

step in the divine program was the arrangement for the justification of the Gospel church—not actually, but by faith, reckonedly. So many as believed, so many as accepted Jesus, were reckonedly justified—reckonedly had the legal curse lifted from them, tho they were actually allowed to remain under the weaknesses and difficulties resulting from that curse. To such of these, reckonedly justified ones, as made full consecration of themselves to the Lord, the privilege was granted of walking by faith in the footsteps of Jesus, and being conformed to his sacrificial death;—the promised reward for this being a share in the Lord's glory, honor and immortality. But not until the last member of this elect body of Christ shall have been accepted as faithful will this Gospel age of sacrifice terminate.

(4) As the Apostle explains, the Lord is reckoning that the various members of the body of Christ are filling up a measure of the afflictions of Christ (they are joined with him in the atonement sacrifice; not that their sacrifice could have been acceptable with God at all without that of their Lord Jesus, but that they are acceptable to God through and under the merit of his sacrifice). "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, *acceptable to God*, your reasonable service." (Rom. 12:1) When the church's sacrifice is complete the whole work of suffering for sin ends, and forthwith the church will be received to conditions of glory with her Lord, in the first resurrection, as he was received by the Father from the dead after he had finished his sacrifice. Then, according to the Scriptures, the Lord will appropriate on behalf of the whole human family *so much of the merit of his own sacrifice*, and of the entire sacrifice of the church, as Justice could demand, and Justice will be fully satisfied of all its legal claims against mankind.

(5) As a result of such a legal satisfaction of the claims of Justice, early in the Millennial day, there will be no hindrance whatever to prevent the institution of the restitution

arrangements which God has provided in Christ and the church, and of which all the holy prophets have spoken since the world began.—Acts 3:19-23.

(6) Thus seen, the curse or condemnation for Adam's sin will be no more—as a legal sentence against mankind from thenceforth forever. Full atonement will have been made and accepted, for the sins of the whole world.* But this will not mean that the effects of the curse will then instantly disappear; just as if a man imprisoned for crime by an earthly court lost his hair, his sight, his hearing, and in general his entire health, while serving out the imprisonment; if he were then pardoned and set free the pardon would not restore to him his hair, his sight, his hearing, all his health. These must be sought for in some other direction. Justice is not responsible for their loss, and has nothing to do with their restoration. The freed man must look for some good physician. Just so with the race and its release from the sentence—from the condemnation to death. It must also look to the "Good Physician." And this is just what God is providing for the world in the glorified Christ—a wonderful and faithful Prophet, Priest and King—to rule and bless and uplift the redeemed world, or so many of the race as will accept his just and gracious terms.

(7) Here, then, we see the distinctions between Christ, the Redeemer, and Christ, the Life-giver. We were redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ, and through the merits of that sacrifice all will be freed from the condemnation; and then, as the Life-giver, he who previously redeemed will restore as many as will accept his favors, bringing them back to the conditions of perfection from which they fell—back to a condition in harmony with their Creator, and thus back to a condition of at-one-ment with God by the close of the Millennial age.

* See "Tabernacle Shadows of Better Sacrifices"

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YEARLY RECKONINGS—SPIRITUAL ACCOUNTS

"Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to usward: they can not be reckoned up in order unto thee; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered."—Psalm 40:5.

Business men are at great expense to secure accuracy in their accounts. Millions of dollars are spent every year in details of bookkeeping, an important part of which is to enable proprietors to know definitely upon which items of their business there is a profit, and upon which there is a loss,—to the intent that the profitable branches may be increased, and the unprofitable ones corrected. This is admittedly a wise procedure.

If the case be such with those who are seeking temporal wealth and its honors, how much more careful accounting should be attempted in connection with spiritual matters! The Lord's people are not merely seeking for wealth, which will last for a few years, and then must be parted with—at the tomb, if not sooner;—they are seeking for the riches which perish not, and which thieves do not break into and steal. More than this, with the heavenly riches they are assuredly seeking also heavenly honors and glories—even joint-heirship with the King of kings and Lord of lords, in the Millennial Kingdom, and in the glorious opportunities which it will bring in connection with the promised blessing of all the families of the earth.

The general settlement day with the world is at the close of the old year, and the beginning of a new one, but with the church an equally appropriate occasion, or, indeed, a still more appropriate one, comes with the annual remembrancer of our Lord's death as our Passover Lamb—and of our participation with him in his sacrifice; and in the Easter celebration of his resurrection, and of our figurative rising with him to walk in newness of life—in prospect of the actual resurrection in which, if faithful, we shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, to be like our glorious Redeemer, to see him as he is, and to share his glory.

Let us see how our spiritual accounts stand for the year past—since last we broke together the emblems of our Redeemer's sacrifice and of our own participation with him. Let us note whether or not the year's experiences have brought us nearer to the Lord, or have in any measure separated us from the warmth of his love and fellowship, and from fellowship with fellow members of his body. Every year should find us nearer to the Lord, not only in the purposes of our hearts, but in the conduct of our lives,—nearer to the perfect standard. We should be making progress, growing in all the graces of the

spirit, and growing also in our knowledge and appreciation of the Lord and of his wonderful plan.

We trust that each reader, as he takes a conscientious view of the situation, whichever way he feels that the balance stands (favorable or unfavorable, as compared with a year ago), can nevertheless thank God that by his grace we are what we are, and where we are;—still his, with hearts striving for things of the spirit, and not for things of the flesh. If any have slipped to some extent backward, let such thank the Lord that matters are not worse than they are, that they have not wholly let go of his hand, and relinquished their share in the exceeding great and precious promises of his Word. Let them thank God that this day of reckoning and reviewing of accounts finds them desirous of being on the Lord's side, and making a better record during the year before us. Let us look together at our text, and see if we cannot join heartily with the Prophet in the sentiment expressed. He divides the subject into two parts: (1) Thankfulness to God for his wonderful work of grace already done or accomplished; and (2) for his thoughts, his plans, his purposes, toward us, which are not yet accomplished and which we have grasped by his promises, with our arms of faith.

Looking back at the things that God already has done for us, we see that the Prophet has defined some of these, saying, "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings." (Verse 2) If we can apply this heartily to ourselves, what a cause it is for thankfulness. As we look about us and see the whole world lying in the Wicked One, without God and having no real hope,—merely vague impressions—and when we look back and see how the Lord has delivered us from the horrible pit of condemnation and sin, how he has had mercy upon us and delivered us, and established our feet of faith upon the rock foundation, Christ and his redemptive work, well may we give thanks, and tell his mercies all abroad. Looking back we may see that happy day that fixed our choice upon our Saviour and our God, as being the time from which our goings have been *established*,—our course no longer vacillating. It was there that we obtained a fixed purpose, a ballast which has hindered us from being upset when tossed, hither and thither, by the varying winds of philosophy and human speculation. Praise God for this which he already has

done for us! No wonder, as the Prophet proceeds to say, we realize that "He has put a new song into our mouth,—even praise unto our God." The new song is not one of doubt or of fear, nor concerning anguish of sinners; but a song of God's justice and mercy and love,—reasonable and harmonious in its every cadence. Thank God! It has brought a new life to us; a new pleasure in life, as well as new aspirations and new hopes for others as well as for ourselves. We can never thank the Lord enough for the blessings which we have already received at his hands—for the things which he has already done for us.

And yet the things that we already enjoy of the Lord's favor we are assured are but a foretaste of the blessings yet in reservation for them that love him—blessings which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man to see or appreciate, but which God hath lovingly declared, and which we grasp by faith, seeing through a glass only obscurely, as yet, the glory, honor and immortality promised to the faithful. What we now have are not realities so much as promises and hopes. Present experiences being but the beginning our comfort, we agree with the Prophet that the number of God's favors cannot be reckoned, computed. We are exceedingly his debtors; we can never discharge the obligation. But then we are his children; he is pleased to *give* us these things, and his request in return is that we shall act toward him in such a manner as will betoken our gratitude, and that we are indeed his offspring, begotten of his Spirit.

Let us proceed in our calculation of present assets, and in our balancing of the year: and let us not be content simply with generalities in the balance. Let us retrospectively scrutinize the privileges and mercies enjoyed during the year, and the use we made of them and the blessings we derived. Let us carefully note which features of our daily course have been most helpful to us, and which have to any extent retarded our spiritual progress, hindered our fellowship with the Lord, prevented our running with patience or with best results the race set before us in the Gospel. These items will necessarily vary with each individual—for no two are alike in temperament or environment. Each in his counting should weigh the advantages derived from fellowship and communion with the Lord in prayer; and should determine whether or not this feature of his spiritual interests could be advantageously expanded during the beginning year.

Each should consider, also, not merely how much time he had spent in *talking* to the Lord, but also how much time he had spent in *listening* to the Lord's voice—in searching the Scriptures: in seeking to know the divine mind, the divine plan, as it pertains to himself individually and to the church and to the world. Included in this matter of listening to the Lord's voice, he should reckon the helps to Bible study provided by the Lord through the brethren, the members of the family, the members of the one body of Christ;—remembering the statement of the Apostle, that God himself had set the various members in the body as it hath pleased him; and that he set these members for the very purpose of blessing one another, edifying the church, building it up in the most holy faith. True, we are to consider that the Apostle were set first, foremost, and hence, that their teachings are paramount; and that all other teachings are to be submitted to the test of harmony with the testimonies of the apostles and the prophets.

If any, on reckoning up, shall find that they have not made such good progress as they had hoped, or perhaps apparently less progress in the narrow way, than some others about them, let them consider to what extent this failure to progress was due to a *failure to use* the divinely appointed means for growth in grace and knowledge and love;—namely, the Word and the brotherhood. If the progress has not been so great as could be hoped, let another point be examined: see whether or not you have been as active as was possible in serving the truth. Consider that you have consecrated your entire life to the Lord, and that by his direction it is to be laid down, sacrificed, yielded up in the interest of his brethren, the church. Consider, count, reckon, whether or not you have been faithful in this matter of laying down your life during the past year—faithful in serving the church, the body of Christ, to the best of your ability. Remember that it is a part of the Lord's provision that he who watereth shall himself be watered; that he who serves the truth to others may appropriate to himself the more abundantly at the Lord's table of grace and truth.

EXAMPLES OF PROPER COUNTING, VALUATION, ETC.

In our counting let us take some hints and suggestions from the inspired apostles; let us note how they counted matters and things—which matters they set down to the profit account, and which to the loss account. Harken to the Apostle Paul's words: "Neither count I my [earthly] life dear [precious, valuable] unto me." (Acts 20:24) Again, "I count all things

[earthly] but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." (Phil. 3:8) Paul's estimation was not merely that the future glories were worthy of some loss in the present time, but that even the *knowledge* of Christ (including the knowledge of God's grace toward us through him, and the knowledge and consequent opportunities of running the race for the great prize)—was alone worth the price; he estimated that the loss of all things, in order to obtain this *knowledge* (and its opportunities), would be a great bargain. Let us thank God if we have this good asset—a knowledge of Christ,—a knowledge of his character, and a deep appreciation of it, a knowledge of the plan which centers in him—no matter what it has cost us of earthly good; if we have this knowledge, if to us he is precious, we are rich today, thank God! The same Apostle proceeds to say that already he had suffered the loss of all things and did "*count* them but dung," that he might "*win* Christ, and be found in him"—a member of his body.

A further suggestion as to how to count is found in the Apostle James' words, "Count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience," etc. (James 1:2) No doubt, as each looks back for a year, we see that there were numerous snares and temptations in our pathway. Over some, no doubt, we gained victories readily; others perhaps we conquered with a severer struggle; and still others perhaps were only partial victories,—they were partially reverses, partially victories for our enemy.

What did these temptations bring us? What has been their value? One value, as the Apostle suggests, is the lesson of forbearance. They proved to us that we are still in the *schooling time*, in the *testing time*;—to demonstrate our loyalty to the Lord, and our worthiness, through his merit, to a share in his kingdom. All wish frequently, no doubt, that the testings were all over, and that we were accepted to a place amongst the overcomers; but patience and faith and trust are to do a refining work in our hearts, making us mellow, willing and obedient to the Lord. Let the good work go on. Let us rejoice if our trials have brought us lessons of any kind that are profitable to us,—that have tended to make us stronger in character, more firm for truth and righteousness, more aware of our own weaknesses, and more on guard against the same. Even those conflicts which have resulted in only partial victories have possibly been to our advantage. Surely so, in proportion as we contended *earnestly* against our weaknesses or against the besetments of the adversary. Even on points in which there may have been absolute failure, the result may be a strengthening of character, a crystallization of determination for greater zeal in that direction again; and a humility of heart before the Lord in prayer, which has caused us to remember the throne of grace afresh, and that thither we may flee in every moment of temptation and find the succor which we need.

The Apostle Paul summed up his account and balanced it as follows: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us"—the faithful. (Rom. 8:18) In our reckoning, in our account for the year, let us similarly reckon the things which we have suffered, whether they be few or many, small or great—whatever we suffered for Christ's sake, for righteousness' sake, for the truth's sake,—let us rejoice therein, and endeavor for the coming year, to be so much more faithful in all these respects, that it may be our high privilege of suffering something further for the name of Christ, for his cause, and for his brethren.

As we reckon the profit and loss sides of the account for the year, let us be thankful that amongst the shortcomings which all may have to deplore none of us find one item of evil which the Apostle mentions; *viz.*, none of us "*count* the blood of the covenant, wherewith we were sanctified, an unholy [ordinary] thing." Thank God, we still appreciate the precious blood of Christ; we will appreciate the fact that we are accepted, not in any merit or worthiness of our own, but in him who loved us and who bought us with his own precious blood. Oh, how much we have to be thankful for in this one feature of our experience, even if, as we look back, we find that there have been vacillations or slips or slidings in the pathway! How much we may thank the Lord, that by his grace we still are what we are, and still have the opportunity of persevering and running with renewed zeal and patience the race set before us,—looking unto Jesus for our example.

HOW THE LORD IS ACCOUNTING RESPECTING US

Finally, in our account of matters, let us take courage from the Lord's statement respecting how he counts things, and let us count accordingly. The Apostle said himself, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he *counted me faithful*, putting me into the ministry." (1 Tim.

1:12) Ah, yes, what a blessed satisfaction it is to us to know that while the Lord knows of our every word and every deed he is pleased to count us something different, even from our words and our deeds—something better! Our words do not always represent the full sentiments of our hearts; our conduct does not come up to the standard: after the words have been spoken and after the deeds have been done—perhaps to the very best of our ability—we realize that they have come short of the glory of God, and short of our own ideals, desires and efforts. How consoling it is to us, then, to know that our imperfect work shall be acceptable through Christ to God; that the Lord counts us according to our intentions, according to our wills. Praise his name! We would have no hope of coming up to any standard of perfection which he would approve, were it not for his gracious arrangement by which our imperfections are covered by our Redeemer's perfection and sacrifice, and our works accepted according to the intentions and desires of our hearts.

The Apostle rejoiced that by the Lord's counting him according to his intentions, and not according to his deeds, he was counted worthy a place in the ministry. Let us similarly rejoice, and let us remember that the word "ministry" signifies service, and the word "minister" signifies servant. Let us remember that all of the royal priesthood, all of the truly consecrated church of God, are ministers, servants of God and of each other. The Lord has put us all into the ministry; and there is a ministry, a service of kindness and of love toward the Lord, in honoring his name and declaring his righteousness; and a ministry toward the brethren, in opening the eyes of their understanding and enabling them to appreciate the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the Lord's character. A share in this ministry belongs to each one of us, and it is a great privilege. It is a ministry or service which, if neglected, or in proportion as neglected, brings us corresponding loss in spiritual progress and character. Let us count this privilege a valuable asset, to carry over into the new year, to be used with greater diligence than ever in the service of our King.

The Apostle, in writing to the church at Thessalonica (2 Thes. 1:5), says: "That ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom for which ye also suffer." Ah, yes; this is more of the Lord's counting. We are not worthy of the kingdom of God. No human being is worthy; but the Lord purposes to count his faithful ones worthy. He will do this through the merit of his own great atonement-sacrifice which permits the acceptance of our wills, our intentions, as instead of the perfect works of righteousness. Thank God for this generous accounting! Let it encourage us, and let us remember the Apostle's statement that those who will be counted of our Lord thus fit for the kingdom, will be such as suffer something for it. Let us then strive in a reasonable, rational manner, according to the divine Word and plan, to suffer for the kingdom's sake.

We are not to seek suffering in a foolish way by doing foolish things. We have no such example in our Lord's case, nor in the case of the apostles. It is not even necessary that we should suffer martyrdom or physical persecution. Possibly

the extent of our sufferings may be the wounding of our feelings, when—"The workers of iniquity . . . whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words, that they may shoot in secret at the innocent." (Psa. 64:3) Perhaps our sufferings, even, will be still less than this, as the Apostle explains (Heb. 10:33-35): "Partly whilst ye were made a gazing stock, both by reproaches and afflictions, and partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used." Let us resolve to carry this good asset over into the new year, rejoicing that we have been privileged thus far to suffer some little for the Lord's sake and for the sake of the truth, and in companionship with the brethren; heeding the Apostle's words, "Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward." God wishes us to trust him according to his promises, and will reward such faith.

We conclude this exhortation to spiritual accounting by calling attention to the Apostle's words: "We pray always for you—that God would count you worthy of this calling and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power." (2 Thess. 1:11) This is our prayer for you, beloved in the Lord; and we trust also that this is your prayer for us. What more could we ask than that the Lord would count us worthy of the great high-calling of this Gospel age—to joint-heirship with his Son in the kingdom? We have his assurance respecting the terms on which he will count us worthy. We realize that the terms are very reasonable indeed, and that what we do sacrifice in conforming to those terms would be really only as loss and dross to us, so long as we were filled with a proper zeal for the Lord and his cause. And now notice the Apostle's words, that these good things which our heavenly Father has called us to receive—to prove ourselves worthy of receiving, according to his gracious terms in Christ—are not things which he offers us grudgingly, but things which he is well pleased to bestow. There was a time, perhaps, with each of us when, under misinterpretations of the Lord's Word, we supposed that coldly and heartlessly, our heavenly Father preferred not to give many blessings, and would give them to but few, and to them in a grudging manner, because impelled thereto by Jesus; and that for the great majority he had determined, before hand, that they should be delivered over to devils for an eternity of misery. Thank God for a clearer opening of the eyes of our understanding, by which now we may know him as our Father, and appreciate to some extent his wonderful plan!

And, as respects our own share, let us settle it in our hearts that these gracious things to which we are called are "*all the good pleasure of his goodness*." Let us start into the new year with good courage, remembering that if God loved us while we were yet sinners, strangers, aliens, foreigners, much more does he now love us since we have come into relationship with him through Jesus Christ our Lord;—since we are seeking to walk, not after the flesh, but after the spirit; since we are seeking to be copies of his dear Son, our Lord; since we have been begotten by his holy Spirit. Truly, faith may confidently exclaim, "All things are ours, for we are Christ's and Christ is God's!"

CONTRASTING EXPERIENCES OF THE SAINTS

ACTS 12:1-9.—MAY 11.

"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."—Psalm 34:7.

Herod was a family name. There were several kings over Israel by this name; (1) Herod the Great, who flourished about the time of our Lord's birth, and who murdered the babes of Bethlehem. (2) Herod Archelaus, son and successor to Herod the Great—deposed A. D. 6. (3) Herod Antipas, another son of Herod the Great, the murderer of John the Baptist, who subsequently, with his men of war, set at naught and mocked Jesus, just prior to his crucifixion—deposed A. D. 40. (4) Herod Agrippa I., grandson of Herod the Great, mentioned in the present lesson as the murderer of the Apostle James. (5) Herod Agrippa II., the last of the Herods, before whom the Apostle Paul defended himself.—Acts 26:28.

The Herod of our lesson (Agrippa I.) was given his kingdom by Claudius Cæsar, Emperor of Rome, whom he saved from a violent death. History says of him: "He curried favor with the Jews in every way; he hung in the Temple, as a votive offering, the gold chain which the Emperor Caligula had given him; he lived in Jerusalem, and punctiliously observed the traditions of the fathers, and secured the fervent loyalty of the Pharisees. At the Feast of Tabernacles, A. D. 41, he took the reader's stand and read the whole Book of Deuteronomy aloud, bursting into tears, as if quite overcome, when he reached the words, 'Thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, who is not thy brother.' He feared that because he had Edomite blood

in his veins he might incur the hatred his grandfather, Herod the Great, had borne, and took his way to gain the political favor of the Jews, who cried out, 'Do not weep, Agrippa; thou art our brother.'" Within a month after the events of this lesson he was a corpse. His tragic end at Cæsarea, whither he had gone to a magnificent festival, in honor of Claudius Cæsar, is thus summed up by Geike, from Josephus' account:—

"A vast multitude assembled to see the festival and games, and before these the king, in all the pride of high state, appeared in robes inwrought with silver threads. The time chosen was daybreak, so that the kindling sun shining on his grand mantle lighted it into dazzling splendor. Presently some of his flatterers, always at hand beside a king, raised the cry, echoing a reminiscence of the days of Caligula, 'Deign to be gracious to us, thou divine one! Hitherto we have honored thee as a man; henceforth we own thee as more than mortal!' Instead of rebuking such lying servility he drank in this adulation with high pleasure. Next moment a great pain racked his bowels. Conscience-stricken at this blasphemous folly, the poor wretch felt that the wrath of God had struck him down, and the cry arose from him in his agony, 'See, your god must now give up life and hasten into the arms of corruption!' In the Acts (12:23) we are told that he 'was eaten of worms.'"

Knowing thus much about the man, Herod, enables us to

understand why he made his attack upon the church. Although not a descendant of Jacob, but of Esau, he had espoused the religion prevalent in his kingdom, and was seeking favor with the Jews by his zeal for Judaism,—which meant, of course, his zeal and energy correspondingly against Christianity. As we have already seen, the Jews had begun a work of persecution against the church, but were hindered by their own troubles with Caligula Caesar; but the latter was now dead, and the persecuting tendencies of misconducted fervor could again be exercised. The Lord, of course, was not subject to these conditions, and could have miraculously prevented the persecutions recorded. But, as the lesson shows, he permitted the evil to triumph in part and restrained it in part.

The Apostle James, whose death is here recorded, in few words was as a matter of fact one of the most noble and notable of the apostles. He was one of the three who usually accompanied our Lord in the most confidential capacity;—with his brother John, and Peter, he was with the Lord in the Mount of Transfiguration. In the same company he was present at the awakening of Jairus' daughter. In the same company he was one of the inner circle of the Lord's friends in the trying hour in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was he and his brother whom our Lord surnamed Boanerges—"sons of thunder"—probably because of their eloquence and forcefulness of speech. It was he and his brother whose mother entreated the Lord that they might sit "the one on his right hand and the other on his left, in the kingdom," and who, when questioned by our Lord, declared their willingness to share in his work and suffering, even unto death. They were both faithful, James being amongst the earliest of the martyrs for the cause, and John living to a life of old age,—being probably the last survivor of the apostles. Although the record of James' ministry is brief in the extreme, it contains nothing that gives the slightest suggestion of anything except zeal and faithfulness to the Lord and to his cause. This James, who died early in the Christian era, should not be confounded with the other James, the author of the Epistle of James—known as "James the Less," the son of Alphaeus (Cleopas—Mark 3:18)—husband of Mary, supposed to have been second cousin to our Lord, and for this reason, according to Jewish custom, styled "the Lord's brother."—Gal. 1:19.

When Herod saw what satisfaction it gave his subjects, and especially their leaders, the Pharisees, that he should thus persecute the Christians, he proceeded to take Peter also. The implication is that James and Peter were two of the foremost amongst the apostles in the church at this time. The expression, "When he had apprehended him," implies that some delay occurred between the order for his arrest and the time of his imprisonment. He was delivered to four quaternions of soldiers. A quaternion consisted of four soldiers to guard a prisoner, two of them being chained to him, one on each side, by the wrists; the other two doing sentinel duty, one at the door of the cell and the other in an outer court. The four quaternions were in the nature of relief guards, so that each quaternion would have charge of the Apostle for six hours of the twenty-four.

It was at the season of Easter, or, more properly, the Passover—"the days of unleavened bread." The time of his arrest was too close to this religious festival to make it proper for such a public execution as Herod had determined upon. He would reserve his show of zeal for the Jews' religion until this festival was at an end. Meantime, the infant church at Jerusalem was evidently sadly perplexed by the trend of affairs—at a loss to know how to interpret the Lord's providences. Doubtless they held their memorial of the Redeemer's death at this time, as we now do, and their hearts were sadly stricken with a realization of the fact that the Lord's faithful must all drink of his cup—of ignominy and death. Although a considerable number of Jews had accepted Jesus, as we saw in a previous lesson, apparently the majority of the believers were scattered abroad, but few of them residing in Jerusalem. These few it seems met in little groups, in private houses, for prayer and praise, for study of the Lord's Word and for building one another up in the most holy faith; and such a meeting was in progress during this eventful Passover week. We are informed that the burden of their prayer was for Peter.

Well instructed by the apostles, we may be sure that they strove not to ask amiss; and that they copied the Master's petition, at least in so far as the expression, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done." We have no record that the church met in prayer for James, tho quite possibly it did; neither are we bound to suppose that if they had not met and prayed for Peter, Herod would have succeeded in killing him also. It is sufficient for us that we remember that God has plans of his own, irrespective of the plans and prayers of his people, and that all of his good purposes will be accomplished;

but it is well that we should note also his good pleasure that his people should come so fully into accord with him and his plans that they would neither be surprised nor disappointed in their fulfilment.

Probably James' death was accomplished suddenly, while, as we have seen, Peter was held over in bonds. This gave the church time to consider how much she had already lost, and how much she might lose further were not the Lord to interpose for her protection. No doubt they reasoned that they had already sustained a great loss; and no doubt Peter's life and his service seemed much more precious to them since the loss of James. In any event, the Lord's people were getting a blessing through their experiences and through their prayers. Peter also was getting a valuable experience; and doubtless the Lord was overruling in the matter so that a great blessing and stimulus to the faith of all would ensue through Peter's release.

Peter, his heart filled with the peace of God which passeth all understanding, was enabled to sleep peacefully in the prison, notwithstanding the unfavorable conditions in which he was placed, and his expectancy that on the morrow he would be called before the king and publicly executed. What a blessing is this rest of heart, this ability to entrust to the Lord all of life's affairs! It is written, "He giveth his beloved sleep." (Psa. 127:2) We cannot say that the Lord's people are never troubled with insomnia, sleeplessness, but we can say that many, previously troubled with the cares of this life, exciting to nervousness, have by the Lord's grace been enabled so to cast all their care upon him that it has in great measure controlled their nerves and brought back to them the ability to enjoy sweet refreshing rest in sleep. Nothing is more favorable to this place of heart than a *full consecration to the Lord*—"all to his wisdom resigned;" it entitles to a *full confidence* in the divine promises,—through faith in the divine wisdom, love and power, which has guaranteed that all things shall work together for good to those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

Peter was aroused from his sleep, loosed from his chains, bidden to arise and fasten the girdle usually relaxed in slumber, to put on his sandals,—wrap himself in his outer cloak and follow the messenger, the light of whose glory filled the prison cell. The doors opened before them; they passed the sentinel unobserved, and Peter was led from the castle of Antonia into the city proper. There the heavenly messenger left him. There is a simplicity to this narrative which, even on the surface, commends it as truthful. Were it a fiction, doubtless the author would have stated matters altogether differently. He would have represented the angel as doing homage to the Apostle, or delivering to him some complimentary message from the Lord, or lifting him up or putting on his sandals and fastening him for him, or assisting in girding him or putting on his mantle. He would have had him give Peter certain directions at the time of leaving, etc. But this simple account merely represents the angel as doing for Peter what he could not do for himself, and no more, and leaving him without a word as soon as he had brought him properly into the city.

The record shows that Peter was so surprised with what had transpired that he for a time fancied himself in a dream, in a trance,—expecting that he would awaken shortly to realize himself still bound; but the cool morning air, between three and six o'clock, and being left alone, brought him to his senses and convinced him that he was actually at liberty. He knew well the usual meeting place, and thither he bent his steps. It was the home of Mary, mother of John Mark—cousin of Barnabas, (so "sister's son" should read in Col. 4:10) John was his Hebrew name and Marcus his Latin name. It was this Mark who was the Evangelist, the author of the Book of Mark,—the same who accompanied Barnabas and Paul on their first missionary journey.

Altho the hour was an unusual one, the inmates of the house were awake, the prayer-meeting was still going on at the very time when the Lord was answering the petition. Peter's knock on the outer door was responded to by the little maid-servant of the family, Rhoda (Rose), who, child-like, discerning the voice of Peter (for it was customary to make inquiries before opening the door) was so surprised and delighted that she neglected to open the door before running back to give word to the assembled disciples.

The fact that the praying ones were amazed, astonished, and could scarcely believe it was Peter who had come, does not prove that they had not faith in their own prayers. Rather, we may say that their faith in prayer was well attested by their continuance in it all night, and to such an hour in the morning, and that they were not asleep at the time Peter knocked; but, knowing something regarding the prison and the appointment of four quaternions of soldiers, they would reasonably expect that whatever answer might come to their

prayers would not be a release of Peter under such circumstances, but might rather be some interference at the time of of the trial, something to change the mind of the king, who would be the judge in this case, and thus to bring about Peter's release. But "God works in a mysterious way his wonders to perform," and not infrequently his ways are not as our ways, and sometimes we learn valuable lessons under just such circumstances. Doubtless the faith of some was shaken considerably by the death of the Apostle James; doubtless they queried concerning the lack of the manifestation of divine favor and interference for the protection of the Apostle and for his preservation as a helper in the church. But if they were thus tempted and tried, and their faith sorely tested for a while, they had now, in Peter's experience, a valuable lesson on the other side—an illustration of God's power to intervene when he will and how he will on his people's behalf.

Here again, in this contrast between the experiences of James and those of Peter, we have something that would be entirely contrary to the manner or thought of a forger attempting to write such an account from his imagination. It would not occur to him to have so marked a manifestation of divine providential care in the case of Peter, and to leave James' case with apparently no evidences of divine protection. And this calls to our mind the fact that divine providence seems frequently to operate along these lines—contrasting between the experiences of different members of the body of Christ, and sometimes instituting contrasts in our own individual experiences as Christians. In some of life's events we can see the Lord's protecting and guiding care most markedly, while in others it would seem absolutely lacking. The lesson it should bring to us is one of full faith in the Lord, and of full submission to all his providences. Indeed, we are to note that in the majority of cases our experiences are far more like that of James than like this experience of Peter's. The miracles which we can trace in our own experience are certainly few and far between. Whatever we have had, or whatever the apostles or others have had in this direction, which serves to demonstrate to us God's supervision of his own affairs, is evidently intended to give us strength and courage, whereby we can walk fearlessly and courageously in the dark, for, as the Apostle says, under divine providence we generally are called upon to "walk by faith, not by sight."—2 Cor. 5:7.

"IT IS HIS ANGEL!"

"Are they [angels] not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them [unto those] who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. 1:10) Knowing the Apostle Peter to be one of the heirs of salvation, and never for a moment considering the possibility of his escape from prison, the brethren queried if their visitor might not be Peter's angel as his representative, come in answer to their prayers, to give them consolation. Soon, however, they realized that it was Peter himself, and afterward learned of his miraculous deliverance by the angel.

Verse 17 implies that when the brethren realized that it was actually Peter who stood before them they were excited with joy, and would probably have created quite a commotion had not the Apostle beckoned to them with his hand that they should be quiet. Then calmly explaining to them his providential deliverance, and sending a message to James ("the Less") "the Lord's brother" or second cousin and to all the brethren, he at once left the place—left Jerusalem. When Peter and John were delivered from prison it was by the Lord's instruction that they went back to the Temple and continued to proclaim; but now, in the absence of any instruction from the Lord to the contrary, the Apostle wisely understood by his proper course, in co-operation with the Lord's providences, was that he should flee, that he should not put himself unnecessarily into danger, nor attempt to wage a warfare with the

representative of the Roman government, trusting to further miraculous deliverances.

We know some who would have been inclined, in Peter's place, to have made a great hurrah about the escape, and to have boasted that prison-walls and Roman soldiers were powerless against the Lord; and who, perhaps, would have gone the length of daring the king to arrest them again. But we believe such a course would not have been the will of the Lord, and that Peter evidently took the proper course. This suggestion may be valuable to some of the Lord's people. This is the time in which "the prince of this world" is permitted to maintain his general control; and we are to expect miraculous deliverances to be the exception rather than the rule, and are to act accordingly;—so far as lieth in us, preserving the peace, living peaceably with all men. Peter's conduct in not daring the king was not a manifestation of lack of confidence in divine power, but it was in obedience to the Master's words, "When they shall persecute you in one city flee ye to another." The persecution had reached him personally; he had been delivered from it, and now was his time to flee to another place, where doubtless, the Lord had other work for him to do. Let us be prompt in following a similar course in proportion as our circumstances correspond. When the persecution gets too severe, cry to the Lord for help, and if he opens a door of deliverance flee to another place or condition, where, with equal boldness and courage and faith you will, as before, lift high the royal banner.

OUR GOLDEN TEXT

It is comparatively easy for us to associate our Golden Text with Peter and his deliverance, and with ourselves in instances of peculiar assistance from the Lord in our affairs, temporal or spiritual; but it is much more difficult for us to associate it with the experiences of the Apostle James and with our own experiences, in which disasters, difficulties and fiery trials are permitted to come upon us. Such experiences are doubtless sent of the Lord for the development and testing of our faith. The Lord's providential care was none the less in the case of James, and we may be sure that nothing happened to him contrary to divine intention and permission; and so with ourselves; we may be sure, not only that the Lord knoweth them that are his, but sure also that "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints," and that he "will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation provide also a way of escape." In James' case the "escape" was final and decisive; in Peter's it was temporary.

Our trials and difficulties are not, therefore, to be esteemed as the results of divine carelessness in respect to our interests, but as the outworkings of divine providence for our good. Those who are able to view the matter from this standpoint are thus enabled to learn some of the very best and most helpful of life's lessons, and are thereby prepared for the glorious things coming; whereas those who allow faith to falter in times of trial, and who will walk with the Lord and have confidence in him only when they are the recipients of miraculous favors, are correspondingly weak, and correspondingly unprepared for the kingdom. And as these lessons are necessary to the individual, so they are necessary also to the church as a whole, as in the case of James and the church in our lesson. So far as James was concerned, it could matter little to him which way the Lord effected his "escape" if, in the Lord's wisdom, he had finished his course, perfected his character and stood the test. As for the church, it could learn an important lesson; viz., that God, while pleased to use the Apostles and various agencies in the prosecution of his work, was not at all dependent upon them, but that one or all of them could be dropped out, and yet the Lord be thoroughly competent to manage his own work and to accomplish all the gracious promises of his Word.

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES

ACTS 13:1-12.—MAY 18, 1902.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations."—Matt. 28:19.

Our Golden Text is aptly illustrated in this lesson. Our Lord's commission* was not, as some have supposed, a command to convert the world, nor is there any suggestion anywhere in the Scriptures that the preaching of the gospel was with such an end in view. Quite to the contrary, every intimation of our Lord's parables illustrating the subject, and all of the words of the apostles, were to the effect that at the end of the age, at the second coming of Christ, he would not find faith predominating in the earth; he would not find God's will done on earth as in heaven; but he would find merely a

* The word "therefore" in this text, is omitted by the oldest Greek MS., the Sinaitic, and also by the Alexandrine.

little flock, selected from the world through the preaching of the truth. These would be made meet to be the bride, the Lamb's wife, and joint-heir with him in the glorious kingdom then to be established for the purpose of binding Satan, restraining evil, and causing truth and righteousness to fill the earth and bless all the nations.—Luke 18:8; 12:32; Rev. 20:1-3.

The commission meant merely—You are no longer restricted to the Jews in preaching this Gospel of the kingdom; you may now deliver it to all the world, every nation, so that "he that hath an ear" may hear—to the intent that a little flock, the elect, spiritual Israel, a royal priesthood, a holy na-

tion, a peculiar people, may be *selected* from all nations for future service in the kingdom. In accord with this, our Lord's instruction, as related by Luke, says, "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke 24:27) And again, as recorded in Acts 1:8, he said, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." The apostles evidently did not at first comprehend the scope of the Master's commission. They were ready enough to begin at Jerusalem; ready also, as we have seen, to extend the work throughout Judea; ready also when the Lord's providence so led, to preach to the Samaritans; but it required very special instructions for Peter to preach to the Gentiles also. As the Gospel was not intended to convert all of the Jews, but only to take from them a remnant while the rest were left blinded for a time, so, likewise it was intended to take from amongst the Gentiles also only a remnant, so that the entire company of the elect of this age is properly termed "a little flock," to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom,—which kingdom, it is also the Father's good pleasure, shall bless all the families of the earth.

Antioch was the first church of believers, so far as we know, outside of Palestine—the first church amongst the Gentiles. Its members were probably chiefly Jews, and these chiefly foreign born. The Jews residing abroad doubtless appreciated the fact that amongst their Gentile neighbors were some of noble character, not less worthy of divine favor than were the Jews; and these doubtless would, on this account, the more quickly fall into line with the Lord's instruction and leading respecting the gospel—that it was thenceforth not for Jews exclusively, but for people of all nationalities who were in heart-readiness to receive it.

A previous lesson showed us Barnabas and Paul meeting with the brethren at Antioch, for a considerable time, in the worship of the Lord and in the study of his Word. The result of these studies was to develop the church as a whole, and to bring it to the point of considering and praying about means for the service of the truth—the spread of the Gospel. There were a number of prophets (public orators) and teachers in the church, and evidently they began to think of how they might be used to the glory of God and to the blessing of others, as they themselves had been blessed by the truth. This is always the case with those who receive the truth into good and honest hearts. Properly enough, they desire to feed thereon themselves and to grow strong in the Lord, but just so surely as the truth is received, with its spirit, it gives a strength and a desire to use that strength. This is as true today as it was then: the consecration which the truth brings is identical with our begetting of the spirit; and the energy for service corresponds to the quickening of the spirit.

We see a distinction drawn in our lesson between prophets and teachers. The Greek word rendered "prophet" signifies a "forth-teller." It might be understood to mean one who tells in advance, or foretells, or prophesies coming events; but in its general use in the New Testament the word seems to indicate one who tells forth, in the sense of proclaiming, giving public utterance to, or standing up before the people in declaration of the Lord's message. The distinction between prophets and teachers, as here used, seems to be that the former were persons of natural talent and ability for teaching the truth in a public manner, in orderly discourse, etc., while the teachers would be those possessing talent as instructors, but not necessarily in a public, or oratorical manner. The same distinctions are true today amongst the Lord's people; comparatively few have the qualifications for public speaking—for presenting an address in an orderly manner, that will be truly helpful to the hearers. Some others, who have not ability as public discourses, have talent for presenting the truth in a less public manner, as in Bible studies, etc.

It is for the Lord to supply the talents as he may deem best, and it is for each individual and the church as a whole to utilize the talents of which they find themselves possessed. Little companies of the Lord's people are not to determine that they must have public preaching, and then endeavor to have it, good or bad. Rather, they are to seek to know the mind of the Lord on the subject, and to have such meetings as the Lord's providence may make possible and proper. If there be one or two or more brethren in the congregation who have the ability to teach—to conduct the services of the church, and to draw out the brethren in questions and answers as a Bible class, in a Bible study, giving their own opinions with the others, the church should seek to use such brethren in its services as they may consent. And if there be in the number one or more with talent for a public or connected presentation, in the nature of a discourse, let them also, if they will, be put

into service. The object of the church should, in every case, be to develop, to use, to exercise, *all* of its different members: each according to his ability and development, spiritual and natural.

It would be specially unfortunate if any companies of the Lord's people whom he had brought into the light of present truth should become ensnared with the wrong views and wrong practices of the nominal church systems, so as to consider public preaching (prophesying) the only proper and satisfactory service. Rather, let us remember to look for the various members whom the Lord shall set in the body and endeavor to use all of them. (1 Cor. 12) We will find that he sets many more teachers than prophets, orators; and we will find that our blessing, as little companies of his people, will be greater in proportion as we note the Lord's providences and fall in line with them. We trust that the new Bibles will prove very helpful in this respect—in enabling many to teach—to lead meetings—to draw out the thoughts of the brethren—to present before their minds the Word of the Lord and the true understanding of the same. The Topical Index will be found very helpful too, we trust.

The church at Antioch evidently had an oversupply of teachers, as compared to its own requirements; but having the proper spirit in the matter, desiring to accomplish as large results in the Lord's service as possible, the brethren had no thought of crushing out or holding down any who manifested ability for the Lord's service. On the contrary, they began to look about them for larger fields of usefulness. They were uncertain regarding the course they should pursue, and hence looked to the Lord as the real Head and guide in the church's affairs. They served and they fasted, and we may be sure that they prayed also; and as a result they came to the conclusion to send forth two of their number—Barnabas and Paul—as representatives of the whole in mission work. We are not informed in what manner the Lord directed them to this. It is possible that it was after the same manner that we today, under similar circumstances, considering such a case, would say—We believe, after studying the Scriptures and praying, and seeking to know the mind of the Lord, that it would be his will that such ones of our number should go out for a public service of the truth. We believe that we are guided to this conclusion, not by any wrong spirit of pride or fond ambition to have the name of sending out missionaries, nor with any mercenary motive,—but that we are actuated by the spirit of the truth, the spirit of Christ, the holy Spirit, in this determination,—that our motives are sincere. We believe that we have the Lord's mind on the subject; we believe that it is the Lord's will that we as a congregation should send forth these two as representatives of our number, to carry the light to others.

In this manner, or in some manner, the conviction came strongly to the entire church at Antioch that this was its duty and its privilege. It is worthy of note, too, that it sought out its very best for this service—thus letting the spirit of self-sacrifice prevail. They still had Simeon Niger and Lucius and Menaen, talented brethren, and the latter one of considerable worldly standing and influence, tho evidently an aged man—foster-brother to Herod Antipas. But none of these remaining were the equals of Paul and Barnabas. This liberal disposition on the part of the church is worthy of praise, and we are sure brought to it a large measure of the Lord's blessing. Not that we should be reckless of the interests of the home congregation in serving others, so as to leave ourselves destitute; but in making our sacrifices to the Lord and his service we are to seek to give the best we have. No doubt the Lord blessed the church correspondingly, and made up to them the loss sustained in the giving of these two brethren to the mission work. No doubt the other members of the congregation were all the more energized, stimulated, brought forward in activity, and made the more useful.

The proper course decided upon, the congregation fasted and prayed and laid their hands on Paul and Barnabas, and sent them on their missionary tour with their blessing and God-speed. In our practical time some of us may be inclined to pay too little heed to incidentals of this kind; there might be today too much disposition amongst us to take a vote on what we believed to be the Lord's will, and to shake hands with the brethren, and say "Goodbye," without the fasting and praying and imposition of hands. We would be inclined to ask, What good would these things do? What purpose would they serve? They would do good to all; they would serve to impress upon all—the missionaries starting and the brethren remaining—the importance of the Lord's service, and the fact that those who remained were having a share with those who went. The laying on of hands would probably be done by the congregation, through the other representatives or

Elders. But this proceeding did not signify, as is generally understood today, an "Ordination;" for the Apostle Paul and Barnabas had been recognized in the church at Antioch for a considerable time as amongst their principal prophets and teachers. It would not signify authority to preach, as Ordination sometimes means today amongst Christians of various sects and parties. It simply meant that—We, the congregation, by this laying on of hands of our representative elders, are sending forth these two men, Paul and Barnabas, on a missionary tour; and that they go, not only as the representatives of the Lord, and as representatives of themselves, but also as representatives of the church of the Lord at Antioch, and as such we hold ourselves responsible for their *maintenance*. We will supply them the needful assistance, and thus will be co-laborers with them,—sharers in their labors, sympathizers with them in their difficulties and trials, helpers of them in their necessities, and partakers with them also in whatever results shall come to the Lord's praise through their efforts. Accordingly, we find that after this missionary tour the two brethren returned to Antioch, and made report. It would appear that subsequently the Apostle Paul, at least, travelled without any such dependence upon the church at Antioch,—without any such praying and laying on of hands, and without any subsequent reports of results of labors,—tho still in love and in sympathy with them, so far as we may judge.

The nature of the praying offered in connection with the sending forth of the missionaries we can readily imagine;—they were, doubtless, prayers for the Lord's blessing upon them, for their guidance, for their support and strengthening, and that their journey might be profitable and to the Lord's praise. But why the fasting? says one. What advantage could accrue from fasting at such a time? We answer that the Lord and the apostles and prophets have all set us an example in the matter of fasting. It is claimed, no doubt with truth, that many people overeat; and that restraints in the matter of diet would be profitable to them physically and mentally and morally, without any reference whatever to its being a sacrifice or oblation unto the Lord. No doubt this is true, yet it is for each person to decide for himself as to what would be the proper amount and kind of food for him—best calculated to help him in spiritual matters, that his time and talent and influence may count as largely as possible for the Lord's praise and for his own spiritual progress. We remind our readers again that there are other appetites besides those for food and drink which may properly be considered in connection with this matter of fasting—all the various desires of the flesh need restraining, and such self-restraint and the bringing of our minds, our thoughts, our words, our conduct and our food under such restraints as will be most beneficial to us as new creatures in Christ, is the very essence and spirit of true fasting, and such fasting will surely bring a blessing and permit a closer approach to the Lord and a keener realization of his love and favor.

Luke, the narrator, keeps prominently before us the fact that these two missionaries were not sent forth regardless of the Lord's will, but by the holy spirit—however the Lord's mind may have been ascertained. We believe that it was ascertained by a vote of the church; that the church, having come into the attitude of harmony with God, through prayer, fasting, consecration, etc., was possessed of the holy Spirit, and that to such a degree that their action would properly be considered the action of the holy spirit through them.

The missionaries went from Antioch, a distance of eighteen miles, to the seaport town of Seleucia, where they took ship for the nearest large city in the Island of Cyprus. It was probably as good a place to begin as any, and had the advantage of being the home country of Barnabas, who would be familiar with the dialect of the people, their customs, etc.

John Mark, the writer of the Gospel by Mark, cousin of Barnabas, and son of one of the Marys at Jerusalem (Acts 12:12, 25), is noted as being their minister, attendant servant, and this, together with the fact that he was not sent out by the church as a missionary with the others, shows us clearly that while all brethren are to be very highly esteemed as brethren this does not signify that they have all one office or one work. It is the same lesson which the apostle inculcates in 1 Cor. 12, saying, "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." The eye serves the hand in some respects; the hand serves the eye in other respects; the foot serves both in still other respects, and both hand and eye serve the foot. The lesson here is that each of us should seek to find the position in which the Lord is pleased to have us and to use us, and finding this we are

to exercise ourselves therein as best we are able;—continuing, if the will of God be such, to abide in that condition and service forever, and thankful for the privilege of serving the body of Christ in any capacity. In the Lord's providence, however, those who serve faithfully in the humbler positions of service are very apt to be advanced to some still greater and more important service. Nevertheless, it is not for us to cultivate ambitions, with their accompanying spirit of envy; but to say rather,

"Content whatever lot I see
Since 'tis my God that leadeth me."

If the Lord opens before us more important doors of service, and we are sure that the opening is of him, we are to go forward rejoicing in his service in any capacity, and confident of a blessing in return.

Altho these brethren, Paul and Barnabas, fully appreciated the fact that Gentiles might now have access to the blessings of the Gospel, nevertheless, in every place they entered into the synagogues of the Jews; because the Jews who already believed Moses and the prophets, and who already expected Messiah, would necessarily be in a much better attitude of mind to receive their message, than would be the Gentiles, who had no knowledge of such matters, and who, therefore, would have to approach the subject more gradually, and would require more instruction. Indeed, we may suppose that the larger proportion of converts made between the time of our Lord's resurrection and the fall of Jerusalem, A. D. 70, were made amongst the Jews, and that comparatively few Gentiles accepted Christ up to that time. Even tho the door was open for them, still we are to remember that only those who had the hearing ear could hear the message; that only those with the anointed sight could see and appreciate the open door.

Similarly, now, in the end of this Gospel age, the work is chiefly with Christians—it is a harvest work. As Paul and Barnabas went chiefly to the synagogues, so we today are to go chiefly to the churches. As they found in the synagogues a few ready to receive their message, so we today find a few in the churches who are prepared to receive the truth as it is now shining in the Lord's Word. The majority, now as then, are deeply immersed in formalism, and draw nigh to the Lord with their lips when their hearts are far from him, set upon the cares of this life, or filled with endeavors to attain riches, or fame or something. We today are at a disadvantage in that the sects of Christendom and their synagogues are determinedly shut against the Gospel of the kingdom; whereas, in the apostle's day there was access and an opportunity, at least, for the presentation of the truth. Now, even our attempt to speak to the sheep, through the printed page, on the outside of their synagogues would be resisted;—if the laws of the world would permit it there would be no opportunity for even handing a tract or a paper to our dear brethren, whom we long to help into the glorious light of present truth, which has done so much for us.

The missionary tour consumed probably considerable time, as the three went from village to village, preaching Christ, until they reached the city of Paphos, at the far end of the island. We are not to suppose they made many converts. What they did do was to witness to the truth;—here and there finding an "Israelite indeed" who would have an "ear" and receive a blessing. At Paphos they found Sergius Paulus, a man of good judgment, the governor of the Island, procurator or representative of the Roman Senate. He had a hearing ear even before the apostles got there, and the Adversary, noting this, was at work upon him through one of his servants, Elymas, a sorcerer or magician, who had already ingratiated himself with the proconsul and gained considerable influence, and was esteemed his friend. We are not to wonder that a man of sound judgment, as the proconsul is represented to have been, should be so interested in the magician and his doings. We are to remember, on the contrary, that similarly there are some men of ability today who are to some extent under the influence of the same adversary and his bewitching agents—spirit mediums. Besides, the magicians in olden times were a compound or mixture of scientists and miracle workers, and usually very bright men.

When the proconsul heard something respecting the teachings of Paul and Barnabas he sent for them, desiring to know more. Then came a conflict between the powers of light and the powers of darkness, between the truth and the error. There is no harmony between the two, there can be no partnership; they are opponents at every point; and so in this case, as soon as the magician discovered that the proconsul was coming under the influence of the truth, he used his every power to dissuade him, to turn him from the doctrines—doubtless by misrepresentation, which is one of the adversary's most common