

but in great mercy the Lord purposes to pass them through a "great tribulation" and to accept as "conquerors" those who will stand the tests of that time of trouble loyally. But their sufferings will not be on their own account. They will suffer for the sins of others—the accumulated sins of this age against light and knowledge will be required of those who in this day of the "bright shining" of the light of truth have still held back from the voluntary sacrifice to which they devoted themselves in consecration.

However, eventually this great company, passing their tests, proving themselves loyal to the Lord, at last will receive a great blessing, even though it will not be so grandly glorious as that which the Lord will give to the little flock, who willingly, gladly, lay down their lives in harmony with the privileges and instructions of the Word. They will be invited to participate in the marriage festival of the Lamb.—Rev. 19:9.

Some have written us lately the assurance that they know that the great company will be blessed on the earthly plane. We reply that it is true that a great multitude will be blessed

during the Millennium under the restitution blessings and privileges—"all the families of the earth." But the Great Company of Revelation 7:9-15 is specially identified with the church and separate from the world. They will come up to their station through "great tribulation," while the world will be led upward along the grand highway of holiness, on which there shall be no lion or ravenous beast, and in a time when nothing shall hurt nor destroy in all that holy kingdom.

If there were no references to the great company in the Bible we should be inclined to look for one, or else know with sorrow that many shall go into the second death. Surely of all that consecrate fully and are begotten of the holy Spirit to new nature only a "little flock" make their election sure by compliance with the terms. The remainder, unfit for the glories to which they were called, must, it would seem, either die the second death or have their new natures developed in fiery trials and great tribulations "for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

## LETTERS ACKNOWLEDGING "VOW" BLESSINGS

[QUERY:—What if health or weather hindered leaving the door open, and one were alone in a room with one of the opposite sex? Or what if it were in an office or room not under the control of the one who took the Vow?

ANSWER:—Both of these and every other contingency are fully met by the word, "so far as reasonably possible," and it is your own judgment that decides. It would not be reasonably possible for anyone to regulate an office or room that is only partly or not at all under his control.]

Dear Brother Russell:—

I write to tell you that I have taken the Vow. I was influenced to come to the point by reading a paragraph of an article in the Tower entitled, "David Attaining Kingship." The paragraph was this:

It is difficult to estimate the power of the human will. Apparently God has placed all the interests of the present life under the control of our wills, and, indeed, much of the success in respect to the future life is similarly under the control of our wills. Apparently the will, rightly exercised against sin, is invulnerable.

I humbly pray that God may "work in me both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Sincerely yours in Christian fellowship,

F. I. PARMENTER.

Dear Brother in the Lord:—

I don't want to wait another hour to register my vow to the Lord. I am very sorry I waited this long. I am so glad it is not too late. I have hesitated because I was afraid I could not keep the vow, and know it is worse to break than to pledge myself at all. Since praying and thinking it over I know that I can, with the help of our dear Master, live up to the vow.

I surely need it as much or more than any one else. My life previous to consecration was most sinful, and I regret that I cannot tell you that I have made no great mistakes since.

My sacrifice is such a small, miserable thing; but I do want to bind it firmly to the altar.

Remember me in your prayers, dear Brother, and give my love to all the dear ones at the Bible House.

Yours in Christ,

Dear Brother Russell:—

We wish to add our names to those of the dear friends who have made the vow unto our heavenly Father, and are very thankful for the privilege.

As God's children we are willing to do anything that will help us along the narrow way and bring us nearer to our heavenly Father, and this we know the vow is doing. We cannot have too much of a good thing if we use it properly.

We think we should have taken the vow even if we had no need of it at this time, for we do not know what we shall need in the "evil day," except keeping close to the Lord.

And so, dear brother, we ask that you remember us in your prayers that by his strength we may keep the vow we have made. With much Christian love and best wishes, we remain,

Your brothers in Christ,

W. T. BAKER,  
A. SMITH.

Dear Brother Russell:—

Beloved Brother in the Lord. It has taken considerable time, and a severe conflict with the old self, to reach the point of sending in my name as a signer and endorser of the vow in all its particulars.

I must confess that I was somewhat opposed to the matter at the first. However, I prayed very earnestly for guidance and wisdom to decide the matter aright. Have just now finished a re-reading of it, and am wondering how I found any objection, for my heart and head both endorse in the fullest possible manner its every detail. Sister Kendall and I now feel convinced that our heavenly Father in his loving kindness has sent this vow as a special safeguard to his children in this time of special need, and I have been prompt to send my name as soon as the matter was made plain to my mind. It will surely prove a source of great blessing to all the pure in heart. Doubtless it will sift out some who are not. 'Tis always so. Therefore, with greatly increased thankfulness to our loving heavenly Father for this further evidence of his care over us, and with renewed assurance, dear Brother, of our perfect confidence in your own Christian deportment and integrity, we gladly and solemnly and reverently register this vow before "Our Father, which art in heaven," praying that he will enable us to keep it inviolate.

With much Christian love,

MR. AND MRS. S. C. KENDALL.

## THE NOVA SCOTIA CONVENTION

The journey from Allegheny to Halifax and back was approximately 3,000 miles—a long distance to go to a convention where only comparatively a small number could be expected. However, the Nova Scotia friends were anxious for a convention, as were also some of those at Boston born in Nova Scotia. This helps to account for the fact that 75 of the Boston friends attended. From various parts of Nova Scotia about 125 more completed the total of 200 in attendance. Everything considered this was an excellent turnout. We had a very enjoyable time and parted company, longing for the time when "those of like precious faith" will be forever with the Lord and with each other.

The convention had been in session two days by the time of our arrival and continued two days more. The chairman

was Brother Marchant, and discourses were given by Brothers Streeter, Bridges, Barker, Brenneisen, MacMillan and Russell on various features of the Divine Plan. Seventeen symbolized their consecration by water immersion, and when it came to the closing service—the LOVE FEAST—the blessings seemed to overflow out of all our hearts. The experience was both a solemn and happy one, well calculated to remind us all of the perfect union with our Lord, in which we hope to join in the General Assembly of the Church of the First-Borns.

The largest attendance at the convention was, of course, on the occasion of the discourse to the public, on "The Overthrow of Satan's Empire." The audience was variously estimated above 2,000, but we accepted the most conservative estimate of 1,200, and felt very glad that that number of

people was privileged to hear of the "good tidings of great joy." The audience was a very intelligent one.

#### A GRAND TIME AT TRURO

The Truro friends bespoke the day following the convention, and on its acceptance made considerable preparation. From the Halifax convention a train-load of 140 went to Truro, a distance of about one hundred miles. Their presence was very gratifying to all concerned. On arrival we had time for a colporteur meeting before noon, all participating, though the total number of colporteurs present was twenty-five. In the afternoon we had a symposium on "The Principal Thing," participated in by sixteen brethren, to each of whom was allotted ten minutes, and between whom were divided the various items of interest pertaining to the Christian character, and what should be put on and what should be put off.

The High School chapel had been secured for the evening meeting, to which the public was invited by liberal advertising. It was the largest available auditorium, and it was crowded, over 600 being seated, while more than 100 stood during the two hours' services. Many of those familiar with the subject gave place to the people of the city by attending an overflow meeting. We believe that we never had any more thoughtful and attentive hearing. We trust that some good seed was sown in some good hearts. At the adjournment of

the meeting at 10:30 p.m., a special train took back the friends who had come from Halifax and vicinity and Boston, while another train bore ourself and others in the opposite direction. The scene at the depot was very inspiring. Inside and outside the songs arose, "God be with you till we meet again," and "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts." The experiences of the day will long be remembered by us.

#### THE GATHERING AT BANGOR

A ride from 11:00 p.m. until 1:30 p.m. the next day brought us to Bangor, where we had accepted another invitation for a stop-over. We were heartily welcomed and generously entertained. The afternoon session for the interested was attended by about seventy, who had gathered from various districts around about, some of them residents of Quebec. The evening session for the public was in the Universalist meeting-house and there was an attendance of about 700, who gave strictest attention, and many of them indicated their endorsement of the presentation during the service, as well as afterward.

More goodbys and then a midnight train, which brought us to Boston the next morning and from there a ride of a day and a night returned us safely to Allegheny, weary but very thankful to the Lord for the privilege of service we had enjoyed and from the encouragement we had received from the loving zeal manifested by so many of the dear friends.

## PRIDE, INGRATITUDE, HYPOCRISY, REBELLION

2 Samuel 15:1-12.—NOVEMBER 1.

*Golden Text*—"Honor thy Father and thy Mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."  
—Exod. 20:12.

Lessons may be drawn from the lives of the ignoble, as well as from those of the noble. As the poet says:—

"Lives of great men all remind us,  
We should make our lives sublime,  
And, departing, leave behind us  
Footprints on the sands of time."

This being so, then surely it is true also that the footprints of the evil-doers on life's pathway have lessons for us also, indicating to us which paths should be shunned, which elements of character should be restrained, which ambitions should be curbed. Following this course of instruction the divine Word holds up before the spiritual Israelites not only noble precepts and counsels and examples of heroic devotion to truth and righteousness, but illustrations also of the course of evil-doers. Our lesson today belongs to this latter class. It considers Absalom, the son of King David, who at the time of this lesson was presumably nearly thirty years of age. His father, the Lord's anointed king over Israel, his mother, the daughter of a king of a neighboring realm, Absalom inherited princely qualities and manners and, being very beautiful, became a center of Israelitish pride. "In all Israel there was none to be so much praised for his beauty. From the sole of his foot, even to the crown of his head, there was no blemish in him"; and the hair of his head is a proverb to this day.

It is worthy of note that those who are highly favored by nature, richly endowed in appearance or mental ability, are subject to temptations to a far greater degree than their fellows who are less talented, less handsome. Their besetting weakness is apt to be pride, self-esteem, to which ambition is apt to lend a helping hand. Thinking of Absalom and his beauty and his high position in the kingdom, reminds us of Lucifer and the glorious description given of him in the Scriptures—his high position and honor and his pride and ambition and the downfall to which they led. The very suggestion of these two characters, from this standpoint should bring a thrill of fear to the hearts of all who realize that we today of spiritual Israel are princes, highly favored of our Father, the Great King, and greatly blessed with the beauty and perfection which come to us through our justification and greatly honored of our Father in the gracious hopes set before us in the Gospel of glory, honor and immortality, and greatly blessed also in the light of divine revelation granted to us, which gives us a wisdom superior to that of the world.

What if these blessings and mercies and favors should have their wrong effect upon us and bring us eventually to disaster, as was the case with Absalom and with Lucifer? The thought is sufficiently appalling to remind us of the Apostle's words, "Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest [of becoming joint-heirs with our Redeemer], any of us should seem to come short of it"—through a lack of loyalty, a lack of allegiance, a lack of faith, a lack of humility.

#### A MURDERER OF THE BRETHREN

It will be remembered that David's eldest son was Amnon, and that he had defiled his half-sister Tamar, the full sister

of Absalom. King David, sorely vexed at the matter, appears to have been at a loss as to what manner of punishment he should properly mete out for the offense, so that two years passed without any being inflicted. Then Absalom took upon himself to be his sister's avenger. He made a feast, to which were invited all the King's children by his several wives. In the height of the feast, in disregard of the rules of etiquette and the claims of natural affection, Absalom slew his brother and then fled, from fear of justice, which, under their code, centered in his father, the King. What lesson is there in this experience for us? What should we copy? What avoid? In spiritual Israel we are all princes, sons of the Great King, who is also the Judge. The lesson to us would properly be that the authority and responsibility for meting out justice is not in our ambitions, but with the Father.

As the Scriptures declare, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." We are not to wait what seems to us a proper length of time, and then, if we see no divine punishment for what we consider to be no longer tolerable, to take the matter in our own hands—to murder one another. Nay, the command of our Great Teacher is, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you." The lesson for us to learn is expressed in the Master's words, See to the beam in thine own eye, rather than put thyself to too much inconvenience examining the mote that is in thy brother's eye. To his own Master he standeth or falleth.

The parallel would not imply that literal murder would here be accomplished amongst the Lord's children. No, thank God! The world is too far advanced in civilization to make such a course practicable; but where the Absalom spirit is—the spirit of hatred, anger, envy, bitterness—strife is also. There is a modern method of assassination by the use of slanderous words, by insinuations, by the shrugging of the shoulders, etc. And this modern kind of murder is oftentimes committed in the presence of the members of the royal family, the heavenly brotherhood. How terrible! do we say? Let us take heed that such blood-guiltiness, such "works of the flesh and the devil," be not upon us, else we shall never inherit the kingdom.

#### THE UNGRATEFUL SON—TRAITOROUS

Absalom remained for three years at the court of his grandfather, Talmi, King of Geshun in Syria. By the murder of his elder brother he had put himself next to the throne of Israel, heir-apparent, and this, possibly, was considerably his inspiring motive in the crime, although he affected that the crime was committed in defense of justice and principle. Alas! how treacherous is the human heart! How frequently do we find double motives operating therein! We see the advantage of those who, as children of God, follow implicitly the Father's Word and leave all the results to him. They thus show their faith in God's power, as well as in God's justice, and thus, as the Apostle intimates, they show that they have become partakers of a holy spirit of wisdom—

"wisdom from above; first pure, then peaceable, easy of entreatment, full of mercy and good fruits," a spirit of wisdom which leaves in the Lord's hands his own matters and trusts fully to his care. This is indeed "The spirit of a sound mind." Let us, dear brethren of the royal spiritual family, apply this principle in all of our dealings and thus receive thereby increasing blessings.

But Absalom realized that as an exiled prince his chances for acceptance as king of Israel would be comparatively small, in the event of his father's death. He therefore instituted an ingenious scheme by which his case was brought to his father's notice under most favorable conditions, and finally a respite or forgiveness or an invitation to return to his homeland was sent to him. As a continued showing of disfavor, his father, loving him the while, refused for two years to invite his wayward son to a personal visit and fellowship. Meantime the ambitious murderer skillfully managed his affairs so that, as the Scriptures declare, he "stole" the hearts of the men of Israel. He did not openly plot mischief against his father, the king, nor speak vilely respecting him, nor manifest any antagonism; he was too deep, too adroit, too wise with earthly wisdom for such a course. He stole the hearts of the people away from the king to himself by feigning extreme humility and extreme zeal for justice, and by careful attention to his personal appearance and by attention to those in influential positions. He got up early, contrary to the usage of princes, and went forth to the king's gate, where he could see the people who, some justly and some unjustly no doubt, were awaiting the king, hoping for contracts and decisions in their favor, etc. These, beholding the handsome and elegantly-dressed prince, bowed themselves to the ground after the manner of the east, only to be lifted up by the hands and kissed and told with affected modesty and love that they should not do that; that it was a king's business to serve his people and that the prince was merely sorry, so sorry, that it was not in his power to do for them all and more than they asked.

Thus for two years Absalom, the hypocrite and sycophant, endeavored (and was considerably successful in so doing) to draw to himself the love, the loyalty of the nation, which had belonged to his father David as the Lord's anointed. Evidently the young man was leaning to his own understanding and forgetting, if he ever knew, that the Lord God was the Ruler of that nation, and he alone had the power to designate who should be and who should not be his representative upon the throne.

#### ABSALOM'S OPEN REBELLION

Our text says, "After forty years," but scholars are agreed that this is a copyist's blunder and that it should read "four years." Some ancient authorities read this "four years"; so does Josephus. Feeling sure that his mock humility, combined with his handsome appearance, gentle manners and affected love for the people and for justice, worked successfully on the minds of the people, Absalom was ready for his next step—open rebellion against his father, the king of the nation and the appointee of divine providence. Surely he did not realize his situation in the odds of divine power against him. Continuing his practice of hypocrisy he requested of his father the privilege of visiting the neighboring city of Hebron, which had been the capital before Jerusalem was taken.

He said he desired to do sacrifice there in fulfilment of a vow. He affected to be very humble and very religious, while his heart certainly was far from the Lord. "Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?" The king granted the request, which included the privilege of taking a certain number of companions and chief people from Jerusalem, without anything amiss being thought of it. What worldly wisdom this young man had! And how ignominiously his mock humility stands out to his discredit! And how his ingratitude to his father, and his lack of every element of principle and righteousness are conspicuous! For us, dear friends, to see in ourselves anything in any degree or measure apparently approaching such a picture, or in our course anything in any degree corresponding to this, should be to horrify us, to rebuke us, to quench the kindling fire.

Into the conspiracy was drawn King David's most valued counselor, Ahithophel, whose presence with the prince as one

of his friends on the occasion would mean a tower of strength to his position and the attainment of his ambition. Many of the people, deceived for years, were drawn into this conspiracy. Besides, Absalom had carefully appointed men throughout the various tribes and various parts of the land district, who were posted for his designs and in full sympathy with them, and whose business it was to create a stampede in his favor, and to help by expressing evil insinuations against the king and expressing hopes of wonderful things, if Absalom took the kingship. These were to congratulate the tribes that they now had a most worthy king in Absalom, and to explain to them that when the trumpets were heard blowing this meant not that Absalom aspired to the kingship, but that he already was king.

Alas, that history shows so many perfidious characters like Absalom! And alas, dear friends, let us remember that while we have become new creatures in Christ, we still have to contend with the mean, perfidious dispositions that were ours according to the flesh! Let us remember, too, that "we wrestle not with flesh and blood" merely, but additionally "with principalities and powers and wicked spirits in high positions." Let us on the contrary remember the Apostle's words, "Humble yourselves, therefore, brethren, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."—1 Pet. 5:6.

"My soul, be on thy guard,  
Ten thousand foes arise;  
The hosts of sin are pressing hard  
To draw thee from the prize.

"O watch and fight and pray,  
The battle ne'er give o'er;  
Renew the conflict every day,  
And help divine implore."

To those about to enter, or who have entered the narrow way, as well as to those who have already been on it for a time, there comes a suggestion that we must "mark well the pathway and make straight paths for our feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way." We are all lame according to the flesh; some more, some less, but all need to observe the heavenly course and to walk circumspectly, seeing that pride and ambition are the greatest of foes to humanity and faith. We are reminded here of one feature in the story of "Pilgrim's Progress": When Christian and Hopeful had escaped from the dungeon of Giant Despair and returned to the Highway leading to the Celestial City, they erected a monument near the entrance to Bypath Meadow, which had led them astray. On the monument they put the following words, "Over this stile is the way to Doubting Castle, which is kept by Giant Despair. He despises the King of the Celestial Country and seeks to destroy his holy Pilgrims."

Satan is the great giant who through these many centuries seeks to draw us away from the narrow path, away from full confidence in God and away from reliance on God's power and his wisdom and his truth, by which alone we can ever become heirs of the kingdom.

#### OUR GOLDEN TEXT

While fully commending the propriety of honor to earthly parents, and appreciating the Lord's promise of blessing to such as obey it, we have in mind that the Great King Eternal, the Creator, has adopted us into his family and given us the spirit of sonship whereby we cry, "Abba, Father." He has given us "exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might become partakers of the divine nature" and sharers with our heavenly brother Jesus in his Messianic kingdom. How we should honor him! How it should be the chief endeavor of life to us to glorify our Father in heaven! How we should hearken to his words and keep them before us—"If ye love me, keep my commandments!" How we should realize that the end of his commandment is Love—out of a pure heart, fervently! How we should realize that hereby we know that we love God, if we keep his commandments—and his commandments are not grievous unto us, if we delight to do his will! Of this character are the sons who, as copies of the Redeemer, will be the heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord in his kingdom. Let us make no mistake, but remember that the "Well-done" blessing will be given only to those who attain such a character development.

"The Father himself loveth you."  
"Have faith in God."  
"Keep yourselves in the love of God."  
"The Lord will judge [correct] his people."  
"All the wicked will he destroy."  
"Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."  
"Faint not when reprov'd of him."  
"The Lord doth prove you whether you do love."

"Love is the fulfilling of the Law."  
"He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God."  
"He shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."  
"He that hateth his brother is in darkness."  
"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer."  
"Anger, malice, hatred, strife, evil-speaking, are works of the flesh and of the devil."  
"Put off all these."  
"Love is the principal thing."

# LOVE IN RETURN FOR TREACHERY

2 Samuel 18:24-33.—NOVEMBER 8.

*Golden Text*—"A foolish son is a grief to his father."—Prov. 17:25.

King David, thoroughly unsuspecting Absalom's duplicity, was completely taken by surprise with the proclamation that Absalom was King of Israel, with Hebron as his capital. "To the pure all things are pure," writes the Apostle, and as David's heart was guileless towards his son, it was far from his thought to imagine such deceit and treachery as had been practised against him in a cunning and underhanded manner for two years preceding the opening battle.

Hearing that Absalom had started on his march of twenty miles toward Jerusalem, intent upon the capture of his father and the overthrow of his kingdom, King David hastily retreated, accompanied by his bodyguard of 600 men and a comparatively small number of people who manifested sympathy for him and went with him to share his fortunes. Doubtless several motives combined to lead up to this decision to retreat. (1) He wished to avoid, especially in his capital, the horrors of civil war. (2) He was overwhelmed with grief that his antagonist, his enemy, was his own son. (3) The evidences were plentiful about him that Absalom had stolen the hearts of the people and that his former friends had become his enemies, who now jeered at his discomfiture, and anticipated with evident pleasure the oncoming of Absalom and the establishment of his kingdom. "God is not in all his thoughts," says the inspired writer. (Psa. 10:4.) So evidently the people of Israel failed to think of what would be the Lord's will in the matter, and this was their great mistake.

That must have been the darkest day of King David's eventful life. Accompanied by his bodyguard, most of whom were foreigners—and of his own nation comparatively few with him—he fled from his own family and the capital city of his kingdom, which he had established, and from the people in whose interests he had given the best years of his life in harmony with the divine anointing. He fled from the face of the people who some years before had sung his praises as their deliverer from the hand of the Philistines—"Saul hath slain his thousands, but David his tens of thousands." Poor old man! The street rabble cursed him and threw stones and dirt at him. Amongst the persecutors was one of Saul's sons, to whom David had shown great kindness, sparing his life and providing for his maintenance and comfort. Here certainly was an occasion for the trial of David's faith and patience and love. What he would have done in earlier life we cannot tell. His history in every place shows him to have been a man of well-balanced mind, but his chief protection was his possession of a spirit of a sound mind, the spirit of consecration to the Lord, the spirit of faith and trust and loving devotion. Instead of threatening the mob or returning railing for railing, or in any way defending himself, King David gave instructions to his guard that no harm should be done to those who were speaking evil of him, slandering, smiting. "The cup which my father hath poured for me, shall I not drink it," were our Master's words in his dying hour (John 18:11), and we can see his spirit exemplified in King David, who typified him in some respects.

It is supposed that the fourth Psalm and portions of the third were written from the standpoint of David's experiences as an exile from his capital. Dean Stanley says, "It has been conjectured with much propriety that as the first sleep of that evening was commemorated in the fourth Psalm, so in the third is expressed the feeling of David's thankfulness at the final close of that twenty-four hours." The king's objective point was a fortified city, Mahanaim, on the east side of Jordan; but the little army camped on the west side for the night.

## ABSALOM THE HEARTLESS

Starting from Hebron with 200 men, Absalom's army made rapid increase, the population evidently rising en masse to share his sedition. Alas for the weakness of humanity. This scene reminds us of our Lord's experience, of his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the multitudes shouting Hosanna to the Son of David, and five days later shouting, Away with him, crucify him, release unto us Barabbas. They were Jews in both cases; but we have no reason to suppose that they were more fickle than others of our race.

Absalom had a triumphal entry into Jerusalem and quite probably was intoxicated with the success. The records of his doings, of the various ways in which he endeavored to cast dishonor upon his father and to arouse the bitter prejudice of the people about him, all correspond with the vain, treacherous, ignoble character which we see displayed in this young man of large opportunities. We, who belong to the King's sons of a higher plane, should search our hearts

diligently and scrutinize critically our every thought and word and act to make sure that we are thoroughly loyal to the Lord, our Father, the Great King; that we are not self-seeking, nor humble merely in outward appearance, but humble of heart, and that we are fully desirous of doing the Father's will, and that his will is not grievous to us, but that we can sincerely say, "I delight to do thy will, O my God."—Psa. 40:8.

## VICTORY FOR THE RIGHT

For three months the rebellion seemed to grow and prosper. The seeds of slander and disloyalty which Absalom had so carefully sowed through others, while quiet himself, had taken deep root in the hearts of many, who joined their cause with Absalom as rebels against the Lord and his anointed. The army of Absalom was increased rapidly from various quarters, while few came to the cause of King David. The size of Absalom's army is not stated, but can be conjectured from the fact that more than 20,000 were slain, while apparently the great mass was discomfited and fled in the battle of the Wood of Ephraim. What may have been David's sentiments during these three months of trial of faith and love, we can merely conjecture; but we have every reason to believe that he was a victor along all these lines. His patience certainly was manifested. His faith must have held secure to the divine promises that the Lord would not take from him his sure mercies; but that he would deliver him out of all evil. And as for his love, even for his wicked, treacherous son, it surely was very great, as we shall see.

The attack was evidently led by Absalom and his army, while David's forces were divided into three little bands under three of his able generals. Apparently with purpose they drew the battle into the woods, where their smaller forces would have the advantage over the attacking party. The result of the battle was the complete defeat of Absalom's forces, and the death of the latter. Riding on his mule through the woods, his head was caught between the forks of a branch, his mule going on, leaving him hanging by the head while the army was in rout. One of King David's soldiers found him, but would not kill him because the King had strictly charged all the soldiers before they left for the battle that they should do Absalom no harm. But when the soldier reported the matter to Joab, the King's chief general, the latter without hesitation slew the traitor, and at his command he was buried under a huge pile of stones.

## "IS THE YOUNG MAN ABSALOM SAFE?"

King David had proposed going with his army, but wiser counsel prevailed, for because of his advancing age (about 62 years), and because of his grief, and because of his love for his enemy, he would not be so competent as others to have charge of the battle. Conforming himself to the advice of his generals and counselors, he remained at Mahanaim, waiting near the gate for tidings from the battlefield to be brought by couriers, runners. On a lookout, a watchman perceived one of the runners, and, recognizing him by his movements, announced that it was Ahimaaz. King David at once remarked, He is a good man and undoubtedly will have good tidings for us. (v. 27.) What a lesson there is in that very expression! As our Lord said, "A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things." (Matt. 12:35.) On the other hand, from a bitter heart proceed bitter words, evil speaking, injurious arrows. Our lives should be so that all of our friends and acquaintances would be ready to say of us, He is a good man; his message will have something of consolation in it. He is never a strife-breeder, nor a heart-wounder, nor a betrayer of confidences.

When the runner reached the King, he prostrated himself to the King, saying, "All is well." This was indeed good tidings to the King, but we note his love for his dishonoring, treacherous, enmitous son, evidenced by his first inquiry, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Some may consider that the King had a love for his son to the extent of weakness. We will not dispute that, but we will hold that if he must err on the one side or the other, it was far more pleasing to the Lord that he should love his enemy too much rather than too little. That loving expression gives evidence that the King had under divine discipline learned considerable of the "Love divine, all love excelling." If King David loved and pitied Absalom in his rebellious condition, how much more intently he must have loved him when he was in harmony; and so, if God so loved us while we were yet sinners that he gave his Son to die for us, how much more does he now love us since we are no longer aliens and strangers, but brought nigh by the precious blood and begotten of his holy Spirit through consecration, sanctification! (Rom. 5:8.) It does

us good to see an illustration of great earthly love, because it pictures favorably to us the great lesson that the Master impressed by the words, "The Father himself loveth you."

With such an illustration before us of David's love for his son, we may safely surmise that to some extent he misrepresented the sentiments of his own heart during the two years after Absalom had been permitted to return from his foreign exile. The King refused to see him during that time, and thus possibly encouraged Absalom's defiance and hatred. We mention this because we believe there is a lesson in it for many parents. It has seemed to us frequently that for some reason parents are disposed to treat their children much more harshly than they really feel, and thus misrepresent to their children their real heart attitude of affection. Whatever severity or austerity may be necessary, whatever chastisements appropriate in dealing with children, all should be done in such a manner as to fully assure them always of the parent's love, and that the punishments inflicted are given with a view to duty, and for the good of the children. Justice is excellent, wisdom is valuable, punishments are necessary, but above all, "love is the principal thing." Let us, therefore, judge ourselves along the lines of this divine standard—our acts, our words, our very thoughts. Whatever acts, words or thoughts will not fully square with the purest of love will be injurious to us as well as to those upon whom they are exercised.

#### "O ABSALOM, MY SON, MY SON!"

The good messenger broke the news as gently as possible to the King. He knew of the general rout of the enemy and of the concourse in connection with Absalom; but instead of telling all that he knew and, drawing upon his imagination for details, his goodness of heart led him to say little except that there had been a victory and that it seemed a great tumult, but did not know all of the particulars. Presently Cushai, a second runner, came announcing the death of Absalom. King David's heart was bowed with great grief. This was what he evidently had feared. He betook himself to a room in the tower, on the way sobbing, "O, my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" Of these words one writer says, "There is not in all of the Old Testament a passage of greater pathos than this. The simple beauty of the narrative is exquisite; we are irresistibly reminded of him who, while he beheld the rebellious city of Jerusalem and thought of the destruction it was bringing upon itself, wept over it."—Luke 19:41.

The expression, "Would God I had died for thee," finds two parallels in the Scriptures. Moses, Israel's mediator under the Law Covenant, gave vent to a similar expression

when the people had come under divine displeasure and were threatened of the Lord because of their sin. St. Paul gave utterance to a similar sentiment when he said, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh." I could wish that I might be separated from membership in the glorious church of Christ, and have my share with the earthly restitution class, if by the sacrifice I could bring to my kinsmen the great blessings of the Gospel privileges which they are missing. (Exod. 32:32; Rom. 9:3.) We are reminded here of the words of Longfellow, the poet:—

"There is no far nor near, there is neither there nor here;  
There is neither soon nor late, in the Chamber over the Gate,  
Nor any long ago,  
Nor any cry of human woe,  
'O Absalom, my son!'

"That 'tis a common grief, bringeth but sweet relief;  
Ours is the bitterest loss, ours is the heaviest cross;  
And forever the cry will be,  
'Would God I had died for thee,  
O Absalom, my son!'

If in Absalom's perverse course of vanity, treacherous sedition, and in its ruinous end we find a lesson respecting the undesirable, evil, godless way, in King David's course we find the opposite lesson of faith and submission and growth in grace, knowledge and love. In a previous lesson we have noted the fact that David committed a most awful crime, violating three of the divine commands most wantonly and inexcusably—coveting his neighbor's wife, committing adultery with her, and indirectly murdering her wronged husband. The Scriptures most pointedly condemn those sins, and intimate that the severe experiences which we have just recounted were permitted of the Lord to come upon him as retributive justice. Yet David's recognition of his sin and his penitence for it testify distinctly that at heart he was not a murderer and not an adulterer. The Lord who looketh at the heart approved him ultimately, while reprobating his misdeeds and permitting him to suffer therefor.

We can draw a great lesson and a profitable one from the lives of these two men without copying either of them. We are not to feel that it is necessary that the man who would preach temperance should be able to say, I was once a drunkard in the gutter; neither is it necessary for us to follow David into his sins in order to profit by the lessons taught us by his experiences.

"Happy the man who learns to trace  
The leadings of Jehovah's grace."

## "THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD"

Psalm 23.—NOVEMBER 15.

*Golden Text*—"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."—Psalm 23:1.

Of all the beautiful symbolic pictures which the Lord gave us through the Prophet David, none seems more forceful than that of the Psalm which constitutes our lesson. The eastern shepherd and his love and care for his sheep are given us as an illustration of our heavenly Father's care over us. It is true that our dear Redeemer was sent forth as the Good Shepherd who gave his life for the sheep, and by his death opened the door into the sheep-fold of divine love and favor and rest and peace. This was a favorite picture that our Lord Jesus gave us of himself: "I know my sheep, and am known of mine"; "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me"; "A stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of a stranger." The Apostle followed the same thought when speaking of our Lord's return. He refers to him as the Good Shepherd of the flock: "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." (1 Pet. 2:25.) The same thought is maintained when the elders of the church are referred to as pastors and "overseers of the church of God."—Acts 20:28.

But while it is refreshing for us to take a comprehensive view of the divine favor and care manifested in provisions made for our welfare as the Lord's sheep, it is well that we should ever keep in mind that the under-shepherds do not own the flock, and that their value to the flock as overseers consists in their faithfulness in making known to the sheep the message of the Great Shepherd and, to the extent of their ability, communicating his tone and his spirit with his Word. The faithful of these, like the Apostle, may urge, "And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord."—1 Thess. 1:6.

On the other hand the sheep are called upon to mark the spirit of the under-shepherds, whether or not it comports with that of the Chief Shepherd, so that they be not led astray. They are to try the spirits of those who pose as pastors or under-shepherds, to note whether they be of God or whether they speak of themselves; whether their words and deeds are according to love or according to selfishness. They are enjoined to note these under-shepherds who feed upon the flock, but do not feed the flock.

Examining our text critically, we perceive that the Shepherd is not any of the under-shepherds, nor even our Lord Jesus, but the heavenly Father. The Hebrew word here rendered Lord is Jehovah. This fact greatly enhances the value of the entire picture. While it is proper for us to love all the sheep and the "under-shepherds," and the "Good Shepherd" of the flock, it adds to our joy to know who is the "Great Shepherd" and to hear the "Good Shepherd," his Son, assure the sheep of the Father's love, saying, "The Father himself loveth you." How wonderful that the heavenly Father, surrounded by the sinless angelic hosts, should feel an interest and a care for his human sheep of the earthly plane, who, through Adam's disobedience, were plunged into death; and how precious to us is the knowledge that at great cost he sent his Son to be our "Good Shepherd," and to bring back to the divine fold all of the sheep that are desirous to return!

#### "OTHER SHEEP I HAVE"

Our Lord Jesus declares, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, that there shall be one fold and one Shepherd"—ultimately. Those other sheep we understand to be the restitution flock, which, during the



Millennial age, the Lord will shepherd, gathering to his right hand of favor the willing, obedient class, who will ultimately be ushered into the blessings he has provided for the good sheep. The wayward goats he will ultimately destroy in the second death. We are glad, indeed, that the light of present truth shows us clearly that the thousands of millions of heathen and ignorant that have gone down into the prison-house of death are neither to suffer eternally nor to be hopelessly destroyed, but are to be awakened and granted full opportunity to come to a knowledge of the "Good Shepherd" and to be guided by him into the path of life, by the following of which, with his assistance, they may be fully recovered from all the imperfections entailed upon them by the fall.

But we are specially glad to know of the "little flock" which the Lord is now selecting from the world, and we are specially glad to be privileged to join its numbers now and our Redeemer-Shepherd "through evil report and through good report," whithersoever he may lead us in the "narrow way" of self-sacrifice. We rejoice that we hear his encouraging voice; that our present trials and difficulties are all foreseen: that he knoweth the way that we take, and that he is able and willing to make all things abound to our highest good. It gives us special comfort to have this assurance that the "Trial of our faith is much more precious than that of gold"; and that as the metallurgist would carefully watch the gold tried in the fire, lest it should be destroyed by too intense a heat, so our Lord, our Shepherd, will watch over the interests of those that are his, and not suffer us to be tried above that we are able, but with every temptation will provide a way of escape. And if, perchance, our pathway may entail special trials, we have the "Good Shepherd's" assurance that these should be considered as "light afflictions" in comparison with the blessings to which they lead; that if rightly received they will work out for us "A far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

#### "MY SHEEP FOLLOW ME"

Our lesson relates, not to the flock of the future, but to the one of the present—the "little flock" which the Lord, during this Gospel age, is now gathering out of every nation, people, kindred and tongue. It is the Father's flock, and his Son, our Redeemer, represents him, as he tells us, "As I hear, I speak"; "I came to do the will of my Father in heaven." Thus the Shepherd's Son fully and completely represents the Great Shepherd; as he says, "All mine are thine, and thine are mine." And again, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me."

The wealth of our relationship to the "Great Shepherd" and his Son increases in our appreciation in proportion as we grow in knowledge. As our Redeemer said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."—John 17:3.

"No good thing will he withhold

From sheep which stray not from his fold."

How comforting is the declaration, "I shall not want!" Our Lord illustrates this lesson by pointing out that a kind earthly father would not give a stone instead of bread, nor a serpent instead of fish, and so he assures us that our heavenly Father, much more loving and tender, will withhold from us nothing that will be for our good. We are to remember, however, that it is not as human beings that he does this, but as "new creatures" in Christ Jesus. It is not the justified believer merely that is a member of this Little Flock at the present time, but the sanctified believer, fully consecrated to walk in the "Good Shepherd's" footsteps, to hear his voice and follow him. Our Lord informed us at the start that following him as his disciples, as his sheep of the little flock now being selected, must signify to us, as to him, worldly disfavor and opposition, not only from the prince of darkness, but also from those deluded by him and under the sway of his spirit of anger, malice, hatred, envy, strife, backbiting, slander, evil-speaking, etc. And in addition to these things we are to expect to contend with our own blemishes and weaknesses. Such a picture of the "narrow way" would indeed have terrified us had it not been for our Shepherd's assurance of succor in every time of need, and his assurance that these trials to the flesh rightly received would constitute a part of our development in the spirit and preparation for the "Rest that remaineth for the people of God."

"I shall not want" may be applied to the necessities of the present life. We are assured that "No good thing will he withhold from us;" but he specially means that we shall not want, not lack the disciplines, the trials, the instructions, the encouragements, the reproofs, and the assistance necessary to our attainment to all "The glorious things that God hath in reservation for those that love him." The only condition connected with this promise is that we shall abide in

his love, abide in his flock, continue to hearken to his voice and to follow his directions. How dangerous then to all of the true sheep would be any measure of worldly ambition, pride or self-esteem! How necessary that the heart should be right, desirous of knowing and obeying the Shepherd's voice! With what care should the sheep scrutinize the motives which actuate their daily conduct, their words and the thoughts of their hearts!

#### "GREEN PASTURES AND STILL WATERS"

Professor G. A. Smith says, "A Syrian or an Arabian pasture is very different from the narrow meadows and fenced hillsides with which we are familiar. It is vast, and often virtually boundless. It has to be so, for by far the greater part of it is desert—that is, land not absolutely barren, but refreshed by rain for only a few months, and through the rest of the year abandoned to the pitiless sun that sucks all life out of the soil. The landscape the Psalmist saw seemed to him to reflect the mingled wildness and beauty of his own life. To him human life was just this wilderness of terrible contrasts, where the light is so bright, but the shadows the darker and more treacherous; where the pasture is rich, but scattered in the wrinkles of vast deserts; where the paths are illusive, yet man's passion flies swift and straight to its revenge; where all is separation and disorder, yet law sweeps inexorable, and a man is hunted down to death by his bloodguiltiness."

More and more as "new creatures" we are learning to appreciate the barrenness of worldly hopes and ambitions and knowledge. And more and more we should be giving heed to the leadings of the "Good Shepherd," who is guiding his flock of "new creatures" for their spiritual refreshment through the labyrinth of the "present evil world." Those sheep which keep nearest to the Shepherd secure the fattest and richest experiences and refreshments. On the contrary, the sheep which stray looking for pastures green on their own account, or following the voice of false shepherds, are the ones that are likely to become hungry and eat of the poisonous growths and fall into the pitfalls of sin and be devoured by the ravenous beasts of passion and worldliness. Happy is the sheep who learns to know the voice of the true Shepherd, and whose faith is such that he follows closely and not afar off!

#### LYING DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES

To lie down is to be at rest, to be happy. This is the privilege of all the Lord's true sheep. Outwardly they may be distressed and "on the run," assailed by the world, the flesh and the adversary, but as "new creatures" they may be at rest, at peace, because of their nearness to the Lord, the Shepherd, and because of their faith in his overruling providence, which is able to make "all things work together for good." "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend (stumble) them." These let the "peace of God rule in their hearts . . . and are thankful." It is to these that our Lord's words apply, "My peace I give unto you. . . . Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

This rest, this peace of heart, is absolutely essential to our development as "new creatures," even as the crystals are deposited from the liquids when they are quiet and not when they are in agitation. So the crystalline character which God is developing in us absolutely demands that a condition of rest, peace, quietness of heart, shall be attained; and to the attainment of this condition patience, faith and love, the chief graces of the spirit, are necessary.

#### THE LABYRINTH OF LIFE

"A labyrinth is a species of structure full of intricate passages and windings, so that when once entered it is next to impossible for an individual to extricate himself without a guide. The one in ancient Egypt, near Lake Moeris, was composed of twelve great palaces containing, according to Herodotus, three thousand chambers and halls. The palaces were connected by courts, around which ran a vast number of most intricate passages. Around the whole was a wall with only one entrance."

"Some years ago," writes Hawthorne, "a minister was rambling in the famous labyrinth of Henry VIII, at Hampton Court near London, where the common children's puzzle is wrought out on a large scale by paths between high and thick evergreen hedges. He wandered about it for a time, but when the time for closing drew near, with all his efforts he could not find his way out, and he feared that he might have to remain all night. At last he looked up, and saw a man in the tower in the center of the labyrinth who had been watching him all the time, and waiting to catch his attention. The eye above could see all so hidden from the man within, and soon guided him out of his difficulties,

Visiting this labyrinth with Deacon Olney, we purchased a chart for our guide, remembering my friend's experience. When the time came for us to find our way out, we took the chart, and by careful study and exactness in following the designated way, we threaded the mazes of the labyrinth with success. Life is such a labyrinth. No person knows enough to guide his course unaided. He cannot see where the paths lead. The picture of the future is a sealed book to all."

One of the important lessons for every sheep to learn is need of the Shepherd's care and guidance through the labyrinth of life. "Who is sufficient for these things," writes the Apostle. Then he declares, "Our sufficiency is of God"—in Christ. He who redeemed us has gone the way before us and directed that we walk in his steps. Those who become so wise in their own conceits that they fancy there are nearer ways and shorter cuts and more flowery ways to Paradise are deceiving themselves. If those who recognize the message and are walking in the Master's footsteps and are walking circumspectly, neglect these and become overcharged with the world and earthly ambitions and joys and toys, they are surely unwisely selling the glorious heavenly birthright for a mess of earthly pottage. On the contrary, he who carefully follows the Master, experiences the truth of the declaration, "He restoreth my soul." Some find their spiritual strength refreshed as they walk in the paths of righteousness in which the Lord leads. He leads them "for his name's sake." This is one of the considerations. Our Lord, the Shepherd, has undertaken to do a shepherding work; to gather a flock. His promise is involved; his honor is at stake! We may be sure that not only because of his love for us will he guide us aright, but because it would be a dishonor to him to make the slightest mistake in respect to our guidance. He is the Faithful Shepherd. The angelic hosts are watching and learning lessons in respect to all this shepherding of the flock through the narrow way. "Which things the angels desire to look into."—1 Pet. 1:12.

#### "THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH"

This valley was entered by our race because of our first parents' disobedience. We have been in the valley more than 6,000 years. The shadow of death has been over the human family, and its accompaniments of sickness, pain and sorrow have extended to every creature, so that the Apostle truly said, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God"—waiting for the uplifting power of the Millennial age, waiting for the sons of glory, Jesus Christ and his church, to bring the promised restitution and uplifting out of "the valley of the shadow of death" back to the heights of light and love and the divine likeness.

The fear of evil, of trouble, of disaster hangs over the world and is accentuated by its ignorance of God and of the future. Satan, taking advantage of this spirit of fear in the fallen race, has so terrorized mankind with horrible pictures of purgatory and eternal torment as to thoroughly separate the human heart, if possible, from its Creator, while feigning to be its Shepherd. Under the influence of "doctrines of devils," the adversary has made God's character and his Book repulsive to mankind in general and well-nigh quenched their love, while fanning their fears.

Our text represents the true sheep as saying, "I will fear no evil." How appropriate; how true! Weak and poor and insufficient and surrounded by foes, we nevertheless need not fear, and the developed sheep does not fear what the demons may seek to do, knowing that "all power in heaven and earth" is in the hands of our Shepherd King, and that he is directing our ways, and has guaranteed that our every experience shall work out a blessing, and that in permitting trials he merely designs our correction and instruction in righteousness and to draw us nearer to himself and make us copies of his Son, to the intent that by the first resurrection change he may take us to himself and give us a share in the Millennial kingdom. Ah! how true it is that we do not fear—because the Shepherd is with us! We have his promise, "Lo, I am with you, even to the end of the age." And furthermore we have the light of his Word, showing that the Shepherd is to be present with his sheep and to care for them and develop them.

#### "THY ROD AND THY STAFF COMFORT ME"

The shepherd's rod or club was of hard wood, sometimes open and preferably of the shape of a golf stick, except that it was shorter and much heavier. With it the shepherd was prepared to defend the flock, combating every foe. The staff was lighter and more like a cane and longer, with a crook at the end. With its point the shepherd at times prodded the sheep that were careless, and with the hook he sometimes helped out one that had stumbled into the ditch, by putting the crook under its forelegs. Our Shepherd, too, has a rod for our enemies and a staff for his sheep—the one for our

protection, the other for our relief and assistance and correction. How glad we are to know that all power is committed unto him in heaven and in earth and that under his protecting care nothing shall by any means harm us! What a comfort is here! No wonder that under such circumstances the sheep may enjoy "the peace of God which passeth all understanding," resting themselves, comforting themselves in the assurance that all things shall be overruled for their eternal welfare!

#### "THOU PREPAREST A TABLE FOR ME"

The picture of the shepherd and the sheep has been gradually fading, and now is in the past. Instead of pastures and the water-brooks we now have the table and the cup. We hear the under-shepherds say, "This is the Bread which came down from heaven, and this cup is the blood of the New Covenant." He whose name is the truth gave us his flesh to eat. He sacrificed his earthly interests that we might partake of them through faith and be justified thereby, and appropriate to ourselves more and more the benefits of his sacrifice. He passes to us the cup of his suffering, his shame, his ignominy, his death, saying, "Drink ye all"—drink it all. By thus appropriating the merits of his sacrifice and participating with him in his sufferings we are his sheep; or, in another figure, we are the branches of the True Vine; or, under another figure, we are members of his body and he the Head; or, under another figure, he is our Bridegroom and we his bride. This provision is made for us in the presence of our enemies.

"Marvel not if the world hate you," said our Master. Yet even in the presence of the opposition of the world and our adversary and all of the besetments of the hosts of demons, we are privileged to partake of these rich blessings and privileges! Yea, even in the presence of our besetments of the flesh, which are also our enemies, we can feast with our Lord and naught can make us afraid. All this has been true throughout the Gospel age, but it is all accentuated now in this harvest time by reason of our Lord's presence in the consummation of the age.

In harmony with this promise of the Scriptures, to all who open their hearts to receive him, he comes in and sympathizes with them. Yea, he girds himself as a servant and comes in and serves us, setting before us rich things from his storehouse—things new and old. Under this service all the old truths become fresh and appetizing, refreshing and strengthening. And new truths are ours, fitting to the peculiar time in which we are living and the special trials and tests now due to come upon the Lord's faithful brethren. They are ushered into the eternal Father's presence, where is fullness of joy forevermore.

#### MY HEAD ANOINTED, MY CUP OVERRUNS

Let us not spoil this beautiful picture with any thought of anointing a sheep's head, etc., but rather take the higher and grander and nobler view that our Lord Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed; and that his anointing was typified by the anointing of Aaron with precious oil (which typified the holy Spirit), which ran down his beard and unto the skirts of his garment. Let us think of this as the holy Spirit of Pentecost, which has anointed all the sheep which have come into the fold and the body of Christ. Let us appreciate this anointing and abide under it, allowing it more and more to be what the Apostle terms an unction from the Holy One, affecting our every talent and power and bringing them all into subjection to the divine law of love.

"Let my eyes see Jesus only;  
Let my feet run in his ways;  
Let my hands perform his bidding;  
Let my tongue speak forth his praise."

"My cup runneth over." Our Master's cup was one of suffering, ignominy, shame and death. We partake of it. It becomes our cup also; but he promises us a new cup of joy and rejoicing, which he will share with us fully in the kingdom. That cup of joy and peace and divine favor and blessing our Master partook of by faith. And we now also have the same cup full to overflowing; but we cannot appreciate it fully until we shall be changed and made like our Head and share his glory. By faith we can enjoy it now and realize that it is full to overflowing. And our joys in the eternal future will be exceedingly and abundantly more than we could have asked or thought.

#### "GOODNESS AND MERCY PURSUE ME"

"Surely goodness and mercy shall pursue me all the days of my life." This appears to be the stricter translation and it contains a beautiful thought. These sheep of the Lord's "little flock"—these "new creatures" of Christ Jesus, instead of being pursued by fears and terrors and trapped and ensnared, are following the Good Shepherd and hearken-

ing to his voice; and, according to his promise, God's goodness and mercy are pursuing them, keeping after them, upholding them in trials. These are the messengers of the Lord, of which the Apostle wrote, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto those who shall be heirs of salvation?" Surely this is so. Looking back we can praise the way in which goodness and mercy have pursued us, never leaving us!

"Angels watch him on his way  
And aid with kindly arm;  
And Satan, seeking out his prey,

May hate, but cannot harm.  
O, child of God; O, glory's heir;  
How rich a lot is thine!"

The conclusion of the whole matter—the end of the journey, is what? To occupy a place in the heavenly mansions in our Father's house! What a glorious consummation to the grandest of all hopes! Why should we murmur or complain at the roughness of the journey which will bring us to such a glorious goal? Let us say with the Psalmist:—

"What shall I render unto the Lord my God for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Most High!"

## EVIL SPEAKING—BUSY-BODYING—TRUTH-HIDING

"Speak evil of no man." (Titus 3:2.) "Let none of you suffer as a busy-body in other men's matters." (1 Pet. 3:16.)  
"Speaking the truth in love."—Eph. 4:15.

All Christians who have made advancement in the development of the graces and fruits of the Lord's Spirit accept as true the texts of Scripture cited. They cheerfully admit the correctness of the points these texts set forth, and agree that it is their duty and the duty of all Christian people to very carefully, very rigidly follow these divine instructions. But, strange to say, it appears that in the majority of minds the reasoning faculties become more or less entangled so that very wrong constructions are put upon the words of heavenly wisdom. The result is that many of the Lord's dear people find the Episcopal confession fitting to them, "We have done those things which we ought not to have done, and we have left undone those things which we ought to have done." One peculiar feature connected with the matter is that some of the Lord's dear people, sincerely desirous of doing his will and naught else, after making blunders and getting into a great mess of trouble, fail to discern wherein they erred; hence with them the experience has brought no lesson, and instead of being helps and bright-shining lights they are stumbling-blocks to a considerable degree and thus offset largely the good they desire to do, or perhaps really do accomplish. It will be clearly understood, then, that the object of this dissertation is not to hurt, wound, offend, but to assist the members of the body of Christ to accomplish more fully the essence of their covenant with the Lord and the desire of their hearts.

### "WHAT IS EVIL SPEAKING?"

We answer: That to speak anything that is derogatory respecting another, to tell things uncomplimentary of them, is evil speaking. Some have the impression that evil speaking is lying and consider that speaking the truth is always in order. This is a misconception. The speaking of anything that is prejudicial to the character of another, whether it be truth or falsehood, is evil speaking in the proper acceptance of that term. The Lord's Spirit, as well as his Word, forbids evil speaking because the Lord's Spirit is the spirit of love and kindness, and evil speaking, true or false, is repudiated by love, is contrary to love, is born of some evil motive, either busy-bodying and gossiping, or, worse still, malice, envy or strife, and all of these the Apostle designates in his list of "the works of the devil."

It is said that there are "exceptions to every rule," and so there are to this one. For instance, if you were a witness to a murder, a theft, or any other heinous crime, it would be a duty to society to speak of the evil, to report it to the proper authorities, the mayor, chief of police, or whoever. This would be evil speaking, it is true, but this is an exceptional case and requires exceptional treatment. It does not, therefore, imply any wrong motive on your part in respect to the wrongdoer—anger, hatred, malice or strife, but is called for by the interests of society and your appreciation of the spirit of love to them. Indeed, in some States the law holds a silent witness as jointly responsible with the principal offender. In the church also there is an exception noted in the Scriptures, namely, that if the trespass be of sufficient importance and likely to break our fellowship with the offender we may go to him and discuss the matter with him alone—not with a view of judging him, condemning him, etc., but with the object of helping the brother out of some view of matters or course of conduct that seems to us to be wrong, sinful, contrary to the Word of God. Before going to him or her, we are to make self-examination to see that we are not in a fault-finding mood, and that the matter is one that really concerns us, either in our personal relationship to the brother or in our mutual relationship to the members of the church of Christ, whose interest we believe might be injured by the

brother's course. We should go kindly and with the hope in our hearts that the matter which seemed strange and in violation of God's Word might prove upon explanation to be nothing of the kind.

We are to go hoping that in any event the Lord will bless our mission, not to the injury of the brother or sister, but to his or her comfort, succor, deliverance from what we believe to be a wrong course. It is only after we have taken this step and the wrong course is persisted in, either to our injury or to the injury of the church—only then are we permitted to speak to another of the thing which we consider to be an evil. Even then the speaking must be done in the presence of the accused, that he may have the fullest opportunity to present his view of the matter, as set forth in the Scriptures in Matt. 18:15-17 and explained in detail in DAWN-STUDIES, Vol. VI. If it were not so pitiable and so grievous an error it would be amusing to note how some conscientious brethren and sisters dodge this matter of evil speaking and seemingly its point entirely. For instance, one of these may say to another, "I have just heard something about Sister C which shocked me fearfully. I do not know what to think about it. I should like to have your advice, but of course I could not tell you what the matter is, for that would be evil speaking, which, as the Lord's follower, I would not be privileged to speak and you would not be privileged to hear." Poor, silly sheep! Such seem not to discern that they are at the time engaged in the very worst kind of evil speaking. In nine cases out of ten, if they would tell all that they know, the impression upon their auditor would not be one-tenth as bad as the one given. This serious error, which is doing so much harm in the whole world and amongst the Lord's people, is an evidence of two things: (1) A lack of reasoning power, (2) a lack of the spirit of love.

We are trying in this article to correct the first defect and to help some to reason more correctly; but it is not ours to help them over the second defect, their lack of love, which really lies at the foundation of the wrong. If they had loved the sister of whom they had heard the evil report, they would never have breathed a word of it to another soul, but would have gone directly to the condemned one in love and with a hope that the report was false, and would have told her, as a friend and as the spirit of love would prompt, all that they had heard or seen or misunderstood, and would have assured her that they hoped there was some explanation of it; but in no event should any hint of the matter escape them.

### "SUFFERING AS A BUSY-BODY"

There are generally two sides to a matter. In nearly every instance in which one person violates the command, "Speak evil of no man," assistance is rendered by the one to whom the evil is told. He or she "draws the matter out" by questions or hints or suggestions or looks of interest or encouraging comments, etc. Undoubtedly such a hearer of evil is in the Lord's sight equally guilty with the speaker of the evil. The difficulty with both is that they lack the spirit of love, which the Apostle refers to, saying, "Charity thinketh no evil," but "covereth a multitude of faults." The first intimation that something scandalous or unkind is about to be said respecting another should lead us to shrink back and feel the fear and realize that the Adversary is near to assist in any evil work. The wise course, as already seen, would be to say promptly, "My dear Sister or Brother, excuse me, but are not you and I both the Lord's children, and can we not please God better and advance our own spiritual welfare more by giving heed to his Word and developing in our own hearts and minds the spirit of love, instead of back-biting and devouring one another? Let us think of



each other's good traits, good qualities, as the Apostle would have us do." If such a proper course lose you the friendship of anyone it will be to your advantage, for if he or she were right-minded such kindly treatment would be helpful, and you would be at once advised that they fully agree with you and are also striving in the same direction.

How often have we heard people say, "Yes, indeed, I wish that I had never heard it! It has caused me a deal of trouble and suffering." These are the people mentioned by the Apostle—who are suffering as busy-bodies in other men's matters, contrary to the divine direction and the spirit of love. They are getting their deserts, and the chances are that they will do spiritual injury to themselves and also do spiritual injury to others through their busy-bodilying. Few of us have time enough to attend to all of the affairs of the world and still give proper attention to our own. "Sweep before your own door" has become a proverb, the intimation being that those who pay great attention to their neighbors' affairs are neglecting home duties and responsibilities and that they are likely to get themselves into trouble in so doing. The Christian of advanced experience emphasizes the fact that he has quite a sufficiency of knowledge of evil in himself and his environment without making special search for the weaknesses and blemishes of others or for their liberties, which perhaps to him seem to be sin; as in the Apostle's case when he speaks of some who "Crept in to spy out our liberties." We may be sure that all to whom the Apostle referred were in a dangerous position by reason of their busy-bodilying, and we may be equally sure that the same principle will always hold good. However good our intentions, none will be crowned for striving unlawfully.—2 Tim. 2:5.

There are some so constituted that it is second nature for them to attempt to regulate everybody else according to their own ideals and standards, forgetful of the fact stated by the Apostle, "To his own Master every servant stands or falls." Our limitations respecting what we may and may not do by way of interference in the affairs of others are very many. To some in olden times it was a terrible sin to eat meat such as was generally sold in public because it was previously offered to an idol. The Apostle took a larger, broader, truer view of the subject when he declared that the idol was nothing anyway, recognizing the fact that the offering of the meat to the idol could do the meat no harm. There were some, however, ready to spy in such matters and to busy-body themselves with other men's affairs, and some of these were perhaps stumbled by reason of their busy-bodilying tendencies. The fact that the Apostle was very willing to yield to these weaker brethren and say that he would abstain from meat entirely does not prove that he was wrong and they right. It merely proves that he was large-hearted enough to forego his own liberties—which were in no wise condemned in the Scriptures—for their sakes because of their weaknesses, their lack of logic, and their weakness along the lines of busy-bodilying. Our Lord addressed busy-bodies when he suggested that they were like the man who went to his neighbor and desired to help him to get a mote out of his eye, without being aware of the fact that he had a whole beam in his own eye. Jesus said to such, "First pluck out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pluck out the mote out of thy brother's eye."—Luke 6:42.

#### A TRUTH-TELLING OBLIGATION

We have already pointed out that it is not permissible even to tell the truth where it would be slanderous or injurious or calculated to bring dishonor to our neighbor; that to tell the truth under such circumstances would be evil speaking from the Scriptural standpoint and forbidden, not only by the Word of the Lord, but by the spirit of love for the brethren, and that it would be wrong even to listen to such a statement, and that rather the one attempting such evil-speaking should be in love rebuked and helped to overcome the weakness. But there is a truth-telling which is in harmony with love. If a scandal-monger and back-biter and slanderer and evil-speaker has disclosed some matter to us, it is our duty not to repeat the matter and not even hint of it to others, but it is our duty to tell the matter and all that we know about it to the one who has been slandered, vilified, spoken against. Why is it our duty to do this? We answer, that the same spirit of love which would prompt us not to speak derogatively of another to others should prompt us to tell the aggrieved one the facts: (1) It will put him on his guard and assist him in overtaking the falsehood or misrepresentation, and all lovers of the truth and righteousness should be glad to assist in such a manner. (2) It would be very helpful, doubtless, to the slanderers, evil-speakers; a

practical lesson would thus be brought home to them, and they might learn before it was too late for learning, that they are still cultivating the works of the flesh and the devil, which must be eradicated from their hearts before they would be ready for the glorious change of the First Resurrection and a share with Christ in glory, honor and immortality. (3) This course would be profitable to ourselves because it would assist in developing in each true courage on the side of right, on the side of truth, the Lord's side, and against the side of the devil, the side of slander and evil speaking.

Strange to say, something in our crooked heads or something of the adversary's deception at times leads some of the Lord's true people into a very wrong course in respect to this matter. For instance, a case came under our observation recently which illustrates this: Mr. A communicated "lovingly" some slanderous information to Mrs. B respecting Mrs. C. Mrs. B "lovingly" heard the awful news and then communicated with Mrs. D, saying that she had heard some awful things about Mrs. C and was greatly distressed thereby. Mrs. D, intimately acquainted with Mrs. C, assured Mrs. B that there was certainly no foundation for any evil speaking. Mrs. B said that she would like to tell Mrs. D the whole of it, but dared not do so, as it would be evil speaking. Mrs. D urged that in any event Mrs. B should go to Mrs. C and tell her the evil things that had been spoken about her and give her the name of her traducer, so that she might go to him in harmony with Matt. 18:15-17; but dear Mrs. B was horrified at the suggestion and declared that not for her life would she be so untrue to Mr. A, and thus "speak evil" of him.

Now notice the mistakes made all through these transactions: (1) Mr. A began the matter as a back-biter, speaking evil of Mrs. C. (2) Mrs. B, in listening to that and not rebuking it promptly and before allowing it to proceed, was a partaker in the guilt. (3) Mrs. B became a slanderer and evil-speaker and back-biter on her own account when she communicated the slander in vague terms to Mrs. D. It matters not that she did not go into details. She gave the bad impression, possibly a much worse impression than if she had told all that had been told to her. (4) Mrs. D was possibly at fault also in listening at all to the slanders, but she took the right course in attempting the defence of one who had not been heard, and in urging that the whole matter be taken at once to Mrs. C that she might know of the evil that was being done her in the robbery of her good name by Mr. A. (5) Mrs. B's suggestion that she would be "evil speaking" in taking this open, above-board course shows that she labored under serious misapprehension of the points of equity. She was partaker with the thief in his robbery of a reputation. (Psa. 50:18.) The reputation of another had been stolen and she was helping to secrete the thief. Yet, as we say, the delusions of our twisted minds and the cunning of the Adversary get some of the Lord's people into these difficulties so that they take unwittingly the side of the Adversary, who puts light for darkness and darkness for light. Mrs. B "would not for the world" expose Mr. A, believing that in so doing she would be "evil speaking." What sophistry! The very opposite of the truth! That was the one and only time she should have told the matter, apologizing at the same time for her own share in the sin. The person against whom the evil was spoken is the one and the *only* one to whom it should have been mentioned at all, and as for Mr. A, if it turned out to be discreditable to him and he lost some of his prestige thereby, it might mean the greatest blessing that had ever come to him and might recover him from the snare of the adversary, which, if not recovered from, would most assuredly hinder his entrance into the kingdom.

#### ANOTHER PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

Here is another instance which came under our observation and which illustrates the awful danger of this pernicious principle of "evil speaking," slandering, back-biting and the subtle forms it may take and the great danger to be accomplished.

Mrs. V took offense at Mr. W. (It matters not for this illustration whether there was ground for the offense or not.) Being very conscientious she felt that she could not tell the circumstance to her friends; and indeed probably another consideration weighed in this matter. She felt that to tell the truth would not serve her purposes, as many would doubtless consider that the wrong and blame belonged to herself. Under the adversary's guidance, of which doubtless she was unconscious, she began to slander Mr. W in a pantomime way—by looking hurt, acting offended and disconsolate. As she forknew, this led her friends to question her: What is your trouble? Indirectly and with apparent unwillingness she inti-

mated that Mr. W was the source of her grief, but that it was too deep for her to mention and that she was too noble to speak evil even with a cause. Promptly her friends, X, Y and Z, took the bait, rallied to her support and, true to human nature, struggled to see which could be the chief busy-body. Incidentally we point out that they should have remembered the Scriptures cited at the head of this article and should have given Mrs. V the Scriptural advice, Go to Mr. W and deal with him along the lines of Matt. 18:15-17. They should not have picked, meddled, busy-bodied, and, in violating this divine rule, they suffered the consequences. These well meaning busy-bodies, X, Y and Z, began the system of "investigation," declaring to their own hearts and each other that it was the love of God alone which was prompting them to help a poor Sister. We will not question the honesty of their claim, but content ourselves with pointing out that their love was not properly exercised along Scriptural lines. They began with Mrs. V—Did Mr. W do this or so? Mrs. V's conscience would not allow her to say, "Yes," because their surmise had quite overshot the mark of any grievance she could have claimed. But she was in the humor to crave sympathy and to forward her designs of bringing contumely upon Mr. W, hence she merely sighed and looked sad and refused to answer Yes or No. The busy-bodies, X, Y and Z, held a consultation and concluded that the reason she did not answer their question was that her trouble was far worse than anything of which they had dreamed. Again they approached Mrs. V with sympathy and condolences, telling her that they knew now that it was worse than she had first suggested and that they had concluded that it must be something even worse than they could even imagine or suggest.

Mrs. V was somewhat shocked that her method of slander by insinuation and silence had succeeded so far beyond her original intention. But she felt that she could not go back on the matter now and tell the sympathizers, X, Y and Z, the plain, simple truth, because then they would forever lose confidence in her and discern that by her methods she deceived them. Thus from step to step Mrs. V became involved and her conscience injured until finally she felt that her only course to preserve her standing with her friends, X, Y and Z, was to take the position that their worst insinuations respecting Mr. W were well founded. Her conscience squirmed for a time, but love of sympathy and of the esteem of others and the fear that the truth would cause the loss of these, bound her hand and foot to the falsehood which she had acted and slander which she had suggested by action, insinuation and silence. The result was that for a time all four of those ladies were in great danger of losing the truth and going into outer darkness—yea, into the second death.

I am glad that we do not have to record such an outcome, but the dangers were certainly sufficiently thrilling for all concerned. How promptly all of that evil condition could have been nipped in the bud. When Mrs. V was overtaken in the fault and began to slander Mr. W by intimation, her friends, X, Y and Z, should have remembered the Apostle's words: Ye that are spiritual restore such an one in a spirit of meekness, remembering yourselves also, lest ye should be tempted. (Gal. 6:1.) If Mrs. V had refused to be restored and continued her process of villification by conduct, these friends, acting along the lines of the Golden Rule, should have gone to Mr. W and told him of the matter, Mrs. V's

conduct, insinuations, etc. What a great help this proper Golden-Rule course would have been to Mrs. V, Mr. W and the three friends! How it would have saved them from the adversary's snare, which for a time enwrapped them and caused them a spiritual blight.

#### DON'T TELL OR YOU ARE A TELL-TALE

Mark those persons who request you to keep secrets from those to whom they properly belong. We do not mean by this that there are no proper secrets in business, in the family, etc., but we do mean that if anyone has a tale to tell us derogatory to another, and first attempts to bind our reason and judgment with a vow of secrecy, it is time for us to be on guard against that person, and to tell him or her in no uncertain terms that we believe that such an attempt to bind our conscience or judgment in advance is belittling to us and ignoble to him. Let us tell such in kindly terms that their ways are ways of darkness, whether they are aware of the fact or not; and that we decline to be a companion in the dark ways which their language intimates, and that we advise them to come out of the dark into more honest methods and practices. Let us tell them this in such a manner as will wound them as little as possible, but in such a manner as will settle it for all time as between them and us and that we do not wish to have their dark secrets—we do not wish to be sharers in their slanders and back-biting and "evil speaking" and thieving of reputation.

Fear of being called a tell-tale has been the adversary's method for secreting wrongs these many years, and not infrequently it is used as a lash to hinder "overcomers" from doing their duty. They must overcome this, and must learn that it is a sin not to tell the truth to the *right* person for fear of offending a slanderer, equally as wrong as to tell a slander to the *wrong* person.

This is a part of the overcoming, the victory which love and justice gain in our hearts. We must learn to pay no attention to the world's false standards and sneers of "tell-tale" and to pay every attention to the divine standard, the Golden Rule. It is the duty of every clerk or employee to make known to his employer any matter of consequence seriously affecting his interests, either financial or moral, as according to the Golden Rule he would wish that employer to do to him if their situation in life were reversed. It is the duty of every one hearing slander and defamation of a friend's reputation to give that friend the fullest information respecting the matter, just as much as under common law it would be his duty to report the matter if he were a witness to a theft of material goods. Fear of consequences must not hinder our faithfulness to this divine principle, this Golden Rule.

Let us fix it in our minds as an inviolable element of the Golden Rule by which we are bound, that if evil speakings come to our knowledge without our being in any sense a party to them or able to prevent them we will *always and promptly* bring the matter to the attention of the brother or sister or person whose name or reputation is traduced and will tell that person *all that has been heard and the name of our informant*, and everything else that will enable him or her to pursue the traducer, according to the instructions in Matt. 18:15-17. Whoever fails to see this, the proper course of a Christian, fails to appreciate, we think, the Golden Rule, which is binding upon all the disciples of Christ.

### "JUST FOR TODAY"

"Just for today!" O depths of faith,  
I need to help me say,  
"Thy Will be done"—"Thou leadest me,"  
Just step by step today.  
I do not know tomorrow's ills  
Or joys—which may befall;  
But whatsoever may betide,  
Thy grace will cover all.

"Just for today!" O blessed thought  
That cheers my fainting heart!  
I cannot wander far from thee  
If I but do my part,  
Which is to trust and never fear  
What man may do or say,  
But only "look to thee in prayer"  
And trust, "Just for today!"

"Just for today!" How many saints,  
Now gone to their reward,  
Have trod this narrow path of faith  
By "Leaning on the Lord,"

Not knowing what each day might bring  
Of joys or trials severe;  
Not even caring, for *by faith*  
*They knew* the Lord was near!

"Just for today!" This "Day of Trial,"  
When Satan seeks to sift;  
When God permits "*such polishings*"  
We praise him for "*the Gift*"  
Of One who's mighty to direct  
The work, till he shall say  
"*Enough!* the Jewel shines! 'Tis mine!  
*I'll gather it today!*"

"Just for today!" Then, brethren dear,  
Be neither weak nor faint,  
But "watch and pray" to be kept free  
From sin's dread power and taint  
That ye with Christ may "live and reign"  
Till sin and death shall cease,  
And Earth shall have her Jubilee  
Of Everlasting Peace! *W. Homer Lee.*

on "Good Hopes" account

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