

harvest work. He intimates that the vials of his wrath will be poured upon us speedily if we do not quickly move the reverse lever. Some of these dear friends appear to be perfectly willing that the *nominal* control of the WATCH TOWER and the WATCH TOWER Bible and Tract Society should remain in the hands to which the Lord entrusted it, provided, Brother Russell will hearken to and follow the voice of the Lord through them; others would evidently prefer that the harvest work be blown to atoms that they might become more prominent. As a sample of this critical, bombastic, self-righteous and domineering spirit, we quote the closing words of C's letter; (Italics are ours):—"Unless steps are taken to correct this evil I shall pray for the overthrow of the arrangement, that it may come into judgment; but at present I will pray that you may be able to see the matter in its true light, and I am assured that the prayer of a righteous man availeth much, and the Apostle cites the prayer of Elias, to show how the Lord hears our petitions. With much Christian love, etc."

Thus our Lord's words are fulfilled in us over and over again from every quarter, "They shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake." And as the Master was called Beelzebub we are said to have a "lying, evil spirit." We tremble not at the threat that we shall be *prayed against* as above, with its intimation that the Lord has been neglecting the harvest work, waiting for this dear brother to give the intimation as to what must be done. We fear none of these fears. We weep not for ourself; our sorrow is for these poor, deluded brethren. We perceive that they are being weighed by the Lord. We fear that they will be found wanting in *brotherly love*—the one important test of membership in the body of Christ—the requirement of the *one* commandment which the Lord gave to his people.—John 13:34; 15:12.

Yes, we may well fear for these, and pray for them. We ask all who claim membership in the Anointed to join petitions with ours that these dear ones may be recovered from their present blindness.

The Apostles James and John, indignant at the refusal of the people of Samaria to sell food to our Lord and his disciples, asked our Master, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire from heaven to consume these men and their city?" Our Lord replied, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of."

So now we say to the few dear brethren so deeply exercised concerning the vow, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of." You have been confused. At heart you surely do not mean all that you are hinting, saying, threatening and doing. We judge you not, condemn you not; but we do ask you to judge yourselves. Are you *exercising* the spirit of love which

you assured us is your real heart sentiment? "By their fruits ye shall know them," said our Master. Let us each look after the fruitage of his own heart and life. "God is not mocked." Anger, malice, envy, hatred, strife, are *works* (fruits) of the flesh and of the devil.

IS THE VOW EXTREME?

We hold that the vow is not extreme in view of the condition of things which our understanding of God's Word leads us to expect as "nigh, even at the door." We remind you of the Apostle Paul's declaration of his willingness to take a Vow, "to eat no meat while the world standeth," if such a course should seem to him *expedient*, in the interest of weaker brethren. The vow which we advocate as now very *expedient* is far less exacting than the one the Apostle declared would be *proper* if expedient. But taking it, let us keep it in letter and in spirit. "Vow and pay unto the Lord your God."—Psa. 76:11.

Someone opposing the vow suggests that those who take the vow are so bound by it that should they through sickness or for other reasons forget or neglect to daily remember in prayer the harvest work, etc., it would be an *unpardonable sin*. We will not call in question the sincerity of those who thus pervert the truth in their attempt to hinder others; we will suppose that they spoke out of the abundance of their ignorance.

As above set forth the vow is a solemn engagement which should not be broken. So is our baptismal vow, our consecration vow—to be dead to the world and self and sin. Suppose that having vowed to the Lord to walk in the footsteps of Jesus in the narrow way, and that at some unguarded moment you side-stepped—what then? Were you doomed therefore to the second death?

Oh no! for just such errors we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." "If any man [in Christ] sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." "Let us come boldly to the throne of the heavenly grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need."

As already elsewhere pointed out a *wilful*, deliberate violation of a vow would bring the full sin penalty. A mixed sin, partially wilful, would be partly forgivable and partly subject to stripes or punishment. A wholly unintentional sin would be wholly forgiven upon request. We repeat, therefore, our exhortation, that the vow be taken by all of God's consecrated children; but not without careful examination and in full determination.

VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER

ISRAEL'S INTEREST IN TURKEY'S TROUBLES

Like a bursting bomb, disturbing European peace, has come the announcement of a rupture of the "Berlin Treaty" by Austria's annexing two Turkish provinces. Russia at once announced her desire that the Treaty be revised, and Bulgaria declared her independence of Turkey. The "Berlin Treaty" of thirty years ago claimed that the Turks were unable properly to govern portions of their territory in which Christians resided, and divided the supervision of these amongst the other powers. Bosnia and Herzegovina were two of these, put under Austria's care. It will be remembered that Palestine was put under British protection, and Egypt unitedly under French and British supervision, but that France avoided her responsibility in favor of the British.

Whether the present trouble shall result in a general war or not it probably will mean the rupture of the "Berlin Treaty," and that the several provinces supervised by other nations will come more completely under their control.

This would make Palestine a British province, like Canada, and mean as full liberty to the Jews as they have in Canada—to buy, build, elect local government, etc. We are not, however, to expect for Palestine full independence before 1915.

NEWS FROM JUDEA

In a recent letter from Jerusalem, Mr. W. H. Dunn refers to the remarkable development in the Jewish National Zionist movement which took place in Jerusalem during the fifteen months he was in England: "Great numbers of Jews are returning to Jerusalem, not for repentance or confession of sins, but simply because they must go somewhere, and the Sultan allows them to enter without hindrance. In that short time no fewer than 5,000 Russian Jews landed at Jaffa. These Jews are investing what money they have in buying land

and buying and building houses. So great is their activity that it is a matter of concern to the foreign residents. The Moslems sell to them however without demur. They believe this land really belongs to the Jews. The development in Jewish education is also striking, and kindergarten schools are being opened for the children. Hebrew is being taught and becoming a living language, and new Hebrew words are being formed so as to make the old tongue helpful for up-to-date use. It is common to hear Hebrew spoken in the streets."—*Exchange*.

UNION OF BAPTISTS AND DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

The Rev. I. J. Spencer, pastor of the Central Christian church (or Disciples of Christ, the term used by members of this denomination), will accept an invitation to address the National Baptist Congress, to be held in Chicago, November 10 to 12, upon the subject, "What Definite Steps Should Be Immediately Taken Toward the Union of Baptists, Free Baptists, and Disciples of Christ?" Other speakers representing the first two denominations also will discuss the topic, and it is expected that the discussion will result in a long stride toward the union of the two denominations—Baptists and Disciples of Christ, the first steps toward which were taken two years ago.

At the National Congress of the Disciples in Indianapolis, in March, 1908, by invitation Dr. E. Y. Mullins, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary of Louisville, and Mr. Spencer discussed the topic: "What Does the New Testament Teach Concerning the Doctrine of the Remission of Sins?" One session of the congress was entirely given to the addresses.

The similarity of the teachings of the denominations on vital points aroused great enthusiasm. This gave rise to the

suggestion that through committees the two denominations might learn as exactly as possible just what are their doctrinal differences.

The original drafts of the statements have been completed and are before the members of the committee for suggestions. When finally revised these statements will be given wide publicity through the religious press, and in the course of time will come before the congress of the denominations. The rough drafts show that they are surprisingly alike. When this is known through publication, the belief is held that in a spirit of fraternity and desire for unity the denominations will waive minor differences and merge congregations, acting as individuals, yet probably in concert, pursuant to a recommendation from their congresses.

In western Canada, Disciples and Baptists have already united, are using churches in common and share things alike.—*Courier-Journal*.

IS CHRISTIANITY DECAYING?

The pastor of the Fifth Avenue Baptist church, New York City, Rev. Dr. Charles F. Aked, who came to its direction from a London pulpit, in his sermon Sunday said:

"When I first came to this great city of New York, the center of empire, its broad avenues thronged with eager, strenuous crowds, pulsating with energy and hope, I saw the buoyancy of the American people. I learned of their hope and endeavor and electric activity. Now, I want to learn the signs of the times. What is the condition of Christianity in New York? When I interview my parishioners, and they are among the most representative in the city, I find the spirit of religious depression very unlike the spirit of abounding enterprise in business, in manufacturing, in engineering and construction.

SOME BIG LOSSES

"To turn to that mighty religious organization, the Catholic church, to which over 1,000,000 New Yorkers give fealty, even there the losses are heavy. I think that church is doing a magnificent work, but with all its enthusiasm and rallying force it does not nor ever did hold its own in this city or in the nation at large. There are about 16,000,000 Catholics in continental United States. Now, in our immigration for ninety years back, no less than 15,000,000 were Catholics. If all remained loyal to its tenets they would number 45,000,000 now instead of 16,000,000.

"The Protestants have lost ground, too, when the filling up of the country is counted. Our own denomination, the

Baptist, reflects the general trend. The increase among the Baptists of America has been equal to only one-fourth of the birth rate among us, proving that three out of four of our Baptist population have fallen away from us. We have in this city 40,000 Baptists. If we held all that was coming to us we should have had at least 150,000. All the Christian churches in city and country in this nation show a similar condition.

"The decline of Christianity is universal. In England, in France, in Spain, in Italy and Germany we hear the same cry.

"Only lately I was talking to an English clergyman. He told me that not merely is there a great falling off in churchgoers in England, but that the class of people who frequent churches are becoming inferior.

THE BLAME

"The church here is out of touch with the masses. Everything has progressed except Christianity. Many thinking and progressive young men and women have been driven from the church by the stupidity of the preachers. The pulpit has too many bigots, too many bores, too many hell-fire screechers for the enlightened thought of the day. Compelled to a life of grinding poverty, treading always the same old paths of a thousand years, hide-bound and restricted, the church of Christ has become a laughing stock—parrots of the dead church cry instead of preachers of the living Christ.

THE AWAKENING

"The church is obliged to accept any applicant for the ministry who is respectable. Even with this latitude, Baptist, Presbyterian and Methodist vocations show a remarkable falling off in 25 years, while the needs for an enlarging clergy were never felt so much as now. There must come an awakening when pious and God-loving men will see a paramount duty in actively enlisting in the cause of salvation and finding its exposition in preaching the Gospel and in doing good to everyone within the sphere of their influence."—*Utica Globe*.

REV. DR. GOODMAN'S METHOD

Five hundred men packed the new Men's Church at Atlantic City Sunday night, and puffed cigars and pipes furnished by Rev. Sidney Goodman during the sermon, which was sandwiched between a special entertainment, also provided by the pastor of new ideas. Moving pictures, stereopticon views illustrating the parables, and singing by professionals who volunteered from beach-front cafes and theatres, made up the remainder of the programme.—*Exchange*.

"LOVING KINDNESS, O HOW GREAT!"

2 Samuel 9.—OCTOBER 18.

Golden Text:—"And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another."—Eph. 4:32.

"I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me."—Prov. 8:17.

The Lord gives us a deep insight into David's character, and shows us one of the abilities he possessed which constituted him "A man after God's own heart." Entirely overlooking and forgetting the evils which he experienced from King Saul during the years in which the latter sought his life, King David remembered with appreciation the conduct of Saul's son, Jonathan; how the latter had befriended him, and how he had made a covenant that in turn he would show kindnesses to Jonathan's family. For a time, busy with the affairs of the kingdom, King David apparently forgot to make any special inquiry respecting the family of Saul, but something occurred which brought prominently to his mind his obligation to Jonathan. Presumably this was about the middle of his reign; and quite possibly it was David's serious sin with Bathsheba and his hearty repentance therefore that now quickened his mind in respect to his responsibilities to those about him, including the family of his deceased friend.

Ziba, chief servant of King Saul, was called to David and inquiry was made respecting any of the remaining members of Saul's family. This disclosed the fact that there was still living a son of Jonathan, who was a child of five years at the time of the death of Saul and Jonathan, and who was lamed in his feet by falling from his nurse's arms as they fled at the news of the defeat.

King David explained to Ziba that he desired to do kindnesses to Saul's posterity, and bade him bring to court Jonathan's lame son Mephibosheth. The King's command was obeyed, although it must have been received with great fear and trepidation and doubt with respect to its sincerity. It was the custom at the time, that when one king succeeded to the dominion of another all the heirs of the throne should be sought and killed, lest they should give trouble later to

the new dynasty. This was evidently expected of King David, and hence the secrecy in respect to the whereabouts of Jonathan's son was kept so that the King knew not of him. However, Ziba was a man of large family interests and realized that it was incumbent upon him to perform the King's bidding, even if it should mean the death of Saul's heir. And the latter, being lame and knowing that his present residence was known to the King, could do nothing less than respond and present himself at the court. His fear that the King's words might be treacherous, his thoughts that so great a generosity as has been suggested could not be expected or trusted, doubtless caused him fear and trepidation as, coming to the presence of the King, he prostrated himself at his feet, saying, "Behold thy servant!"

"Fear not," said David, "for I will surely show thee kindnesses for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the lands of Saul, thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually."

With the people of oriental lands the eating of food together as friends implies a pledge of friendship and fidelity; and to eat continually at the table signifies membership in the family. We are not to consider this a light matter, for David had two wives and their children were hopeful of being his successors to the kingdom and this bringing a stranger into the family might properly be considered as a menace to their interests, especially as that stranger already, according to the usages of nations, had a prior claim to the throne, superior even to that of the King.

The entire operation shows us the fearlessness of the King and confidence that the kingdom should not be taken away from his posterity; and it shows us also the confidence which all the members must have felt towards him and respect to his judgment as to the affairs of the home and his headship in

his home. This headship we cannot suppose was used in an austere and arbitrary manner, but with loving kindnesses and generosity and in the interest of his entire household. He who could be thus kind to the son of a friend, certainly could be kind and generous also to the members of his own family.

LESSONS FOR SPIRITUAL ISRAELITES

The most advanced even of the Lord's consecrated people may draw some helpful suggestions from the incidents of this lesson.

(1) A friend in need is a friend indeed. Jonathan had been David's friend in his time of need and thus had attested his nobility of character, his faithfulness to principles of righteousness, his loyalty to the Lord, even when the Lord was taking his kingdom power to give it to David. David's friendship came in time of need to the poor man with lame feet, who lived in secret, fearful that anyone should recognize him lest his life should be taken.

(2) David's searching for the opportunities to do good reminds us that such should be our attitude; that we should not merely wait until circumstances force upon our attention the troubles of others and their need of assistance. Well do the Scriptures say, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor." This is a God-like quality, and whoever practices it is to that extent godly. The Apostle says of God, that he looked down and beheld the "groaning of the prisoners" in their condition of sin, degradation, dying. He looked further to note that there were no other means of assistance, that they were wholly dependent upon him; then his own arm brought salvation. The arm of the Lord Jesus was revealed for man's uplift from the condition of death back to harmony with God. Our Lord suggested, "Be ye kind even as your Father in heaven; for he is kind unto the unthankful and the evil and the good."

In harmony with this, our generous sentiments and helpfulness should not be confined to those who have claims upon us through love relationship. Our generosity is to go beyond, even to our enemies. "Yea, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink." So shall we be the children of our Father in heaven; so shall we show that we have his disposition, "the mind of Christ," who, when we were enemies, died for us. We are not, however, urging the same degree of love and benevolence toward all. The Lord specially loves those who are in accord with him—and so should we, but our love and sympathy and assistance must not be confined only to these, for we have the admonition that "If ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? And if ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? for even sinners do the same." But God commended his love to us as an example of what ours should be in that his Son, "Christ, died for the ungodly."

(3) David's justice and generosity are both manifested in the course he pursued. Instead of coveting Saul's possessions and using his power to attach these to his own he deliberately settled the matter that the profits of Saul's estate should all go to his son, who at the same time would be continually partaker of the King's bounty at his table. Comparatively few would have been so just and so generous. The incident gives David's character a fresh luster and helps us to understand why he was so beloved of the Lord. He was not content with merely wishing to do right, willing to do right, he went forward and dealt justice. He put his bright thoughts and generous impulses into practice, and made "foot-prints on the sands of time" which have helped to mark the proper pathway for the millions who have since examined these in the holy records.

OUR FIRST GOLDEN TEXT

While the Scriptures everywhere inculcate the thought that God's people are to be generous towards strangers as well as their own people, they make common the thought that they should have a special interest in one another, as the Apostle expresses in these words, "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another." Ah! Yes. Kindness is certainly one of the elements of love, as the Apostle says, and tender-heartedness must characterize those who would have a participation with our Lord in his kingdom. Hardness of heart and cruelty are evidences of degradation—the loss of the image of God. The coldness and the hardheartedness of the world make countless thousands mourn, even more than their circumstances necessitate. As the Apostle declares, "The whole creation groaneth," waiting for the King of Glory, who will bring in restitution. And it should be a part of the mission of every member of the body of Christ to do something to help ameliorate the world's difficulty. And each may do something, even if it be no more than the cheering word. Indeed, we rejoice as we see the manifestations of the

coming kingdom of our Lord, "The times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."—Acts 3:20.

"FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER"

Are not the Lord's people commended "to be perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"? And if this is so, what in each other's conduct would they have to forgive? Ah! there it is. At heart they must will perfection absolutely; but how to perform it they find not; hence, as the Apostle says, in many things we all fail. "There is none righteous; no, not one." More than this, the Lord's elect are not, according to the flesh, the highest, the noblest the best. "Not many great, not many noble, not many rich hath God chosen." While the Apostle intimates that some great, some rich and some noble may be expected amongst the elect, he emphatically declares that God has chosen chiefly the mean things of the world, and the things that are despised, and the things that are not, to bring to naught the things that are. How strange! Nevertheless, it is just like the Lord to pass by the self-righteous and the proud, and to declare that "Only those who humble themselves shall be exalted and those that exalt themselves shall be abased." This fact, then, that God will accept none but the humble, accounts for the fact that those who have received the message in humility are chiefly the mean, the ignoble. It is only the humble-minded, taught in the school of Christ, who are able and willing to accept the ignoble ones who rally to the Lord's standard and who may be accepted. To love the ignoble signifies that we must view them from the divine standpoint and love them as God loves them—not because of their ignoble and mean qualities, but in spite of these; because of their heart's desires towards God and righteousness. As we come to love and appreciate all those who stand for and strive for those principles, we take our position with God and view the situation from the divine standpoint, having compassion upon those who are weak and out of the way and doing all we can to assist them, if they are of those who love righteousness and hate iniquity and are striving in harmony with their ideals.

The more such have to contend with the more will they call forth the love and sympathy of God and all who are his. God has promised to "cover their blemishes" and this must be the sentiment of all who are on his side. As the Apostle said in this text we must be disposed to forgive one another and, as he again in 1 Cor. 12 teaches, that "Those members in the body of Christ which are most ungainly," upon them we should bestow more efforts and energy for their assistance, especially covering their blemishes, especially assisting them. Along this line the Apostle elsewhere says that we ought to follow the example of Jesus in laying down our lives for the brethren—"We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves."—Romans 15:1.

Too often the Lord's people forget this injunction and are disposed to lay down their lives for themselves, for their own comfort, or to lay down their lives, their time, their energy, in fellowshiping with those of the brethren most congenial to them in cultivation or in advancement. Is not this pleasing ourselves in ignoring to serve those members of the body who need our assistance most—the more ignoble?

OUR SECOND GOLDEN TEXT

The Sunday-School Lesson Committee have appointed this date for a special prayer to God in behalf of Sunday-School people the world over. While the lesson itself does not seem to have been chosen in connection with this thought our second Golden Text is very appropriate to it, "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me." This is said respecting wisdom, but God himself is the very personification of wisdom, and hence this applies to God. Similarly to those who are privileged to hear of God's grace, Christ is wisdom. As the Apostle declares, "He is made unto us wisdom"—unto all who rightly, properly accept him.

It is not our thought that the Gospel call was sent especially to children, nor do we find our Lord's teaching specially adapted to the child mind, nor that he taught children, nor that he or the apostles established Sunday-Schools. (See our comment on Sunday-School work in DAWN-STUDIES, Vol. 6, pages 544-7.) We may properly say, however, that whatever were the limitations of the Jewish Law which hindered Christ and the apostles from becoming ministers of the truth until after they were thirty years of age, there are no such limitations applying now, and hence "Whosoever has an ear to hear, let him hear," however old, however young.

We encourage the dear brethren of the truth everywhere to see to it that their children have the very best religious instruction, as well as their own example in daily living. Every

home should have its Sunday-School class, even though there be but one child. Every Sunday should have its quiet, sacred hour of fellowship, communion and praise, participated in by the parents and the children. It is beautiful to note the influence of a proper home-life in the families of some—in joy and love and truth. Will not all so resolve and by the grace of God fulfil?

There is a charm about childhood—its innocence, its faith—and the child-mind is peculiarly susceptible to the truth and its spirit, too, the spirit of consecration. How blessed it would be if all of our children from earliest infancy were taught to love the Lord as the Giver of all good; to consider his will, to consecrate their little all to him! Such children so instructed often become teachers of their parents, showing forth the true spirit of devotion. Here and there on our pilgrim visits we are introduced to little ones thus early given to the Lord and trained in harmony with his will. Some of these have the spirit of devotion so strongly developed that any pennies coming to them, instead of being spent for sweets, are laid by as consecrated to the Lord, to be sent to Brother Russell from time to time to print tracts to help the people understand the Bible and to see that God is love. We seek not the pennies of the dear children, but their welfare, the great spiritual blessing which comes into their lives and which will surely go with them through coming days to

their comfort and joy. The little, loving hearts thus early given to God, surely find a blessing and a protection from much of the evil that is in the world.

Many of the little ones who thus began a life of consecration and self-denial for the Truth's sake before they could rightly appreciate the situation in full have since matured most remarkably, and at twelve and thirteen years have requested opportunity for symbolizing their consecration, and have given clear evidence of a comprehensive knowledge of the fundamentals of the Gospel and of a heart-appreciation of the sacrifice presented to the Lord.

Our Lord said, "I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me." And similarly our prayers need not go up on behalf of the world, for whose blessing the Millennial kingdom and its opportunities have been provided, but our petitions may ascend on behalf of those who have become consecrated to him, our brethren in Christ, and this will include the younger ones of the consecrated as well as the aged. We may also in a general way include those whom the Father has given to us as our wards, as being under our care and instruction; we may pray for these favorable providences of God for their highest welfare, and for ourselves wisdom and grace, that we may present to them the Lord's message in its best form and exemplify the same in our daily conduct and in our dealing with our children.

LORD, THIS VOW THAT I HAVE TAKEN

(Tune: Nettleton)

Heavenly Father, I adore thee!
Hallowed be thy holy name;
Mighty angels bow before thee,
Should not mortals do the same?
May thy rule of love control me,
And thy will in me be done;
Hear the Vow I make before thee,
In the name of Christ, thy Son.

Daily will I pray, remember
All thy servants, dearest Lord,
Those who labor as one family,
To dispense thy precious Word;
Those who lonely go, as Pilgrims,
Those who travel two by two,
Those who volunteer to scatter
Golden gems, like morning dew.

O'er my thoughts, and words and actions,
I a closer watch will keep,
That I may be used more freely
In the feeding of thy sheep.
Oh, I want thy Word to cleanse me,
By its power to set me free
From all fleshly imperfections,
And to make me more like thee.

Lord, I know the powers of evil
Are increasing every day;
Trying to ensnare and hinder
Those who walk the narrow way.
Never will I listen to them;
Lord, I fear their subtle power,
From their every snare protect me,
Help me, keep me, every hour.

Lord, in all my daily dealings
Toward my brethren in the Truth,
I will not by word or action
Do what thou wouldst not approve.
Purity shall mark my conduct;
Chaste in thought and word I'll be,
That the image of my Master
May be perfected in me.

Lord, this Vow, that I have taken,
I could never keep alone.
When I think of self, I tremble;
When I look to thee I'm strong.
Leaning on thee, in my weakness,
Trusting thee for promised grace,
I will take this Vow and keep it,
Till I see thee face to face.

Rebecca F. Doney.

A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

Psalms 32.—OCTOBER 25.

Golden Text—"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

After a most prosperous career, about thirty years from the time of his anointing and when he was somewhere about fifty years of age, King David fell into most grievous sins. In quick succession he violently broke three of the ten commandments. He coveted Uriah's wife; he committed adultery with her, and he indirectly murdered her husband. Dividing the ten commandments into two parts, the one appertaining to the Lord and the other to humanity, King David certainly violated the second portion about as grievously as could be possible. A fouler record than this of man's inhumanity to man can scarcely be imagined. The Scriptures offer no apology, nor do they in any degree shield the offender or justify his course. In view of these admitted facts skeptics sometimes inquire, "How is it that such a man is regarded as a great prophet of the Lord? How is it that of him it is said that 'He was a man after God's own heart'? Does God approve of such a course as his, represented by those sins?"

We reply: Those transgressions do not represent David's course of life. They were exceptions; they were contrary to his heart; they were repented of; they were punished; David was forgiven. Today's lesson is intended to bring this matter fully and clearly before our attention; to show us the underlying principles connected with what God approves and disapproves in his creatures. There is a philosophy con-

nected with all of the divine dealings, the appreciation of which is helpful to such as desire to be in harmony with the Lord, because it will enable them the better to govern their course of life, that we may also be as was David, men and women after "God's own heart"—such as please him.

ONE PECULIARITY OF THE BIBLE

The Bible holds up before us the naked facts of its heroes as no other religious book does, and in this particular it commends itself as truthful testimony of the Lord. It tells not only of Samson's strength, but also of his weaknesses. It tells of Rahab's favor and of her previous immorality. It tells of Peter's denying the Lord with cursings, as well as his noble traits and faithfulness to death. It tells us that amongst the early Church was a Judas as well as an Ananias and Sapphira. It tells of Adam's disobedience and condemnation to death, as well as of Christ's obedience and his voluntary sacrifice for the redemption of Adam and incidentally his race. So, then, the mention of David and his experiences in sin, sharply contrasted with the majority of his experiences as a faithful servant of God, is not our keeping, but the Scriptural usage, though it is out of accord with the custom of men and of other religious writings. Instead of upsetting our trust in the Lord and his Word, these facts only strengthen our faith and give us assurance of the truthfulness of the narrative and the good intentions of their

writer, and of the wisdom and power of God in respect to the use of all these weak servants in connection with the ministry of the truth.

It might be said in extenuation of King David's course that in ancient times kings were accorded despotic powers and esteemed to be above the laws of their realm. This, however, is no real excuse, for King David understood well that he was not superior to the divine law, but on the contrary amenable to it. We find even amongst heathen kings a much higher standard of morality, a more close approach to the requirements of the divine law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." [Note the attitude of King Pharaoh towards Abraham's wife. (Gen. 12:18, 19.) Similarly the conduct of King Abimelech.—Gen. 20:2-5, 9-11.]

COMPASSION, FORGIVENESS, SIN-COVERING

Another peculiarity in respect to the Bible is that the God which it reveals is a merciful one. The gods of the heathen are cold, merciless, terrible—deficient of any attribute of love and compassion. The God of the Bible commands himself to us in that "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly," and made it possible for God to be just and yet be also the justifier of repentant sinners believing in Jesus and returning to his favor through faith in and obedience to Jesus. This is the essence of the lesson, and we have no hesitancy in saying that David's sincere repentance for his sins and the declaration of God's forgiveness and the continuance with David of divine favor have been a lesson of great value to many poor, weak, fallen members of our race, as they have attempted to come into the presence of the holy Jehovah and have realized their own blemishes and unworthiness of his favor. Well do the Scriptures declare, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mightest be feared," revered. Moreover it is this quality of the divine character that calls forth more than fear, more than reverence from those who appreciate it; it calls forth love; as it is written, "We love him because he first loved us, and sent his Son to be a satisfaction for our sins." Well has the poet declared that this is

"LOVE DIVINE, ALL LOVE EXCELLING"

This love of God, as we come to appreciate it, becomes a constraining, drawing, influencing power in the hearts and lives of his people. Thus the Apostle declares, "The love of Christ constraineth us," for if one died for all, then all were dead (under dying conditions); and we who live (we who through faith in Jesus' sacrifice have passed from death into life—justification) should henceforth live not unto ourselves (selfishly), but unto him who died for us.

The Psalm which constitutes our lesson is supposed to have been composed by the Prophet after his heart had returned to peace with God through assurance of divine forgiveness of his sins. Its opening sentence takes this standpoint. David was the blessed man who had experienced divine forgiveness and covering of his transgression, his sin. He was the man to whom the Lord no longer imputed iniquity and in whose heart was no deception, no secret longing for sin, with merely the restraints of fear, but who had a heart and mind fully turned away from sin and in absolute accord with divine justice and all of its righteous requirements.

Instead of rebelling against the laws of God as hindrances to wilfulness and wickedness, the King delighted in the law of the Lord and meditated therein by day and by night. He was pleased henceforth to measure all of his conduct, yea, his thoughts also, by the divine standard, realizing that these were not only righteous altogether, but that every contrary course would surely mete out to him discomfort, trouble.

GROANING ALL THE DAY LONG

Verses 3 and 4 briefly rehearse the King's unhappy experiences during nearly a year. The King's transgression began in his mind, as do all sins. It is on this account that the Scriptures urge the Lord's people to "Keep their hearts with all diligence, for out of them are the issues of life." The King coveted his neighbor's wife, and in the language of our God, "He committed adultery with her in his heart." The first step of sin having been taken the King's conscience was hushed to sleep in some unaccountable manner, while the strength of his vigorous mind was turned aside to the gratification of unholy desires. These accomplished, his case seemed to him hopeless except in one direction. Regret and remorse, already begun in his mind, brought terrors as he realized that under the Jewish law both parties were to be stoned to death at the instance of the wronged person. Hence his command to his chief general, Joab, that Uriah, the wronged husband, be placed in the front of the battle and then be deserted by the remainder of the corps, that he might be slain by his enemies. Joab understood the situation. Indeed, the whole matter probably leaked out, and poor David

was in serious trouble every way. Not only had Uriah been one of his prominent, valued men, but the grandfather of Bathsheba, Ahithophel, was King David's chief counsellor in State. That the incident did lead to an estrangement between this man and his sovereign is quite evident; later on in Absalom's rebellion he joined his cause as against the king. Apparently, too, these various burdens upon David's mind and heart brought upon the king a spell of sickness.

Sin is always a disturbing element under all conditions, and more particularly as the sinner has light and responsibility and therefore condemnation of conscience. Indeed, we may well suppose, as the Psalmist intimated, that the chiefest of his troubles consisted in his separation from the Lord; his realization that the Lord's favor was justly turned from him, and that in a certain sense he was forsaken of the Lord as an intelligent transgressor of his law. It may, indeed, be generally recognized as a principle of the divine government that anything which separates the Lord and his people brings upon them the deepest melancholy, and incidentally is sure to affect their health. On the contrary, we may well realize it as a fixed principle that "the peace of God" is sure to be favorable to physical health and happiness. Thus continually we find amongst the Lord's people that as they grow strong in the Lord there is very apt to be a measure of physical rejuvenation also.

THE PROPHET'S PARABLE

Apparently for a time the King had smothered his conscience; had, perhaps, come to think of himself as a sovereign to some extent exempted from the laws governing others, and had this condition been allowed to progress it might have meant a complete estrangement of the King from the Lord. But because he had made a covenant with the Lord and the Lord had accepted him and warranted unto him "the sure mercies of David," therefore he was not allowed to pass into a comatose condition morally, but the Lord sent the Prophet Nathan, who, by a parable of the wealthy man stealing a sheep from a poor man, aroused in the King a sense of justice and a demand that the thief should be severely punished. It was then that the Prophet declared, "Thou art the man," explaining to him that he had not only stolen Uriah's wife, but had sinned still more grievously, and that he must expect chastisements from the Lord for his wrong doing.

Honest at heart the matter appealed to the King immediately, and he saw himself a grievous sinner. He went to the Lord and said, "Against thee and thee alone have I sinned and done this great evil in thy sight." True, he had sinned against Uriah, but since the latter's death there was no means of making amends for his misdeeds; no restitution was possible. To the Lord only could he go asking forgiveness. Although the Lord is very gracious and very merciful, he apparently permitted David to lie under the lashings of his conscience for a considerable time before he restored unto him the joys of his countenance. This should not intimate an unwillingness on the divine part to forgive, but the wisdom of divine grace which will permit the lesson as a means of blessing and as a safeguarding against the future.

Wonder is often expressed that some of the most notorious evil-doers in the world appear to have no conscience, no realization of their own wickedness; and still more wonder is expressed that these often pass through life with no chastisements, no punishments for sins such as came upon King David for his sins. The explanation of the situation is given by the Apostle, saying, "Some men's sins go before unto judgment, and some follow afterward." The world in general will find that transgressions in the present life, violations of conscience, have a degrading influence upon them which will make their climbing from sin and imperfection to righteousness and perfection during the Millennium all the longer and more difficult. Thus the judgment or penalty for their sins will follow after and they will be obliged to reckon with them during the Millennium. On the contrary, the Lord's consecrated people of the Gospel age, and his specially consecrated people of the Jewish age, shall have had their stripes in the present life, because they are not to share with the world in the experiences of stripes, disciplines, etc., during the Millennium, but to do so now that they will be ready for a share in the resurrection of life; to come forth from death perfect beings in full harmony with God. This constitutes an ample explanation as to why the following is true, That the Lord's true followers receive chastisements, stripes, for their correction while the world in general escapes, except in so far as human laws and nature's laws may chastise them; or in a case such as the Amalekites and Amorites; their iniquities came to the full, reaching the point where to have allowed them to go further would have been inconsistent with

the divine program, and they were cut off from life to hinder them from greater degradation.

THE LORD'S CHASTENING HAND

In one of the Psalms David wrote, "Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." Verses 3 and 4 tell us something of the King's experiences under the rod of chastisement, which the pride of the Lord's favor calls elsewhere, "The light of thy countenance." At first the King kept silence. He was ashamed of himself and knew of nothing he could say to the Lord in extenuation of his conduct. But the burden grew heavier and heavier for both mind and body. He seemed to age rapidly that year. His "bones waxed old"; he became enfeebled prematurely. Day and night the Lord's chastening hand was heavy upon him, so that all the freshness, vigor and joy were consumed as by a drouth. What a poetic picture of a child of God under the ban of divine displeasure—mourning after a manner that the world could not understand! The result, however, was joyous, because when the Lord restored to David the light of his face, and again, when David's cup ran over with divine favor and blessing, he was able more than ever to appreciate the value of the Lord's smile. All of the Lord's people must learn the value of the blessing of the Lord in the fellowship divine. Here they can sing,

"O, let no earth-born cloud arise
To hide thee from thy servant's eyes."

Fortunately not all God's dear people need such severe discipline. Nevertheless, for all there is the comforting thought that even if any should be taken in grievous sin, there is still mercy with the Lord, which is to be sought for. But still more are the blessings for those children who possess more of the Lord's character, so that from their hearts they can say, "I delight to do thy will, O God; thy law is written in my heart." These also require lessons, chastisements, for even our dear Redeemer himself "learned obedience from the things which he suffered." He learned the cost of obedience, as he has since learned the value thereof in the Father's estimation—who raised him to glory and immortality. Similarly all his followers must learn in his school. Each one whom the Father will receive must be an under-study of the great Chief Shepherd. Each one must by experiences learn the value of the Father's smile and fellowship and gracious promises for the present and the eternal life.

THOU FORGAVEST THE INIQUITY

Various erroneous views are entertained respecting the forgiveness of sins and the stripes which sometimes follow after the sins have been forgiven. King David's experiences demonstrate the truth on this subject. After he sinned there was a period in which he seemed to appreciate the facts—their enormity. Then came all the force of awakening and self-abasement and contrition of heart and humbling before the Lord in acknowledging the sin, in confessing the transgression before the Lord. Then came in due course the Lord's forgiveness and by and by the King's appreciation of the fact that he had been forgiven, and, as a result, the restoration of the joys in life's experiences. Nevertheless we find that the end was not yet; that years afterwards the Lord allowed a very severe, heavy discipline to come upon the King and his family, apparently as a retribution. Absalom's rebellion against his father, King David, and all the train of evil experiences which followed as a part of the same, were recognized by David himself as permitted of the Lord as a chastisement on account of his transgression which had been forgiven.

How can this be understood? How can a sin be forgiven and yet punishment be inflicted on its account? The right thought on this question is that divine forgiveness signifies that God gives over or relinquishes his indignation against the sin and the sinner and deals with the sinner henceforth from the standpoint of favor. Justice, however, still maintains a hold and must be satisfied. Justice knows no forgiveness. It requires a full payment, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." Applying the matter to ourselves, to Christians of this Gospel Age, we remark that Justice has been satisfied so far as "believers" are concerned by the death of our Lord Jesus. His merit has been appropriated to us. Is this only a part of the demands of justice? We reply that it was for all of our wrong-doing or short-coming or such proportion of it as was unwilful. In a word, God's provision in Christ for our forgiveness does not cover a wilful sin, of which the Apostle says, "He that sinneth wilfully is of the devil." It merely covers the unwilful sins, or in the case of sins that are partly of weakness, partly a temptation and partly of wilfulness, it covers all the unwilful features, but leaves us responsible for whatever portion of wrong-doing on our part was wilful; hence the Apostle said to the church,

"If we sin wilfully after we have received a knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries."—Heb. 10:26, 27.

As a matter of fact, it is safe to presume that, surrounded by the weaknesses of others and beset by the weaknesses of our own flesh, very few of the Lord's people reach this point of full, complete, deliberate, intentional sin, the penalty of which is the second death. In nearly all sin, therefore, there is room for a measure of divine forgiveness, proportionate to the willingness or weakness. The sins of the Lord's people repented of are graciously forgiven in the sense that divine disfavor and withholding of the Lord's countenance are no more in evidence and the individual is restored. Still there hangs over him a responsibility for whatever measure of wilfulness is connected with the misdeed. And the Lord will see to it that he receives the necessary stripes. We are not to think of this as vindictive, but rather as a measure of justice, that thus is learned something of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, its undesirability, and that good always brings its reward.

In harmony with this thought there are numerous Christians today who have come into full harmony with the Lord Jesus and every blessing of fellowship with God's children, who are, nevertheless, suffering physically the penalty for indiscretion, sins of their earlier life. The sin has been forgiven in the sense that it is not held against them so as to bar their fellowship with the Lord. It is covered, but it has left its mark upon their flesh and causes them distress in various ways. Indeed, a general blight is upon the whole human family, which is covered in some respect to those who have accepted Christ. The scars and weaknesses of the present persist in our mortal flesh, and we have no hope even to get rid of these. They belong, however, to the mortal, which having been reckonedly justified through faith in Christ and consecration to God's service, will not be gotten rid of until the "change" in the First Resurrection, when we shall be granted new bodies. Then the sins which are now covered or hidden in the Lord's sight will be absolutely effaced, and we shall know them no more. This seems to be the Apostle Peter's thought when he says, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." (Acts 3:19.) In a word, our sins may be covered, but, at the second coming of our Lord, they will be blotted out completely and forever.

WHEN THOU MAYEST BE FOUND

Thinking of the Lord's favor to himself, the Prophet by inspiration sets forth a principle applicable to all of the Lord's—to all people at all times, saying, For this [cause—because of God's mercy], everyone that is godly may pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely, when the great waters overflow, they shall not reach unto him. In other words, there is a time limit to divine mercies. The Lord will not always chide, neither will he keep (restrain) his anger forever. There came a limit to his merciful dealing with natural Israel. When that point had been reached a separation took place between those who were Israelites (the wheat) and the remainder (the chaff). The former were received into the Gospel dispensation, the others being scattered in the destruction of Israel's national polity in A. D. 70.

Similarly in dealing with the Gospel church, a reasonable period seems to be allowed to each individual to make his calling and election sure, who, if he fails to do so, may drop into the great company, but whose only hope of attaining this place is through fiery trials in which, if still unfaithful, the end will be destruction in the second death. Similarly in the end of this Gospel age comes the testings of the nominal systems, with the Lord's declaration that some will stumble and fall and be overwhelmed in the anarchy impending as Babylon is cast down, while the faithful will be "changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." Similarly during the Millennial age, when the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth and every member of the race shall be privileged to see the "true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," everyone will be obliged to make a start in righteousness by obedience to God's law; and those who refuse will, as the Prophet says, die the second death: "There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days; for the child shall die an hundred years old, and the sinner an hundred years old shall be accursed."—Isa. 65:20.

David seems to speak prophetically for those in the end of this Gospel age, saying, "Thou art my hiding place; thou wilt preserve me from trouble; thou wilt compass me about with songs of deliverance." As the faithful were delivered in the great trouble that came upon the Jewish nation, so the

faithful will be delivered from the great trouble impending upon Christendom. This does not necessarily imply that they will be taken away before the trouble. It is "Through much tribulation we shall enter the kingdom." As of old the three Hebrews who were cast into the fiery furnace were uninjured, while those who threw them in were slain by the heat, smitten to death, so in the coming trouble the Lord's faithful will not be injured by the fiery trials through which they will pass.

GUIDED BY GOD'S EYE

The last four verses of our lesson represent our Lord as speaking to his people, "Ye righteous." In view of the context this is not to be understood to represent any absolutely faultless. "There is none righteous; no, not one." The righteous, here addressed are such as the Lord reckons righteous, because of their heart attitude of faith and desire to be obedient to his will. To these he says, "I will instruct them and teach them in the way in which they shall go; I will guide them with mine eye."

This may be understood to signify that the Lord's eye will watch over us that he may give us the necessary, proper counsel. Another way in which it may be viewed, is represented by an exhibition which some of us have seen of a horse driven without reins or bridle, simply directed by the eye and watching for the master's will, the animal being without restraint. But this is true of only those who have had exceptional training. A horse and a mule, as the next verse tells us, are without understanding and require bit and bridle to make them serve us properly. We are exhorted not to be driven in this manner, because such is not acceptable to the Lord. "He seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth."

Those of God's children who fail to learn this lesson will never constitute the members of the Elect class, will not be "fit for the kingdom of heaven." True, the Lord will deal with the world in general along these lines during the Millennium. With bit and bridle they will be restrained. Nevertheless, even the restitution class must advance beyond this place else they will never be fit for eternal life at the close of the Millennial age. Whoever sees the principle here in-

volved, that if he has any hope or desire for joint-heirship with Christ in his kingdom, must learn the lesson of serving the Father and his cause of righteousness gladly, willingly; must be guided by his eye; must follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

SORROWS TO THE WICKED

"Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about." Those who trust in the Lord, to all outward appearances, have as many sorrows as their less pious neighbors. Nevertheless God's promise is sure, his grace is sufficient for them. They may rest assured that "All things work together for good" to those who rejoice in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope, which maketh not ashamed those in whose hearts the love of God is shed abroad.

BE GLAD IN THE LORD, AND REJOICE AND SHOUT FOR JOY, ALL YE THAT ARE UPRIGHT AND HONEST IN HEART

We trust that all of our readers are coming to appreciate this blessed message more and more—to be glad in the Lord—a very different thing from being glad in the trifling things of this world. He whose affections are set upon this earth will continually find tribulations which hinder his rejoicing. But he who has set his affections upon things above, on the Lord and the glorious things which he has promised us, may indeed rejoice, for our Lord changes not. "Not one of his good promises shall fail." Let all who are honest in hope, in intention, in endeavor, speak forth the Lord's praise and shout for joy, not merely that their unintentional imperfections according to the flesh are covered, but also in the thought that the reign of righteousness, the Millennial kingdom, is now at hand, and that under its domination all the families of the earth shall be blessed after the great adversary, Satan, shall have been bound.

" 'Tis sorrow builds the shining ladder up,
Whose golden rounds are our calamities;
Whereon our firm feet planting, nearer God,
The spirit climbs and hath its eye unsealed."

WHAT SINS THE SCAPE-GOAT BORE

Following the account of the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16—after the account of the first sacrifice of the bullock for the sins of the High Priest's body and house and the sacrifice of the Lord's goat for the sins of all the remainder of the people—we read that the High Priest took the scape-goat and laid his hands upon its head and confessed over it "all the iniquities of the children of Israel and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send it away." We have interpreted this scape-goat to be a type of the "great company" of Rev. 7:9-15. We have pointed out that the Lord's goat and the scape-goat, both tethered at the door of the Tabernacle, represented the two classes who during this Gospel age make full consecration to the Lord and are accepted of him and begotten of the holy Spirit. The one class goes on in harmony with its consecration, following the example of Christ, who is in type represented by the bullock. The other class, equally consecrated and begotten of the Spirit, fails to avail itself of the privilege of "suffering with Christ." It is allowed to escape the sufferings implied in the covenant of sacrifice. The question arises, What were those sins that were laid upon the head of the scape-goat and what do they represent in the antitype of the great company? We answer that they do not represent the same sins which were laid upon the bullock, which made atonement for the household of faith; neither could they represent the sins that were previously atoned for with the blood of the Lord's goat. The sprinkling of the blood for those sins entirely cancelled them for "all the people."

The explanation of this seeming incongruity of first making an atonement in the Most Holy "for the sins of all the people," and then "laying the iniquities of the people upon the head of the scape-goat," is explained by the fact that there are two kinds of sins and that the sacrifice of Christ and the church, typified by the sacrifice of the bullock and the Lord's goat, atoned for one kind of sin and not for the other. Thus of our Lord it is written, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," and this Lamb has associated with himself the church, whose sacrifice is represented in the Lord's goat. The sin of the world is the Adamic sin, to which the Apostle refers, saying, "By one man's disobedience sin entered into the world, and death as a result of sin, and so death passed upon all;" that sin and its penalty was upon everybody alike regardless of his wishes, for all were born in sin, shapen in iniquity—blemished, incapable of right-

eousness in the absolute sense. It was for that one sin, and that only, that Christ, the Head and body, pays the penalty.

Aside from this general sin, however, there are "iniquities of the people" in which some share more and others less and others not at all. These are the more or less wilful wrongdoings which prevail throughout the world—violations of justice and love beyond the degree of inherited weakness. In these things, therefore, there is a measure of responsibility proportionate to the knowledge and ability to resist. These are the sins of the world that will be confessed on the head of the scape-goat class and for which they will be permitted to suffer. An illustration of this is found in our Lord's words respecting typical Israel and the awful trouble which came upon those of the Jewish nation found unworthy, who had enjoyed the great privileges and were still found unworthy of the high calling.

Of that time of trouble our Lord spoke freely in Matt. 24, and the Apostle, speaking of it, says that "God poured upon that nation his wrath to the uttermost, that all things written in the law and the prophecies concerning them should be fulfilled." Why should such great severity come upon them more than had come upon their forefathers? Why should so great tribulation as the Scriptures foretell come upon the great company in the end of this age more than came upon others of previous times? Our Lord dropped a word which gives us the key to the situation: "Of this generation shall be required all the righteous blood." (Luke 11:50, 51) And similarly respecting the end of this age the Scriptures imply that there is a great back-account of retribution owing to the rest of the world which will be fully squared in the awful trouble with which this age will end. For instance, those who suffered earlier in the age are represented as beheaded souls under the altar crying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Rev. 6:10) The answer given them implies that their blood, the wrong and injustice done to them as well as the wrong and injustice done to others since their day, is kept strict account of and will all need to be settled in the end of this age.

Those who made a covenant to sacrifice their lives in the service of the Lord, the truth and the brethren, and who on the strength of this were begotten of the Spirit to a spirit nature, and who subsequently neglected to fulfil their covenant or vow, would be liable to the second death on this account;