord has invited us to share with Jesus. And as the Master prayed for such, and now intercedes for such, and makes good their unwilling imperfections, so should all who have his spirit feel kindly, generously, sympathetically, and speak helpfully to the Peter class. But as the Master had no such words of sympathy for Judas, the open and premeditated enemy and traitor, so likewise, whatever our sorrowful feelings for such may be, there is no room for any expression of sympathy or co-operation in their evil work, as for any of the Apostles to have co-operated with Judas would have meant a share in his evil deeds.

However much sympathy we may feel with Peter and others of similar character and experience, however much we may rejoice with him that the Lord prayed for him so that his carelessness in watching and praying for himself did not result

in his undoing and his loss of relationship to the Lord—nevertheless, we should strive not to be of the Peter class, but of the class represented by the Lord himself. Let us be of the watching, praying, faithful kind, who will not be overtaken by the adversary's temptations of the present time.

We are in the harvest of the Gospel age; the separation of the wheat from the tares is due; and, more than this, the separation of the chaff from the wheat is also due—a sifting process. While this figure may to some extent have fit the experiences of the church in the past, we are sure that it specially applies to the church in the "ends of the ages"—to those who were living in the end, or harvest, of the Jewish age, and to those who are now living in the end, or harvest, of the Gospel age. And our Lord is pleased to permit these siftings; they are necessary, apparently, that the Judas class may be entirely sifted out, and that the Peter class may be so thoroughly stirred up by the trials and difficulties and realization of their own weaknesses, and the knowledge that they would utterly fail without the Lord's sustaining grace, that these lessons may prove profitable to them, developing in them more of meekness, watchfulness, prayerfulness and trust in their all-powerful Head.

WHY JUDAS' CASE IS HOPELESS

Heretofore we have pointed out that during this present age (the Gospel age, or spirit dispensation), the world of mankind is not liable to the second death. (1) Because this age is for the church's trial and not for the world's judgment, or trial; (2) Because now the world has not that degree of enlightenment which would involve the full, extreme penalty of God's law, the second death; (3) Because the inspired Apostle declares that now Satan is exercising a blinding, deceiving influence upon all except true believers (2 Cor. 4:4; Rev. 20:3), and that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."—1 Cor. 2:14.

These conclusions from the Scriptures in general are so abundantly confirmed by the statements of Heb. 6:4-8 and 10:26-31, in which the Apostle warns the church that wilful sin, or apostasy, on the part of those who have enjoyed the privilege of consecrated believers—those who have tasted of the good Word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and who have been made partakers of the holy Spirit—as to leave hopeless the case of such. It will be found impossible to renew such, for there remaineth no longer any part for them in the sacrifice for sin. They have had and have misused their share in the great "ransom for all."

We have called attention to the fact that the world in general, even in civilized lands, has had no opportunity to sin after the example of wilful apostasy, described by the Apostle. And it is well to note that this sin unto death on the part of believers is not at all the same as the missteps and stumblings which may occur in the path of any through weakness of the flesh (Gal. 2:11-14), and which are among the sins which may be repented of, reformed from, and forgiven.—1 John 2:1; 5:16.

In view of the above, and of our further claim that the spirit dispensation began at Pentecost, after our Lord was glorified (John 7:39), some have wondered that we teach that Judas' case is a hopeless one, since his sin and death were before Pentecost. We are asked to explain this seeming inconsistency.

We answer, The period of the Lord's presence at the first advent—from his baptism to his ascension—differed from the period after Pentecost, throughout this age, in which believers walk wholly by faith and not by sight, even as the Millennial age will differ from the Gospel age.

In the Millennium knowledge and responsibility will no longer be confined to the spirit-begotten, for it is written, "The earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea [knowledge ocean-deep]"; "All shall know me [Jehovah] from the least unto the greatest."—Isa. 11:9; Jer. 31:34.

It will no longer be the rule that the consecrated must "walk by faith and not by sight," for the consecrated of that time, while no doubt still having room for the exercise of faith, will, to a very considerable degree, walk by sight. It will no longer be true that Satan, the god of this world, will blind and deceive all except believers, for Satan will be bound and can deceive the world no longer; and "this world" [age] shall then have given place to "the world [age] to come," "wherein dwelleth righteousness"; and "all the blind eyes shall be opened."—Heb. 2:5; 2 Pet. 3:13; Isa. 35:5.

When knowledge is thus general, the possibility of sinning wilfully against great light will be general. Whosoever will may then accept the divine favor and use the divine aids, and attain to perfection and life everlasting; and whosoever will

may intelligently reject God's favor in Christ, and die the second death—the everlasting death, the hopeless death.

Now let us return to the case of Judas, and consider the conditions which obtained at the time of his trial and failure, in the period of the Lord's presence in the Jewish harvest. The circumstances of that time differed from those of the present age and also those of the Millennial age in the conditions, and hence the responsibilities differed also. Our Lord was present and performed marvelous works, illustrative of "the powers of the world [age] to come." The truth was presented to the people in such a manner that the Lord declared that its rejection would bring "stripes" and "woes" upon those who, after hearing, loved darkness rather than light. He declared that some of those, because of their rejection of the truth, would be counted worthy of "many stripes"; and that it would be, therefore, more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for those. Our Lord's declaration was, "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did they had not had sin."—John 15:22, 24.

And if the people had such responsibility because of what they heard and saw, how much greater was the responsibility of the twelve chosen Apostles! They had professed much, saying, "We have left all to follow thee." They were always with him; and not only beheld many of his mighty works, of which the multitudes in various places saw but few, but more; he communicated to them, severally, a measure of his spirit and power, and sent them out to proclaim him and his kingdom and to work miracles—to heal the sick and cast out devils in his name.

The Apostles received also a special insight into the divine plan, an enlightenment not granted to the people, the equivalent to much that is now granted to the spirit-begotten ones of this age. The Lord addressed the multitudes in parables and dark sayings, but these he interpreted to the Apostles, saying, "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to them that are without [outside of the twelve and other special disciples], all these things are done in parables." Again he said to them, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear; for verily I say unto you that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."—Matt. 13:11-17; Mark 4:11.

If, then, the people, who saw a few of our Lord's mighty works and heard a few of his words of life, under parabolic cover, were declared "worthy of stripes" for not receiving the light, what shall we say of the responsibility of the twelve who not only saw much more, but by his power in them performed his miracles; who not only heard the parabolic words of life, but who had them expounded to them by the great Teacher? (Matt. 13:36-43; Mark 4:10-20) And what punishment less than death—hopeless extinction—shall we suppose was merited by one of these who, after all this, according to his own confession, "betrayed innocent blood"?

We judge that if Pilate and Herod and the Roman soldiers had some responsibility for Christ's death, the multitude who clamored, "Crucify him! His blood be upon us and on our children!" had much more responsibility; that the better educated, envious Pharisees and Priests who incited the illiterate, common people, had yet a greater responsibility (Matt. 23:15-33), and that Judas, his betrayer, was the chief, the real crucifier, because of his knowledge and wilfulness.

Upon him alone, of all who had to do with his death, our Lord placed the full responsibility, the full guilt, when he said: "The Son of Man goeth [to death] as it is written of him [prophetically], but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It had been good for that man if he had not been born!" (Matt. 26:24) Should Judas be granted eternal life, under any circumstances or after any experience, his birth could not be considered a disadvantage to himself. See also Psa. 109:6-8; John 6:70, 71; 17:12.

So, likewise, those who (with good knowledge of God's grace in Christ) sin wilfully and count the precious blood of the Covenant wherewith they were sanctified [set apart], a

common thing, "crucify Christ afresh and put him to an open shame." And, like Judas, they often accompany this denial of his ransom-sacrifice with the words, "Hail, Master!" and a deceitful kiss. All such should be an abhorrence to every one who possesses to any degree the true, noble, Christ-like spirit.

"BE NOT WISE IN YOUR OWN CONCEITS!"

Some of the dear friends feel very loath to "give poor Judas up," and some seem to feel that their sympathy for him is an evidence that they have "more love than others." Those who come to Christ are not selected because they are the least blemished amongst men; they are oftener the more blemished; the less blemished often feel a self-complacency and satisfaction which hinders them from coming to God as repentant sinners and from realizing that they can be justified only through the imputed merit of Christ. But those who come to Christ and hear him, soon learn how imperfect are their depraved conceptions, and they seek and obtain his mind, that it may be theirs thenceforth, as instead of their own judgments. "We have the mind of Christ," says the Apostle. It is our "new mind"; we are "transformed by the renewing of our minds," so as to be able to "prove [know] what is the good, acceptable and perfect will of God."—Rom. 12:2.

Those whose hearts go out so strongly to Judas seem to indicate by their questions that, however much they have submitted their judgment to God's will on some questions, they have not submitted them on this point. The reason seems to be that they deceive themselves into thinking that their sympathy with Judas is the true love which the Scriptures everywhere enjoin as the essence of Christian character. But they are deceiving themselves. To love an evil thing is on a par with hating a good thing. Both are wrong; both are sinful; both are evidence that the depraved mind is not renewed, remodeled, transformed into the mind of Christ.

The mind of the Lord, inculcated by his Word, teaches that we are to love the beautiful, pure, true, noble; we are to love (in the sense of sympathizing with) the weak, the penitent and oppressed, who are seeking for the paths of righteousness and truth; but we are to "hate iniquity" and "every false way," and all the meanness and sin which is wilful, against light and of the devil.

Cease to pride yourself upon love for one of the most detestable characters known to the pages of history, of whom our Lord, who so loved (sympathized with) the world that he laid down his life for it, said, "It had been better for that man if he had never been born." Adopt God's standpoint. As the Apostles say, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked;" "He that doeth righteousness is righteous [and approved of God], but he that practices sin [knowingly, wilfully] is of the devil."—Gal. 6:7; 1 John 3:6, 7.

For our part, we have no thought of ever becoming more loving than the Lord; we accept his definitions and seek to be conformed mentally to his standard—the image of God's dear Son. We want to love just as he loves and just what he loves, and we want to hate what he hates. Of him it is written, "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore, God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." (Heb. 1:9; Psa. 45:7) "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? . . . I hate them with a perfect hatred."—Psa. 139:21, 22.

We are glad that neither Satan nor Judas nor any other creature will ever be tormented to all eternity. We are glad that a full, fair opportunity for coming to a knowledge of the Lord and of the way of righteousness will be granted to every member of Adam's race; and we are glad that, on the contrary, all who rejoice not in the truth, but rejoice in iniquity, will be utterly and everlastingly destroyed in the second death. We abominate Satan, who, for over six thousand years, has wrought unrighteousness and gloated over the evil and pain and sorrow which he has wrought, and who with clear knowledge of the redemptive work has for eighteen centuries opposed the kingdom and the great salvation. The person who could believe in Satan's conversion after all this battling against the light and the truth has a perverse mind, very sadly blinded by the "god of this world"—a mind thoroughly out of harmony with the Word.

"YE HAVE NEED OF PATIENCE"

"Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."—Jas. 1:4.

There are two quite distinct words in the Greek which, in our English Scriptures, are translated "patience." One of these is a word that in a general way corresponds to the common thought of patience as we speak of it in connection with the everyday affairs of life, meaning merely forbearance, or long-suffering. Indeed the Greek word is generally trans-

lated long-suffering. It is the other word with which we are more particularly interested in the treatment of our text, and which is the one most frequently translated patience by the New Testament writers.

This word has a much deeper and fuller significance than attaches to our English word patience. It signifies, rather,

constancy, the thought being an endurance of evil in a cheerful, hopeful, willing, patient manner. It represents, therefore, an element of character, and not merely a temporary condition or restraint of feeling or action. It signifies that development of heart and character which manifests itself in an endurance of wrong or affliction with contentment, without rebellion of will, with full acquiescence in the divine wisdom and love, which, while permitting present evils, has promised to overthrow them in God's due time.

This grace of patience smooths the way for every other Christian grace, because all must be acquired under the process of patient and continuous self-discipline. Not a step of progress can be gained without this grace of patience; and not one of the graces more beautifully adorns the Christian character, or wins the approval of the world's conscience, or glorifies the God of all grace whose Truth inspires it. It is enduring meekness, striving to stem the tide of human weakness, and endeavoring with painstaking care to attain to the divine likeness. It is slow to wrath and plenteous in mercy; it is quick to perceive the paths of righteousness, and prompt to walk in them; it is mindful of its own imperfections and sympathetic with the imperfections and shortcomings of others.

The importance of endurance in the Christian's character is fully borne out by the Apostle Paul's use of the word; for on more than one occasion he places patience above and beyond love, which we have seen is the "mark" of character for which we are to run—the "mark for the prize." For instance, in writing to Titus (2:2), enumerating the characteristics of the advanced Christian, the Apostle uses the following order: "Vigilant, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity [love], in patience." Though we have all the other qualities, this final test of patient, cheerful endurance must be passed before we can be accepted of the Lord as members of the very elect.

Again, in writing to Timothy (2 Tim. 3:10) respecting himself, the Apostle puts this quality of patient endurance in the place beyond love, saying, "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, patient endurance."

"THE LORD YOUR GOD DOTH PROVE YOU"

One might ask, if "Love is the fulfilling of the law" and "the mark for the prize of our high calling," how can patience rank higher than love? The answer is that patient endurance does not come in merely at the close of our race, but it is a requisite all the way along the race-course. We need this cheerful endurance of the earliest trials in the Christian way; and as we speed along in our race for the "mark," the spirit of cheerful endurance should be growing stronger and stronger at every step of the journey. Some might be faithful for a few days or a few months or a few years, yet be unworthy of the great kingdom blessing of Christ.

In the parable of the sower, our Lord gave an illustration of this fact, saying that some seed fell on stony ground and sprang up; it grew; but finally, when the burning heat of persecution came, the tender plants withered away. In choosing the members of the kingdom class the Lord is looking for a depth of soil, a depth of character, a depth of heart that will be patient to endure. Those who lack this one quality will not be fit for the kingdom. Patience is necessary as an element of character on any plane of being; but with the Christian it is specially important to have it developed from the beginning of the race. We need it with us at the first quarter mark, and at the second quarter mark, and at the third quarter mark, and still with us at the fourth quarter mark, the mark for the prize—perfect love.

And when we have reached this mark of the race where we love, not only our friends, but our enemies, it is required of us that we stand up to the mark faithfully, cheerfully, patiently enduring the tests which the Lord will even then see fit to have come upon us. God subjects his people to testing, long testing, sometimes for months and years. As it is said, "The Lord your God proveth you."—Deut. 13:3.

Hence it is that the Apostle Paul exhorts us, "Having done all, stand"—endure. Having reached the "mark," "Let patient endurance have her perfect work," or "perfect her work." Let patient endurance demonstrate, not only that you have the character, the qualifications of love, demanded in the race for the prize, but also that you have love as an element of character, deep-rooted, immutable, so that you can endure opposition cheerfully.

St. Paul tells us that we have need of this patient endurance that, after having done the will of God [after having brought our own will into complete subjection to the divine will], we might receive the promise. (Heb. 10:36) The thought in the Apostle's mind seems to be that there is a certain work for us all to do in ourselves—"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." (Phil. 2:12, 13) It is God who is

working in us to will and to do—to co-operate in this work. Let us make sure that rebellion of any kind in our heart be thoroughly killed, mortified; and that we bring the will into perfect submission to the divine will, so that we may have no other will than his. Even then, after we have overcome to this extent, we have need of patience. The Lord will not accept us merely because we are consecrated. He requires that the consecration shall be proven. To begin with, he accepts the consecration; then he tests us to demonstrate to what extent we really love him.

PATIENCE NECESSARY TO FRUIT-BEARING

Patience endurance is also mentioned in the Scriptures as being the Lord's Word, or teaching. Our Lord says, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience I will also keep thee." (Rev. 3:10) Twice in the Gospels also we note that our Lord brought to the notice of the disciples the importance of the quality of patient endurance. Once was in the parable of the sower above referred to. (Luke 8:11-15) He said, "That [sown] on the good ground are they which in an honest and good heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience [with cheerful endurance, constancy]." The thought here is that in order to be of the fruit-bearing class, which the Lord will approve and accept in his kingdom, it is necessary to do more than receive the Word of his testimony, even though we receive it with joy; for that class in the parable is represented by the stony ground, which at first gave evidence of great fruitfulness and vigor, but withered under the sun of persecution, because of lack of depth of soil. That stony, shallow ground represents, the Lord explained, a class of bearers who rejoice greatly in the truth, but do not endure; they are such as cannot withstand persecution or opposition, but wither under it, become discouraged. Such cannot be of the kingdom class, all of whom must be overcomers.

In this parable our Lord shows us that patient endurance, constancy, is the final test, following after the readiness of preparation to receive the seed; following after the seed has been received and has sprouted; following after love and hope and joy and faith have caused it to spring forth and to give promise of fruitage. Patient endurance, then, is necessary in order that the grain may be developed and thoroughly ripened and made fit for the garner. How important patient endurance, cheerful endurance, seems to be, in the light of the Lord's Word! for we cannot suppose that he who judges the thoughts and intents of the heart would be pleased with his children, even if he saw them enduring much for his sake, if they endured in an impatient or unhappy frame of mind. They would not in that event be copies of God's dear Son, whose sentiment is expressed in the words, "I delight to do thy will, O God!"

Our Lord at another time was telling his disciples that as the result of being his followers they must expect opposition, trials, tribulations. Perhaps it may assist some to realize the strength of the meaning of the word tribulation when they know its origin. It is derived from the Latin word "tribulum," the name of a roller, or threshing-machine used in olden times for cleaning wheat, removing from it the outer husk, or chaff. How appropriate the term when applied to the Lord's consecrated people, who in the Scriptures are symbolized by wheat! Our new natures are the kernel, the real grain; yet this treasure, or valuable part, is covered with the husk of earthly conditions. In order that the wheat may be made properly ready for the "garner" and for usefulness, it is necessary that each grain shall pass through the tribulation necessary to remove those qualities which, until separated, render us unfit for the future service to which we are called of the Lord.

In proportion as we are able to realize our own imperfections, and the perfect will of God concerning us, we shall be enabled to bear patiently, and even with a certain kind of rejoicing, all the tribulations which the Master may see best to let come upon us. Our Lord explained to his disciples that so long as they lived in this present age, when sin abounds, and when Satan is the prince of this world, they must expect tribulation from various quarters; but he assured them that they would, nevertheless, be fully and completely under divine care and protection, even though the persecutions would be permitted to reach and to affect them. Then follow the words, "In your patience [patient endurance, cheerful, hopeful constancy] possess ye your souls."—Luke 21:19.

"HE THAT OVERCOMETH SHALL INHERIT ALL THINGS"

One object of the test of patient endurance is that we may be "strong in the Lord," that we may have the character-likeness of the Lord Jesus—not merely the firmness, but also the gentleness. All this must be developed before we can receive the things promised, the things which God has in reservation for those that love him. (1 Cor 2:9, 10) These

things are spiritual and might be apprehended by our minds, but could not be comprehended. The promise that we are to be like our Lord includes not only the spiritual and heavenly conditions, to which we shall attain in the first resurrection, but also the blessing of sharing in the uplifting of the world. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:29) But to "be Christ's" means, not only that we shall accept him, join him and his standards, but also that we shall be good soldiers. Those who would not be good soldiers would not be worthy of being members of the body of Christ, for such could not be conquerors and "more than conquerors" through Jesus Christ our Lord.—Rom. 8:37.

We already have the "promise," but it has not yet been received in the sense of being fulfilled. The promise is a conditional one. "He that doeth these things shall live by them." (Lev. 18:5; Rom. 10:5) So in our Lord's arrangement, the condition of the promise is that we shall abide in his love, his favor. Whoever accepts of Christ's death and trusts in him and seeks to follow the divine commandments, walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, will receive the promise, for the promise is made to "overcomers." All the promises of the Gospel age are made to the "overcomers." Such shall sit upon the throne. Such shall become the bride of Christ. Such shall be joint-heirs with the Redeemer and participate in all his great work as the great Messiah, to bless Israel and through Israel the world of mankind.

By faith the church now begins to enjoy this conditional promise, which depends upon their faithfulness to the end—their patient endurance. Such loyal ones have the earnest of the promise and shall be joint-heirs in the kingdom. All others will be cut off from that membership. "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth [cleanseth, pruneth] it, that it

may bring forth more fruit." (John 15:2) We are on trial; and the trial is to prove our loyalty. If this trial time, or probation, is satisfactory, the membership is made permanent. Those who fail to live up to the conditions, are not counted worthy to be members of the body of Christ and joint-heirs in the kingdom.

LET US ABIDE IN HIS LOVE

Who can consider the importance of becoming copies of our blessed Lord and Head without feeling that to attain to this character-likeness will be a life-work! It cannot be accomplished in a day or in a year; but the whole life must be devoted to it; and day by day, if we are faithful, we should realize a measure of growth in grace and of development in Christian character. It is not enough that we know the Truth, or that we be content to hold it in unrighteousness. We must see to it that the truth is having its legitimate and designed effect upon the character. And if the truth is thus received into good and honest hearts, we shall have the assurance of the Apostle Peter that "We shall never fall," but that in due time we shall be received into the kingdom.

Hence we see the necessity of ever keeping the instructions and precepts of the Lord fresh in our minds, and of drinking deep into their inspiring spirit, although we are already established in the faith. To be established in the faith is one thing; to be established in Christian character and in all the graces of the Spirit is quite another.

Beloved, "Let us run with patience [cheerful constancy, patient endurance] the race set before us" in the Gospel. (Heb. 12:1) As already observed, the race must be run with this constancy if we would reach the "mark;" and after reaching the mark we can maintain our position only by the grace of constancy, patient endurance, that having done all, we may stand!

A GREAT REFORMER

Ezra 8:15-36.—NOVEMBER 19.

"The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him."

Ezra was a learned Jew who headed a great reformation movement. As God's agent he was largely responsible for the maintenance of the Jewish faith and nation. His family had been amongst the many carried captive by Nebuchadnezzar. Like many others that became rooted in the new soil of Babylonia, they were not among the fifty-three thousand to return to Jerusalem when King Cyrus gave the opportunity. Ezra, imbued with a spirit of religious fervor based upon a faith in God and his Word and promises to Israel, headed another company bound for Jerusalem—seventy-eight years after the return of the exiles.

The Jews evidently were prosperous in Babylon, and their exile for a time at least led them to earnest study of the Law and the Prophets. In fact, Judah, probably under Ezra as one of its chief representatives, seems to have prospered more in Babylon than in Jerusalem—not as a whole, but a certain pious few. These were vexed as they from time to time heard of the poverty of their brethren in Jerusalem, and that matters religious were not prosperous there, and that the rebuilding of the temple which represented divine presence with the nation was but poorly served.

Deeply in earnest for a revival of the true religion, Ezra laid the matter before representatives in Babylon and before the Persian king, with favorable results. Large donations were made for the repairs of the temple and the institution of its worship upon a proper basis, and in general to help the interests of the Jewish cause in Jerusalem. The donations of gold and silver totaled a little more than two million dollars, and the total number of persons who volunteered to be the company numbered about seventeen hundred. The donations were a public trust, and Ezra wisely divided the treasure between twelve principal men of his party, taking receipts from each.

Before the journey proper was begun, a fast was proclaimed and the Almighty God was entreated to grant his blessing upon the undertaking and to direct the course of the travelers. They were not without cause for fear for themselves, for it must have been generally known that they carried a large amount of treasure with them, and the country through which they must pass was infested with robbers who might pounce upon them at any time to carry off their treasure, which consisted of large supplies of wheat, wine and oil besides the gold and silver.

"IN ALL THY WAYS ACKNOWLEDGE HIM"

The beginning of the journey with fasting and prayer gives us an insight into Ezra's power and efficiency. "God was with him"—he walked with God, he sought to know and to do the divine will. Surely it is in vain that any would attempt to

serve the Lord and yet neglect to humble themselves before him and to make request for his blessing and guidance. We submit that fasting and prayer and earnest desire to know and to do the Lord's will are far more efficacious for good than are large donations of money. Perhaps there has been too great a tendency on the part of many to leave out the matter of religious work at home and abroad save along financial lines, forgetful in part at least that they labor in vain unless the Lord grant his blessing.

The fact that notwithstanding our wonderful financial efforts during the past century there are today twice as many heathen as there were a century ago, should take us to the Lord in prayer to assure ourselves regarding the meaning of the prayer he taught us—"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." Seeing the futility of our efforts to bring about heavenly conditions on earth ought to lead all of God's earnest children to search his Word and to see whether or not it teaches that the second coming of Messiah is to unite to himself his "elect" church as his bride and then to establish the kingdom of righteousness which, backed by divine power, will bind Satan, overthrow sin and death, and uplift mankind and make of earth a paradise.

THE WAY OF TRANSGRESSORS

Ezra and his party reached Jerusalem in safety after a journey of exactly four months. As great a distance can be covered in less than four days with our modern conveniences, which surely seem to be precursors of the glorious Messianic Epoch, the wonderful prosperity of which has so long been foretold.

Ezra has been censured as narrow and cruel because of the reforms at Jerusalem of which he became the leader and adviser. The Jews who first returned from Babylon were full of zeal for the divine law, and refused to intermarry or to have social dealings with their heathen neighbors; but as their prosperity lagged their zeal slackened. Carelessness and irreligion came in. Hence Ezra soon found that many Jews were intermarrying with their neighbors, and that a condition of things prevailed which, if continued, would mean the corruption of the nation to which God had given the promise of national continuity, and the promise that ultimately he would use them as a nation for the sending out of the light and truth which he has promised shall yet bless all the families of the earth.

A general assembly or convocation of Israelites was called and held to consider this matter of mixed marriages and the requirements of the law, and any failing to be represented were notified that they would be in danger of being counted out of the congregation as aliens. It was a time of weeping

and sorrow and distress amongst the people as they realized that conformity to the divine law would mean the breaking of family ties. The divine law had been broken and now the penalty was to be felt. The way of the transgressors was hard.

This requirement of the law can be understood only by those who realize that Israel was under a special covenant with God by the compact at Mt. Sinai, and that that nation was subject to every feature of that law. No such law is or has ever been put upon others nations—nor upon Christians, who are not under the law but under grace. We must not, however, object to the Jew's being faithful to his covenant, for that Law Covenant is as binding upon him to-

day as it ever was, and it will remain binding until it shall be superseded by the New Law Covenant referred to in Jeremiah 31:31. The great Messiah, Head and body, will be the Mediator of that New Covenant, and its sealing will be effected by the blood of "the better sacrifices" of this Gospel age.

To the Christian, the next thing corresponding to this Law is the Apostolic injunction that the consecrated followers of Christ should not inter-marry with the worldly but "only in the Lord." (2 Cor. 6:14) There is surely divine wisdom in this injunction, yet it is not a law, and Christians who have married unconsecrated persons are not to leave them but to fulfil their marriage covenants.

CO-LABORERS WITH GOD

DECEMBER 3.—Nehemiah 4.

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith; quit you like men; be strong."—1 Cor. 16:13.

Nehemiah's prayer for Jerusalem and the holy interests centered there continued for months before the answer suddenly came. The king, whom he served as confidential secretary, prepared a banquet, the queen being present as well as Nehemiah and others. Everybody was smiling and joyous, attired in their silks and jewels, but the king noticed that his trusted secretary had a sadness which showed through his smiles. Finding that he was not ill he said that it must be a trouble of heart—and inquired as to what it was. It was a dangerous moment for Nehemiah, for the kings of that time were quite autocratic and capricious. The sadness might have been construed to mean a loss of interest in the king and his affairs, or a hundred things disapproved for such an occasion of rejoicing.

Nehemiah's prayer instantly went up to God for wisdom to know how to answer, for he did not receive the wisdom at once, although he had prayed beforehand. He knew that the Almighty could hear his desires of heart, uttered or unexpressed. He received the needed wisdom for a wise and successful reply, which did not offend the king, but enlisted his interest. He told the king that his sadness of heart was because the home of his fathers was ruined. The result was that the king appointed him special governor of Judea with full authority to attend to the work and to call upon the governors of surrounding provinces for aid if necessary.

WISDOM SHOWN BY METHODS

That Nehemiah was a wise man and no mere dreamer was evidenced in the practical methods he employed. A man of wealth, he probably financed his own expedition, aside from the retinue of soldiers, etc., furnished by the king. A four-months' journey brought them to Jerusalem. The object of his coming was kept secret. He was merely a visitor for a few days, seeing and hearing. Then by night he made an inspection of the old city walls, particularly the broken parts and the heaps of ruins from which they might be rebuilt. He saw the feasibility of the scheme and outlined in his mind the method. Then he called for the elders and prominent representatives of the people, explained to them his object in coming, showed them his authority from the king and suggested a method for the beginning of the repair work immediately.

He perceived the necessity for great caution, as enemies were on every hand as anxious to hinder them as he was anxious for success. The Samaritans were jealous. They had a rival worship of Jehovah, and Israel's success would seem to imply that God's favor was to the Jews rather than toward the Samaritans. Besides, they all hoped to profit by the poverty and helplessness of the Jews—thinking it not wrong to pillage them as opportunity offered. Nehemiah's plan was approved. The leading men in each quarter of the city joined in the work with the laborers, and each built the wall most nearly in front of his own home quarters. This was a wise plan, for each would be specially interested in having the wall strong in his own neighborhood, and a certain degree of proper pride would attach to the work as a

prominent monument of the builder's skill—itself a credit or discredit.

Nehemiah joined in the work with the others, his accompanying servants participating also. His spirit of zeal was an inspiration to the discouraged people, who took heart, and hope began to thrive. Then came discouragement and opposition from the enemies. An attack was even planned, but learning of this, Nehemiah so directed the work that the heads of the families kept an armed watch while the others labored, carrying swords also for self-defense.

When their enemies found that they were prepared, the proposed attack was abandoned and discouragements were resorted to. The effort was laughed at, ridiculed as impossible, and worthless anyhow. Those unused to manual toil soon grew sore and weary and discouraged. The higher the walls grew, the more difficult it was to place the stones and the mortar, and the more stones built into the wall, the fewer suitable ones remained amongst the rubbish. It was a time of testing of faith and loyalty to God. Trials and difficulties are permitted to come to all of God's people for just such testings. The overcomers are developed through various experiences for the divine service.

"STAND FAST IN THE FAITH"

It may be asked why Nehemiah's faithfulness and courage were tested, and what reward was his. We reply that a reward of character-development follows every good endeavor. The reward of those who lived faithfully in Nehemiah's time differs essentially from the reward of the faithful amongst the followers of Jesus. The latter are promised a share with the Master in his glorious Messianic kingdom. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom;" "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne."—Luke 12:32; Rev. 3:21.

But Nehemiah could have no share in these kingdom promises because he lived before the call to the kingdom—before Pentecost. He and others of his time who displayed faithfulness and loyalty are not personally mentioned by St. Paul in Hebrews II, but they are undoubtedly included in the list. Of them the Apostle declared, "They had this testimony, that they pleased God." St. Paul declares that they will receive their reward—a share in the earthly phase of the kingdom, after the church shall first have her share with the Redeemer in the heavenly phase of the kingdom, for "they, without us, shall not be made perfect, God having some better thing for us."

St. Paul's words in our text teach the same great lesson of the necessity for character-development on the part of all who hope to be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ their Lord. They must watch as well as pray, they must "stand fast in the faith" against the various oppositions of the world, the flesh and the adversary. They must acquit themselves like men, "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." They must be strongly developed, by trials, difficulties and obstacles overcome in the name of the Lord and with His assistance.

THE VALUE OF PRAYER

NOVEMBER 26.—Nehemiah 1.

"The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."—James 5:16.

Thirteen years after Ezra's company returned to Jerusalem, Nehemiah went thither with an escort and full authority from the king of Persia to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and to restore its gates. It would appear that Ezra's reformation, while very helpful to the people, brought against them the violent opposition of their neighbors, as was to have been expected. The Jews, now considerable in

numbers, were despised by their neighbors who wished to drive them out of the land. The wall of the city was poor and did not withstand the attack.

Josephus says that Nehemiah, wealthy and favored of the king of Persia, resided in the king's palace at Shushan. He was a pious man and deeply interested in the land of his fathers. While walking one day he overheard two men talk-

ing in the Hebrew tongue, and accosted them. They had been to Jerusalem and had returned. One of them proved to be his own relative. He gladly inquired respecting the holy land, the holy city, God's temple, and concerning the Jews who had returned from Babylon. The sad story of their trials and the desolation of the city and its exposure to enemies touched his heart and led him to prayer. That prayer is the subject of this lesson.

ANSWERING OUR OWN PRAYERS

Undoubtedly, the recorded prayer of Nehemiah is merely an epitomized statement, for we read that he made the matter a subject of earnest prayer for four months before he reached the point of action where God used him in the fulfilment of his own petition. This reminds us of how our Lord instructed his disciples, saying, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth more laborers into his harvest." While the disciples thus prayed it would imply that they would be laboring in accordance with their prayers, that they would be doing all in their own power to forward the harvest work as well as to interest other laborers in the same. Thus it must always be that earnest effort will accompany prayer. Prayers not accompanied by efforts brand themselves as insincere. The prayer which is not of faith is sin—unscriptural, sacrilegious.

THE SOUL'S SINCERE DESIRE

The poet has well defined prayer as being "The soul's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed." Another has well declared that it "is the Christian's vital breath"—that is to say, Christian character cannot be maintained without prayer any more than a human life could be maintained without breathing. Who has not noticed that all the great Bible characters used of the Almighty were accustomed to go to him regularly in prayer and to seek for guidance from him in respect to every matter. Even the great Redeemer, holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners, needed to pray to the Father—needed his fellowship and communion—needed to be in touch with the Infinite One. Several of his prayers are recorded, and we are told that he spent the entire night in prayer on more than one occasion.

Some may ask, Would the Almighty change his plans in answer to our petitions? Assuredly he would not. Indeed, on the contrary, we are cautioned in the Scriptures to ask only according to his will. We are warned that if we ask amiss our petitions will not be answered. Hence the necessity for studying God's Word and being enlightened thereby respecting the divine program that we may ask in harmony with every feature of it and receive strength and encouragement through the answer to our petitions.

The Redeemer gave us the keynote to this, saying, "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye may ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." (John 15:7) Alas! how few seem to note the two limitations of this promise:

(1) The one asking must be in Christ—abiding in him. This means that the petitioner has turned from sin, has accepted Christ and the terms of discipleship. It implies that he has made a full consecration of his life to the Lord and

become a new creature in Christ Jesus. Such, abiding in Christ, may pray to the Father.

(2) After having come into membership and fellowship with the Head, the Messiah, these must ask in harmony with God's Word and promises; in order to know what things to ask for they must search the Scriptures, which are sufficient, "that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished." There are many things for which we may pray, the answer to which would not involve any change in the divine plans. We are not to understand that all the little incidents of life are fore-ordained and predestinated. So far as the world is concerned, many of its affairs are purely of chance under the permission of natural laws with which God does not generally interfere. It is in the affairs of his consecrated people that God assures us he takes a special interest. These are so supervised by his providence that he guarantees his children that all things shall work together for good to them.

WHAT TO PRAY FOR

God is pleased to make use of the little talents possessed by his consecrated people, and their usefulness as ambassadors for God and for Christ, in their own families and own cities, will avail in proportion to and depend very much upon the earnestness of their prayers and endeavors. Those who pray for opportunities to serve the Lord and His cause and who watch for the fulfilment of their prayers in the open doors of opportunity will surely have them. "He that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

The baptized in Christ may pray for earthly necessities, as in the Lord's prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread;" but we are not to pray for more than the bread and water which the Lord has authorized His people to pray for. The true Christian, instead of thinking about what he shall eat, what he shall drink, and wherewithal he shall be clothed—instead of making earthly things the subject of his prayers, will be thinking of and praying about his higher, his heavenly interests. More particularly he will be concerned respecting his spiritual food, spiritual clothing, spiritual growth in grace and knowledge and love, and for these particularly he will pray and strive.

Our Lord declares, "After all these things (food and clothing) do the Gentiles seek; but seek ye first (chiefly) the kingdom of God and His righteousness." God's people are consequently to attain a joint-heirship in Messiah's great kingdom according to the divine invitation that we should be "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord." We are to seek possessions in that kingdom with our Lord in his throne, by seeking to develop characters which will have divine approval and make us fit for that high exaltation. Our Lord speaks of these as seeking the righteousness of the kingdom—that kingdom which will be established amongst mankind for the very purpose of enforcing righteousness, and whoever will be a joint-heir with Christ must love righteousness and hate iniquity, and must develop this character before he dies in order to hope for a share in this kingdom and its glory, honor and immortality. For this he will be seeking, striving, praying—above all else.

"THE ROYAL DIADEM"

"Thou shalt be called by a new name; . . . thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God."—Isa. 62:2, 3.

In one place the Prophet Jeremiah declares, "This is the name whereby he shall be called, Jehovah our Righteousness." In another place he says, "She shall be called, Jehovah our Righteousness [or, the Righteousness of Jehovah]." And so the Apostle declares, "That we might be made the righteousness of God through him."—Jer. 23:6; 33:16; 2 Cor. 5:21.

These statements refer to Zion. The typical Zion is the Jewish nation; and the antitypical Zion is the glorified Christ. Very properly, then, we may understand that the blessings which belong to the church on the spirit plane will, naturally, on the earthly plane, belong to the ancient worthies, who will be in divine favor forever.

The two expressions, "a crown of glory" and "a royal diadem," express practically the same thought, the repetition making the sentiment doubly impressive. A diadem is a crown. Crowns are generally used to add dignity and honor to the individuals wearing them; but the Scriptural expression, "A crown of glory, . . . a royal diadem in the hand of thy God," does not include the thought of a diadem that is to be worn, as giving glory to God; but rather as representing a beautiful ornament in the divine hand, as you take something in your hand to look at the beauty and workmanship.

The jewels that will make this diadem beautiful, when

properly tested by the great Master-Workman, are the church. The Lord will come to make up his jewels, to secure his jewels. "God hath set the members in the body." The text refers to the final setting in the future, in the kingdom condition. As star differeth from star in glory, so shall these jewels differ in setting and position. This also applies to the present time. The present arrangement is subject to change in proportion as the individual will or will not be fully submissive to the Lord's will. There has been a selection of a jewel class; and the experiences of this class during the Gospel age have been the polishing processes; and there will be a setting in the end of this age, when the church is completed. This began when the first resurrection began.

The first setting in this royal diadem was, undoubtedly, **our Lord Jesus himself.** He is the first in this great diadem which Jehovah has in his hand. Next will come the members of the body, as they shall be perfected in the first resurrection—the apostles and sleeping saints, each as he is granted his change, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." Each jewel will be placed in that particular setting for which Jehovah has seen that it is prepared.

When the mother of James and John went with them to Jesus and requested that her sons might sit, the one on his right hand and the other on his left hand, he said that these places would be given to those for whom they are intended

by the Father. Those positions will not be given through favor, but through justice. Any place will be glorious in this company. Only the Lord is competent to say who shall sit on the right hand and on the left. We shall be pleased to have His will done; and beyond the veil we shall have such a large sense of justice that we shall be glad to have the matter as the Father has arranged.

The Lord is first; we think probably St. Paul is next. And we think St. Peter and St. John have prominent places. We shall all be perfectly content and pleased with whatever the Father will decide. We shall be glad of any place. And any one who would not be of that spirit, of that disposition, will thereby indicate that he is not of that class which the Lord would have there. Any who will be of that class will be glad to accept the Father's decree and to prefer it to anything they could have devised.

So the church in the hand of God is the church in the hand of divine power. That power will use the church and she will be a crown of glory and a thing of beauty, gloriously reflecting to all eternity the workmanship of our God. How glorious it will be! How beautiful! The Lord Jehovah will have the setting of these precious jewels, one reflecting upon another in that crown of glory and diadem of beauty, with the Lord Jesus in the chief place, for the Father will not give to the church any glory that He would not give to the Lord himself. The church is to be displayed before men as "a thing of beauty and a joy forever"—God's handiwork.

He is selecting the jewels now, and is providentially dealing with them. When the process of polishing shall have been completed, he will use them in a very special sense for a thousand years. As a star blazes in glory, so the Lord will make use of each one of the church. But the use of the church which the Lord will make at that time will be only a part of the work which he intends to accomplish. The Apostle says, "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."—Eph. 2:7.

All who are in Christ, all who are in the "elect" body of Christ—to these God will show His exceeding grace. His grace and favor will be showered upon the church. And the world will eventually see in the church the culmination of all of God's creative work. The glory of the church will be manifested in the sight of angels and of men. And so the Lord indicates the blessings that are to be ours if we are faithful in making our "calling and election sure."

Let us never forget that we are a "peculiar people," separate from the great body of nominal Christians, as well as from the world, having higher hopes, aims and ambitions and favored with a clearer insight into the deep things of God, having been called out of our former darkness into his marvelous light. And if thus separate from the world and from Christians who partake largely of the worldly spirit, what wonder if we find them all out of harmony with us, and either ignoring or opposing us in the performance of the Master's will.

INTERESTING QUESTIONS

NO MARRIAGE IN THE RESURRECTION

Question.—Do you gather from God's plan that the present reciprocal love of man and woman is to be confirmed by the Lord so as to continue forever, both on earth and in heaven?

Answer.—We answer, No! Marriage is an arrangement that God instituted for a very special purpose, and with the human family only. The object of the separation of Mother Eve from Father Adam [she was formed from one of his ribs] was, the Scriptures tell us, that a race might be produced. Marriage means merely the union of these two recognizing each other as one; and so the Apostle says, "I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the Head of Christ is God."

There is no arrangement in God's plan to have any of those on the spirit plane male and female. According to the productions of art, there are no male angels; but according to the Scriptures, there are no female angels. Possibly the reason why so many artists have supposed that angels are females is that there are more women in the church than men. But the entire idea is erroneous; for angels are an entirely separate order of beings from mankind. Man never was an angel and never was intended to be an angel. Man is of the earth, earthy. He fell from the position of king of the earth and became a degraded being; and the divine intention and promise is that when Messiah shall reign humanity shall be lifted up from sin and degradation and brought back to human perfection.—Acts 3:19-21.

The only ones who will become spirit beings, as are the angels, are the church class—those begotten of the Spirit, those who in the resurrection will be given a change of nature. As the Apostle states, "We shall all be changed," for "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. 15:51, 50) Therefore the first resurrection, in which the bride only has part with her Lord, is different from the resurrection of the world. Of those who will have part in the first resurrection we read that "they shall be priests unto God and shall reign with Christ a thousand years." (Rev. 20:6) Flesh and blood cannot be a part of that kingdom. Therefore they must all be changed. We do not expect that Jesus will be changed from spirit to human nature; but that the church must be changed from human to spirit nature, for they "shall be like him and see him as he is" (1 John 3:2) and share his glory and be his bride. When the church shall thus be changed, all the peculiarities of male and female will be obliterated, for there is neither male nor female amongst the angels; and the Scriptures tell us there will not be in the glorified church. The perfection of spirit being will be one. All will be alike, sexless.

As for mankind: We think the Scriptures clearly indicate that divine provision for mankind will be that they will all be sexless when perfection shall have been reached. That is to say, at the close of the Millennial age, all having

been gradually perfected, each sex will, in their development, have taken on more of the qualities of the other; during that age the woman will gradually add to her womanly graces the qualities that belong to man; and man will likewise gradually take on with his manly qualities the finer sentiments and qualities of mind and body that belong to the female. Thus man will receive again that which was taken from him originally, represented by the rib. So all will then be perfect; and they will neither marry nor give in marriage; for all will in this respect be "like unto the angels."—Luke 20:34-36.

STILL HOLD SAME SCRIPTURAL VIEW

Question.—Are we to understand from your remarks in THE WATCH TOWER of April 1, 1911, page 102, column 2, paragraphs 2 and 3, that your opinion has altered respecting the "change" of the church?

Answer.—No; we have no different thought from that heretofore presented. We still believe that since 1878 we are in the time indicated by the statement, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, they shall rest from their labors, and their works follow with them."—Rev. 14:13.

We must all die, but "we shall not all sleep." In the cases of those remaining alive at the time of our Lord's second presence, there will be no need to sleep—the moment of death will be the moment of resurrection change.—Psa. 82:7; 1 Cor. 15:51, 52.

THE CHURCH THE BODY OF CHRIST

Question.—When does the church become the body of Christ?

Answer.—The church may Scripturally be viewed from two standpoints:—

(1) The church in glory will consist exclusively of the Redeemer and his bride class, his joint-heirs, or, under the other figure, "Jesus, the Head, and the church, his body"—"members in particular of the body of Christ." These alone will have part in the "first resurrection"; these alone will reign with Christ a thousand years.

(2) In the present time, however, the church is spoken of as the bride of Christ, in a formative or developing state, his espoused. Each one who makes a full consecration of himself to the Lord, trusting in the merit of Jesus, when begotten of the holy Spirit, is counted a member of the body of Christ. As a member he is to grow in grace, knowledge and love, putting off the former things of the flesh and putting on the fruits and graces of the holy Spirit. These, however, develop into three different classes:—

(a) A "little flock," a royal priesthood, who will become exclusively the body of Christ, through participation in the "first resurrection."

(b) A "great company" class, loyal to God and in the end faithful but not sufficiently zealous to be considered sacrificing priests, not worthy, therefore, to be counted of