

Christian Renewal

—By—

ALFRED P. GIBBS

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CHRISTIAN RENEWAL

THE need for constant renewal is everywhere recognized as essential to effective service. This is true, not only in the natural and physical realms, but in the spiritual realm also. Scripture bears testimony to the fact that: "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." By "the outward man" is meant the physical body; while the "inward man," of course, refers to the sum total of those things which combine to the making and maintaining of that spiritual life which each child of God received when he was born from above. Just as one's physical life needs to be maintained by constant renewal, in the shape of food, air, rest, and exercise; so also the spiritual life need to be developed, if the believer is to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of his Lord and Savior" (II Peter 3:18).

The Christian life commences with a once-for-all *regeneration*, but is continued by means of daily *renewal*. It starts with an *act* of faith in Christ, but is continued by an *attitude* of faith towards Christ. It begins with a *crisis*, but continues with a *condition*. Thus the child of God finds himself in need of constant renewal, if he is to be the man of God his Father in heaven desires him to be.

Let us see what the word of God has to say regarding this Christian renewal. We shall consider first, the need for

A RENEWED "RIGHT SPIRIT" BY SELF-EXAMINATION

(Ps. 51:10).

In this psalm of contrition David prays: "Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me." Though it is true that each Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit from the moment he re-

ceives Christ as his Savior, and is thus sealed unto the day of redemption (Eph. 1:13, 4:30); yet it is tragically possible for him to manifest a wrong spirit, or attitude, towards others.

David had been guilty of this. He had fostered a lazy, covetous, cruel and callous spirit, which had robbed him of his joy in the Lord, his peace of mind, and his usefulness in God's service. Not until he had humbly and frankly confessed his sin, judged and forsaken it, could there be a restoration of his fellowship with God.

Many a Christian has failed in his spiritual life, because he has allowed a wrong spirit, or attitude, to dominate him, and misdirect his thoughts, words, actions and attitude. Let us name a few of these wrong attitudes.

1. *Some have adopted a critical spirit.* They are always complaining about conditions in the assembly to which they belong; but do nothing to remedy the matter. They are quick to find fault with those who are attempting to do something for God and, by their very attitude and bearing, act as a wet blanket on all efforts to carry on the Lord's work. One such criticizer approached a Christian worker and remarked: "I don't like the way *you* do personal work!" The worker replied: "Well, tell me how *you* do it." Somewhat embarrassed by the direct question, the critic answered: "Er . . . er . . . I'm afraid I don't do it!" At this the worker tersely exclaimed: "Well, I like the way I do personal work, better than the way *you* don't do it!" It requires but little stock in the way of brains, brawn and brotherly love to carry on the business of criticism. In fact, all it requires is a plentiful supply of "hot air"!

Scripture furnishes us with a striking illustration of the baneful effects of carping criticism. In II

Samuel 6 the incident is recorded which doomed Michal to barrenness for the rest of her life. She learned, to her cost, what it meant to foster a critical and censorious spirit within her heart. As she looked down from her window and saw David, her husband, dancing before the Lord as he brought the ark of God to Jerusalem, "she despised him in her heart." With supercilious scorn on her face she sneered: "How glorious was the king of Israel today!" Her husband's devotion to the Lord and his self-effacement, as he rejoiced before the Lord, meant nothing to her. In her foolish sense of snobbish superiority, she took her seat in the critic's chair and paid the usual price—barrenness! (v. 23).

Let those who are "constituted in the objective case and the kickative mood" take heed, lest spiritual barrenness follow the unjust criticism which results from envy, jealousy and warped prejudices. Constructive criticism is good, and should be welcomed by everyone; but that spirit of faultfinding that exists only for its own benefit should be avoided like a plague. It is like a killing frost, or a withering blight, which brings barrenness wherever it goes. It turns a lovely garden into a wilderness of weeds, and brings desolation to all it touches.

Even the world recognizes this fact, for one of its poets has said:

"A good thing to remember,
And a better thing to do:
Is to work with the construction gang
And not the wrecking crew!"

C. J. Sodergren, writing in "His," gives the following recipe on "How to become perfectly miserable"; "Think about yourself. Talk about yourself. Use "I" as much as possible. Mirror yourself continually in the opinion of others. Listen greedily to what people say about you. Expect to be appreciated. Be suspicious, jealous and envious. Be sensitive to slight. Never forgive a criticism.

Trust nobody but yourself. Insist on consideration and respect. Demand agreement with your views on everything. Sulk if people are not grateful for the favors you show them. Shirk your duties if you can, and do as little as possible for others. Love yourself supremely."

2. *Others exhibit a cynical spirit.* They assume a skeptical attitude towards all attempts to carry on the Lord's work, and actually impute wrong motives to those who do seek to do business for God. They are dominated by the idea that all service for the Lord is some sort of "racket," and assume that the one who is engaged in it is motivated merely by a desire for prominence, praise and reward. They forget that only God can comprehend the motives of the heart, and that "by Him actions are weighed" (I Sam. 2:3).

While we have abundant scriptural authority to judge the *actions* of another by the word of God (I Cor. 5); we have no right to judge *motives*. This is what our Lord had in view when He declared: "Judge not that ye be not judged" (Matt. 7:1).

This cynical attitude, which falsely assumes that all human conduct is motivated by self-interest, is usually the result of a soured disposition, which robs the believer of that "simplicity that is in Christ" (II Cor. 11:3). The freshness, joy and transparent honesty that should characterize the spiritual life, gives place to a spirit of suspicion and intrigue, with its consequent coldness and deadness. The Lord deliver us from this wrong spirit!

3. *Then there is the niggardly spirit* which some evidence. These miserly souls withhold when they should give, and save when they should spend. Instead of giving willingly and gladly of their substance to the Lord, they part with it grudgingly. Instead of giving proportionately of their income, "as the Lord has prospered them," they keep it for

themselves, and thus rob God of His portion, and themselves of the joy of liberality. They seem to be unaware of the fact that God devotes two whole chapters to the subject of the grace of giving (II Cor. 8-9). It is not for nothing that the wise man said: "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty" (Proverbs 11:24).

4. *Then again, there is a covetous spirit that sometimes possesses believers.* The love of money, power and position becomes an absorbing passion that is never satisfied. This unholy desire consumes their love for Christ, their desire for prayer, their appetite for the word of God, their joy in His service, and their appreciation of the fellowship of God's people in assembly capacity. Let us pay good heed to what the Lord Himself bade His disciples: "Beware of covetousness." Covetousness is declared to be idolatry. Perhaps a good definition of idolatry is: "Anything that displaces God in the life." An idol is what a man worships in his heart. God desires the place of absolute preeminence in the life of each Christian, and He will yield second place to none. Anything that obscures God, or denies Him this first place in one's life, be it money, position, or even earthly relationships, is therefore an idol, and must go, for He has declared: "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me" (Exod. 20:3).

5. *Another wrong spirit that sometimes actuates a child of God is that of intolerance.* This was once exhibited by James and John. When a certain village of the Samaritans did not welcome Christ, they asked the Lord: "Wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" (Luke 9:52-56). On another occasion John reported to the Lord that they had seen a man casting out demons in the name of Christ, and had remon-

strated with him, because he did not follow them. Christ rebuked his disciples for this and said: "Forbid him not, for there is not a man which shall do a miracle in My name, that can lightly speak evil of Me" (Mark 9:38-39).

It is sadly possible for one who is meeting in church fellowship in accordance with the principles of God's word, to manifest towards other Christians, who do not so gather, a harsh, overbearing, egotistical and intolerant attitude. The word of God makes clear that love, forbearance, and kindly patience must be the spirit that should characterize the believer in his relation with other Christians, if he is to be a help to them.

6. *Lastly there is the callous spirit*, which remains indifferent to the needs of others. Surely that Christian is in a bad condition of soul who is not deeply concerned with the need of the lost, who are going blindly down the broad way to eternal perdition. It is stated many times that our Lord and Master had "compassion on the multitudes, for they were as sheep without a shepherd." Well might the believer be concerned if he has no concern for the lost, or for his fellow believers. The Lord give us tender and compassionate hearts as we live amongst our fellow travelers to eternity!

In view of this possibility of a believer exhibiting a wrong spirit, how may he have a right spirit renewed within him? First, by self-examination in the light of God's word, and in the presence of God. See Psalm 139:23-24. Second, by contemplation of and occupation with the Lord Jesus. Read Philipians 2:1. Here is "the mind of Christ." Surely there can be no room for pride, arrogancy or intolerance, as we walk with Him! Third, by an honest confession of sin, self-judgment and prompt adjustment to the will of God as revealed in His holy word. By this means the believer may have

that "right spirit" renewed within him, and thus bring glory to his Lord and Master.

Now let us think of the necessity for

A RENEWED SPIRITUAL STRENGTH BY PRAYER

(Isa. 40:29-31).

In the words of this passage, Isaiah, by the Spirit's inspiration, suggests the possibility and prescribes the cure for that faintness, or weakness, that oftentimes comes upon the believer. We shall seek to trace some of the causes of this faintness, and then consider its cure.

I. The Causes of Faintness

In the first flush of new-found joy, the young convert knows little or nothing of these periods of faintness, or weakness. It is with him as with the people of Israel, when God redeemed them out of the land of Egypt. We read that: "God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near: for God said: 'Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt'" (Exodus 13:17). God knew they had neither sufficient strength nor experience in the art of warfare to fight against the foe that would have withstood their progress. Thus He did not "suffer them to be tempted above that which they were able" (I Cor. 10:13). This explains the large measure of immunity from severe testing that the young Christian usually enjoys. However, sooner or later, the testing must come, so to be forewarned is to be forearmed.

1. *Sometimes our physical limitations* are the cause of our faintness. This fact is illustrated in the life of Elijah when he fled from the threat of Jezebel. After many weary miles of travel, he sank, physically exhausted, beneath the juniper tree and

dolefully moaned: "It is enough: Now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers." What was God's response to this melancholy complaint of His servant? He did not rebuke Elijah, for He realized the tremendous physical stress and mental strain under which His servant had labored. First, God saw to it that he was given a refreshing sleep, and then supplied with strengthening food to reinvigorate his tired body. Then came God's word to him: "Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for thee" (I Kings 19:1-8).

The physical is more closely allied to the spiritual than most people imagine. Depleted nervous energy, brought on by physical exhaustion, often brings a depression of spirit that causes the believer to faint. In Psalm 103:14 we read: "God knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are *dust*." When a Christian foolishly imagines he is made of cast iron, and overtaxes his physical endurance, he is often made to learn, in the hard way, that he is but "*dust*." Our Savior Himself, seeing His disciples were too busy for their own good, said to them: "Come ye apart into a desert place and rest awhile" (Mark 6:31).

Many cases of nervous breakdown amongst Christians would have been avoided had these believers known and remembered what God knew and remembered. These bodies of ours can stand only a certain amount of strain, and it behooves us to be "*temperate in all things*" (I Cor. 9:25). The aim of the Christian should be to have a healthy soul in a healthy body. The apostle John expresses this in his letter to the well beloved Gaius: "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (II John 2).

2. *Our Satanic adversary.* Another common cause of faintness is the opposition of Satan and his

host of wicked spirits. We little realize the tremendous opposition arrayed against us by this wily and powerful foe. David sensed this and inquired: "Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" (Psa. 42:9). If Satan can discourage a child of God, he has succeeded in robbing him of his usefulness in the service of Christ.

A study of the tactics of the Devil in the temptation of our Lord will help the believer to recognize his approach. Christ was offered sustenance without dependence (Matt. 4:3); preservation apart from obedience (Matt. 4:6) and glory without suffering (Matt. 4:9). To all such temptations our Lord resorted to the word of God, and thus left us "an example that we should follow His steps" (I Peter 2:21). The heartening words of James 4:7 should come as a clarion call to all believers: "Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you!"

3. *The Circumstances of Life.* It was when Peter "saw the wind boisterous," and took his eyes off the Lord, that he sank in the water. Many a Christian, preoccupied with the circumstances and vicissitudes of his life, has fainted beneath the load. Martha suffered from this same trouble. When "cumbered about with much serving," she became fretful, and actually took it upon herself to charge the Lord with being careless about her need (Luke 10:38-42).

To "faint in the day of adversity" is an indication that our "strength is small" (Prov. 24:10). Job could say: "What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10). No Christian is guaranteed immunity from sickness, pain, trial and loss; but he is promised grace by which to glorify God in his affliction (II Cor. 12:9). In other words, we are not delivered from the trial, but delivered in the trial; and made to prove the all sufficiency of His grace to meet every contingency that may arise.

The monotonous round of life, with its daily duties, irksome tasks, household cares and business problems, all tend to depress the Christian, and rob him of that buoyancy of spirit and joy in the Lord that is so essential to a useful spiritual life. It is deeply significant that the Savior pointed out that it was that triumverate of evil: "the cares and riches and pleasures of this life" that choked the seed, so that it brought forth no fruit to perfection (Luke 8:14).

4. *Dabbling with the questionable.* Samson discovered this to his cost. When he had given away the secret of his strength and his hair had been cut, he "wist not that the Lord was departed from him." Imagining himself to be as strong as ever, he fell an easy prey to the Philistines, who bound and blinded him (Judges 16).

Each time a Christian indulges in what he knows to be a questionable habit, he weakens his power of resistance until the inevitable tragedy takes place, and his secret backsliding becomes evident to all. There is a word in Job 17:9 which is very much to the point in this connection: "The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he *that hath clean hands* shall be stronger and stronger." If we would be "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might," we must lead clean lives that are upright and honorable in the eyes of the world. The questionable should be studiously avoided, and God must be given the credit in any matter of judgment of which we are in doubt.

Having examined a few of the causes for spiritual faintness amongst the people of God, let us now consider

II. The Cure for This Faintness
or how our strength may be renewed.

This is prescribed in verses 29 and 31 of Isaiah 40.

1. *Let us notice the Source of this renewed strength.* It is found in the words: "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might *He* increaseth strength." Though the child of God may, and does often fail and faint; "the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary" (Isa. 40:28). We have an omnipotent God, to Whom all things are possible—and He is our Father! How blessed it is to know that "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" He is the One Who called Himself: "the Strength of Israel". (I Sam. 15:29). "All power belongeth to God." Creation, both above and around, was brought into being at His word of command, for "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast" (Psa. 33:9).

Before the risen Lord ascended to His Father, He gave this heartening assurance to His disciples: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). Thus, both where He now is, and where He has left us, His power is limitless. In John 15:5 He sums up, in a few words, the cause of our weakness and failure: "Without Me, ye can do nothing." Many years ago, the Post Office of Niagara Falls, New York, used to stamp on all letters coming from that town: "Locate at the seat of power." Here, then, is both the source and secret of the believer's strength: union and communion with Christ. Paul realized this and triumphantly testified: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). He had learned, as we must, that we cannot do anything *for* Christ *without* Christ.

Here is a great newspaper press, capable of turning out thousands of newspapers an hour. It is all ready to begin operation; the type has been set and placed in order, but it lies silent and helpless, incapable of printing one paper. What is wrong? It

has not yet been brought into contact with the vast reservoir of electrical energy generated by the power station nearby. At last, the switch is thrown and contact is made and the power, thus released, rushes in and the great press is alive with movement and power. Surely this is a parable of life. All power is vested in our risen, glorified Lord at God's right hand; but we must be in contact with Him if this power is to flow out to us and through us, as channels of blessing to others. One of the laws of electricity is that it will never flow *in* where it cannot flow *out*; it requires a circuit to complete the operation.

2. *Let us mark the means by which this power or strength is communicated:* "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew, or exchange their strength." Prayer is thus the channel by which God communicates this sorely needed strength to His children. Prayer is at once the confession of our own weakness and our confidence in God's power. As we thus come, in conscious weakness, to the throne of grace and spread all our needs before Him, we shall be made to prove the truth of that old hymn which affirms that: "Prayer is the power that moves the hand that moves the world, and brings deliverance down."

This waiting upon the Lord in the spirit of humility and childlike dependence, is not easy to the flesh; but it is essential if our weakness is to be exchanged for the strength that only God can give. It was this that David had in mind when he said: "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord" (Psa. 27:14). We must both *make* time and *take* time for prayer; for God is revealed in His word as commanding prayer, inspiring prayer, hearing prayer and answering prayer. Time spent at the throne of God is not wasted time, but time used

to the best advantage and for the best purpose imaginable, the renewing of our spiritual energies.

3. *Let us now see the results of this waiting on the Lord.* "They shall renew their strength." As the believer, in all his weakness, waits upon the Lord in prayer; he will discover that his spiritual strength is miraculously renewed, so that once again he can mount over the seemingly impassable obstacle as with the wings of an eagle. He is enabled, as of yore, to run with patience the race that is set before him (Heb. 12:1). Not only so, but he is empowered to walk the path of faith and obedience, which is so pleasing to his Lord and Master.

Perhaps the mounting, running and walking could also illustrate three phases of the believer's activity which are affected by prayer. The "*mounting up*" could speak of *worship* which the Father seeks from His blood-bought people, as they appreciate, in some measure, all He has made Himself known to be in the Person of His Son. As this worship, or ascription of worth, rises from the altar of our souls through Christ, to the Father, in the power of the Spirit, it brings great delight to Him.

The *running* could depict our *service*. As we wait upon the Lord, our feet shall become both beautiful and swift to obey His commands. Thus by loving, loyal and glad service, we can be His messengers to whomsoever, whenever and wherever He desires. David testified: "I will run in the way of Thy commandments when Thou shalt enlarge my heart" (Psa. 119:32). Paul could say: "Forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before; I press towards the mark" (Phil. 3:14). He had to lament over certain ones of whom he said: "Ye did run well, who did hinder you?" (Gal. 5:7). Because of failure to renew their strength they had fainted in the race.

The "walking" surely is a figure of the *daily life* the believer must live before God, his fellow believers and the world. God's word to Abraham: "I am El Shaddai: (the God Who is enough) walk before Me, and be thou upright"; must surely come home to each believer's heart with power. How much therefore he needs this Divine re-invigoration to enable him to walk worthily, lovingly and circumspectly (Eph. 4:1; 5:2; 5:15). If we would walk with God as Enoch did, we must wait on God. In fact, the more we wait on Him, the better we shall walk before Him. Thus we shall be enabled to live the God-pleasing life, that brings not only joy to the believer, but also blessing into the lives of others.

May it be ours to experience, much of this renewed strength as we traverse the wilderness pathway as "strangers and pilgrims." The way may seem rough and long, but Christ has gone before. Let us therefore consider Him, "lest we be wearied and faint in our minds" (Heb. 12:3). May we so wait upon the Lord that our weakness shall be exchanged for His strength. We shall then discover what Paul meant when he said: "When I am weak, then am I strong"; (II Cor. 12:10). Thus, "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might" (Eph. 6:10) we shall be enabled to go on for Him and live lives that shall be to His eternal praise and glory.

We shall now consider the matter of

A RENEWED COMMUNION BY SELF-JUDGMENT

(II Chron. 15:1-15).

There is much we may learn from the history of Israel. In fact, we are told by God Himself that "All these things happened unto them for *ensamples* (or types); and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the end of the ages are come" (I Cor. 10:11). The Old Testament has well been called

"the picture book of the New Testament." Most of the Old Testament is inexplicable apart from the New Testament. It was Augustine who said: "In the Old, the New is *latent*; in the New, the Old is *patent*." A great amount of real spiritual profit may be gleaned from Israel's turbulent history; and wise is he who reads to learn, and then seeks to apply the truth, in a practical way, to his own life and conduct. Three main facts emerge from the Scripture record: Israel's dearth, repentance and renewal. Let us think of them in this order.

I. Israel's dearth, verse 3.

"Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law." In these words Azariah, "clothed with the Spirit of God," summarized the condition of the nation. Let us examine it a little closer.

1. *There had been no communion with God.* The God "Who taketh pleasure in His people" (Ps. 149:4) had been unable "for a long season," to communicate to them "the joy of the Lord, which was their strength" (Neh. 8:10). Instead of the heavens being opened to them, so that His people might "walk in the light of His countenance"; the heavens had been as brass. There has been no fellowship between God and His blood-bought people. The reason for this is not difficult to discover, "If ye seek Him, He will be found of you; but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you" (vs. 2). Israel had turned its back on God, and sought its satisfaction elsewhere. The people had "forsaken God, the Fountain of living waters, and had hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that could hold no water" (Jer. 2:13). God had therefore withdrawn from them the conscious sense of His presence and favor, and spiritual dearth was the inevitable outcome.

What a graphic illustration this is of a child of

God who, through neglect of the daily devotional reading of the word of God; of worship and prayer to God; of service for God, and personal heart dealings with God, has lost the enjoyment of that fellowship with his Father that used to be his! Tolerated, unjudged and unconfessed sin has been allowed to rob him of his spirituality, so that he no longer enjoys the things of God. Though he may keep up a semblance of Christian testimony by attending the various meetings, he has no real heart for it. His golden harp of joy has been hung on the willows, and his voice is no longer heard singing the Lord's songs. (Ps. 137:1-4). This is the price we pay for backsliding, and it is high indeed—more than any man can afford. "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God" (Jer. 2:19).

John Newton wrote of this experience of spiritual dearth:

"How tedious and tasteless the hours
When Jesus no longer I see!
Sweet prospects, sweet birds, and sweet flowers,
Have all lost their fragrance to me.

The midsummer's sun shines but dim,
The flowers strive in vain to look gay;
But when I am happy in Him,
December's as pleasant as May!"

2. *There was no word from God*, vs. 3. *There had been "no teaching priest."* There had been no communication from God, through His word, to their hearts. It is indeed a sad day for the believer when he has no appetite for the Bible or, when he does force himself to read it, gets no instructions from the Lord. It surely is a gloomy period when no word from the Lord falls upon our hearts, and heaven is silent above us! It was this dread that moved David to exclaim: "Be not silent to me: lest

if Thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit" (Ps. 28:1). When did some word from the Lord last reach our hearts and stir our souls? When did some new light from the Scriptures break in upon our spirits, and cause us to rejoice "as one that findeth great spoil?" (Ps. 119:162). O, the tragedy of having a Book that no longer speaks to us! (Prov. 6:22).

3. *There was no direction from God.* They were "without law," vs. 3. Having forsaken the word of God, there was no longer any guidance from God. Left to their own devices, they wandered further and further from Him into the bypaths of sin. Truly, lawlessness brings its own punishment. He who would be "the master of his fate and the captain of his soul," will soon discover he has a fool for a master and a knave for a captain! The key to the utter confusion that characterized Israel in the days of the Judges is found in the last verse of that book: "There was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

That believer who becomes a law unto himself and pursues a path of self-will must pay, in the hard cash of bitter experience, for his folly. Just as Jonah "paid the fare" to Tarshish in order to avoid the necessity of doing what he was told; so every disobedient Christian must learn, the hard way, what such a course will cost, and where it will inevitably lead.

4. *There was no peace before God,* vs. 4. "trouble." When Israel threw off the restraining hand of God and plunged into sin, falsely imagining licence to be liberty; they discovered themselves in a sea of trouble of their own making. Their weakness, resulting from their sin, emboldened their enemies, who now attacked and supplied them with plenty of opposition. God's promise to His people was: "When a man's ways please the Lord,

He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Prov. 16:7). Because they no longer pleased the Lord, the slumbering enemy awakened to his opportunity and assaulted them with all his malignity and power.

How true this is in the case of the backsliding Christian! The old appetites, kept under control while the Spirit was ungrieved within, now reassert themselves and, with impudent boldness; unrestrained by the will, do their deadly work in the soul. Instead of "suffering as a Christian," he suffers as an evil doer, and thus brings disquiet and trouble, of his own making, upon his head. (I Pet. 4:14-16).

5. *There was no blessing from God.* "And God did vex them with all adversity," vs. 6. Added to the trouble which they brought upon themselves, God now visited them with His chastening hand. God's people are too dear to Him to be left to their own devices: they must now feel the lash of His discipline; and so God used the nations as a scourge to bring the people of Israel to its senses, and to an acknowledgment and forsaking of their sins.

Sooner or later, the backslider must feel the rod of the Father's disciplining hand. This fact is made clear in the Epistle to the Hebrews where God declares: "If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye illegitimates, and not sons" (Heb. 12:8). God loves us too much to allow us to go unchastised when we are living in a backslidden condition of soul. It is as our *Father* that He corrects us, and though "no chastening for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward, it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:11). Like David, when offered a choice as to what punishment God should inflict on him for his sin in numbering the people, the true

believer will say: "Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord, for very great are His mercies; but let me not fall into the hands of men" (I Chron. 21:13). It is far better that God should wield the rod of correction than we be left to ourselves, to go, unpunished, into deeper depths of infamy.

II. Israel's Repentance, verse 4.

"When they, in their trouble did turn unto the Lord God of Israel and sought Him, He was found of them." In these few words we have the history of a soul's restoration. Notice the order of this recovery.

1. *In their trouble they turned to the Lord.* They did not turn away from the hand that chastised them, but to it. They recognized the justice of His dealings with them, and kissed the hand that smote them. It was the *troubles* of the Prodigal that caused him to turn, in thought, to his father, and the provision of his home: "How many hired servants of my father have enough to eat and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" His hunger, misery and rags brought him to his senses, and caused him to realize his waywardness, folly and sin. Modern uplift societies concern themselves very largely with the attempt to make the prodigal more comfortable in the far country; but God wants His people out of that country and into His arms and home!

The Father marks this turning of the heart to Him, for He knows the feet will soon follow the direction of the heart. True repentance has its beginning in the thoughts, for it is our thoughts which shape our actions. A new day has dawned for the backslider who turns, with determination of heart, to the One from Whom he has wandered, and Whom he has grieved so much by his folly and neglect. To turn necessitates an act of the will, the forming of a definite decision, and this involves the turning

from those things that previously occupied the attention. The prodigal not only changed his mind, but the direction of his face, for he turned his back on the far country and made his way to the Father's house.

2. *They sought the Lord*, vs. 4. This involves the *confessing* of the sin that caused the departure from God, and the *forsaking* of it. This seeking of the Lord is as essential to restoration as is the turning to the Lord. Hosea, the prophet of the backslider, urges his hearers to: "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him: 'take away all iniquity and receive us graciously' " (Hos. 14:2).

The Lord wants to *hear* something from the backslider, and that is an honest confession of his sin, accompanied by a loathing of that sin and self-judgment because of it. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). As we thus honestly and humbly confess our sins and judge ourselves because of them, our Father will hear and grant His restoring grace; for it is still true as it was in Jeremiah's day: "And ye shall seek Me and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your hearts" (Jer. 29:13).

3. *The Lord was found of them*, vs. 4. God's response to their seeking of Him was a fresh revelation of His love and favor, so that once again the joy of the Lord was their portion. God not only knows how to correct His people, but He knows how to restore them to Himself, and confirm His love afresh to them. Truly, He is "the Lord who teaches His people to profit" (Isa. 48:17).

III. Israel's Renewal, verse 8.

"Asa . . . renewed the altar of the Lord." The altar, long disused, was now restored to its former position, to serve the purpose God intended it should.

The altar, in Israel's day, was the place where God's claims were recognized, His Person honored, and His blessings made available. God had said: "An altar shalt thou make unto Me and . . . I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee" (Ex. 20:24).

This altar surely speaks to us of that communion and fellowship with God, so essential to our Christian growth and progress in the path God desires for us. It speaks of the daily reading, study of and meditation in the word of God that should be the habit of every Christian's life. It is only in this way that we can learn the mind of God, for He reveals Himself to us in the Scriptures. The altar also speaks of that worship, praise and prayer which must form an integral part of our life, if we are to be the men and women of God He desires us to be. Then again, the altar could illustrate that sacrificial service we should willingly render to the One Whose precious blood has made us forever His. We should so present our bodies to Him as a living sacrifice that He, through us, shall be glorified in our service for Him.

To allow this altar to be neglected is fatal to the development of one's spiritual life. Should we be conscious of any neglect in this matter, we should "give neither sleep to our eyes, nor slumber to our eyelids," until the altar has been renewed; and once again we have the conscious sense of fellowship with our blessed Lord at the throne of grace, and enjoy communion with Him through His word. May it be ours to offer, upon the altar of our souls, both the morning and evening sacrifice of praise to God, and intercession on behalf of others. This surely is a sacrifice well pleasing to God, and well calculated to keep us happy in the Lord and faithful in His service. Let us lay to heart these lessons of the Old Testament that contain so much needed truth for the present day, and see to it that the altar be

given its right place in our lives for, apart from this, there can be neither the enjoyment of God's blessing, nor effective service for Him.

Fourthly, let us note the need of

A RENEWED YOUTH, BY REMEMBRANCE AND PRAISE

(Ps. 103:5).

Renewed youth has been the dream of philosophers from time immemorial. Alchemists of long ago spent years in the quiet of their laboratories trying, but in vain, to concoct an "elixir of life," by which perpetual youth could become the portion of all men. Ponce de Leon's search for the mythical "Fountain of Youth" but serves to illustrate the longing of humanity to perpetuate, if possible, the care-free days of youth, and thus stave off the encroachments of old age.

In spite of all efforts to the contrary, however: "Time, like an ever rolling stream, bears all its sons away." It carries them from babyhood to boyhood, and from thence to youth, manhood, middle age, declining years, old age, death and eternity. All man's attempts to stop, or even retard the flow of this stream of Time have ended in dismal failure. No one has succeeded in recapturing the experiences of youth, for these can only be enjoyed by youth itself. The proverb: "Time and tide wait for no man," summarizes man's findings on this score.

How remarkable, then, is this expression, culled from the song of the sweet psalmist of Israel: "Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." The reference, of course, is not to the physical life, but to the *spiritual*; and it may be of spiritual profit to examine this expression and discover what word from the Lord is in it for each of us.

We shall think, first, of the possibility of Christians suffering from:

I. Premature Spiritual Senility.

We have all probably seen very old people who are in their dotage, or second childhood. They are incapable of assuming responsibility, and have to be cared for like little children. This period of senility is accompanied, oftentimes, by querulousness, pettiness, and a dwelling in the past, and particularly the distant past. They love to speak of what they did "forty years ago," and talk glowingly of the giants that lived in those "good old days." The present is always made to suffer at the expense of the past, and they live in a world of their own, peopled by those whom they knew in the long ago.

There is a disease, however, known to medical science, as "Premature senile decay," in which the ravages of old age appear in middle age, or younger; and thus the victim of this strange malady becomes an old person long before his time. How sad to see one, who should be enjoying those experiences peculiar to the prime of life, evidencing all the symptoms and disabilities of extreme old age! How tragic it is to see a person who should have the springy step and buoyancy of youth, a doddering old man, with palsied hands and feeble knees, shuffling along with unsteady step, and cackling about what he used to be and do in the past!

However pitiful this may be in the *physical* realm, it is much more so when it takes place in the *spiritual* life of a believer. How many there are, who, when they should be at their best for God, and an example to the younger believers in faith, love, righteousness, joy, peace, patience, godliness and effective service; are spiritually senile, living on their past reputations, and in the realm of their experiences in the dim and misty years of long ago.

Let us look at some of the characteristics of old age as seen in the case of Barzillai, the Gileadite. His history is recorded in II Sam. 17:27-29 and 19:31-39. Upon the rebellion of Absalom, and the subsequent flight of David; this man, together with others, befriended the exiled king, and supplied him with needful food and comforts. After Absalom had been killed and his army put to flight, David prepared to return to Jerusalem and once more occupy the throne of Israel. He now approached Barzillai and invited him to Jerusalem, promising him his protection and provision for the rest of his life. To this Barzillai, though grateful for the king's thoughtfulness, demurred, and gave as his reasons for declining the invitation the frailties of his old age.

It should be most interesting and instructive to examine this description he gives of the evidences of his old age, and apply them spiritually to this premature senile decay which is sometimes seen in the lives of Christians.

1. *Lost perception*, vs. 35. "Can I discern between good and evil?" The analytical sense in very old age becomes dulled and incapable of distinguishing clearly between the good and the bad. One of the surest evidences of spiritual senility is the inability to form a correct judgment as to the worth, or otherwise, of what is seen and heard. The line of demarkation between the spiritually good and the spiritually bad becomes practically non-existent. Every sermon heard by these unfortunate people is uniformly declared to be "a wonderful address," irrespective as to whether it was sound or unsound, edifying, or highly seasoned sawdust. Moral values also seem to have little place in their perception, and what should shock their sensibilities, no longer seems to affect them. Instead of their senses being "exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:14); they seem to have lost this important faculty.

White, to them, is no longer white; and black is no longer black; but everything is a sort of uniform dull grey.

2. *Lost Taste*, vs. 35. "Can thy servant taste what I eat and drink?" The palate no longer conveys the impression of either bitter or sweet; pleasant or nauseous; but everything has the same monotonous flavor. Surely this also is one of the symptoms of spiritual senility. How sad it is when one's taste for the word of God is lost, and there is no longer any discrimination between the precious and eternal verities of the Divine revelation, and the frothy imaginations of the modern novelist.

It is indeed a gloomy day when the believer can no longer exclaim: "Thy words were found and I did eat them, and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart!" (Jer. 15:16). It surely is a tragedy when one's spiritual palate is no longer tempted by the sight or sound of the word of God, and no more is the rapturous testimony heard: "O taste and see that the Lord is good!" (Ps. 34:8).

It certainly is a discouraging sight to see many in an audience sitting with wooden expressions and dull, unresponsive eyes as the speaker exalts the beauties and glories of the Son of God, and the blessings that are the inheritance of all the redeemed! It matters not whether it is the sufferings of the Savior, His wondrous virtues, or His present and eternal glories; it seems to produce no reaction, either in sorrow or joy, on the part of these poor souls. Everything to them seems to be dull, flat and tasteless. May the Lord deliver us from this spiritual insipidity!

3. *Lost Interest*, vs. 35. "Can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women?" That which previously pleased the ear no longer holds

any attraction. The beautiful psalms of David, and his trained singers, under Asaph, together with their harps and psalteries, possessed no charms for Barzillai; for his hearing had become dull, and he could not longer appreciate the exquisite melody and harmony of the songs of Zion (I Chron. 25:1-7). Alas for the Christian who has lost his sense of appreciation for the music of heaven; who no longer can say: "Thy statutes have become my songs in the house of my pilgrimage" (Ps. 119:54).

Spiritual senility is never more evident in a believer than when he either loses the ability to sing himself, or enjoy the spiritual songs of others. An illustration of this is found in Ezra 3. At the laying of the foundation of the restored temple in Jerusalem, the "ancient men" wept as they compared this with the old temple of their young days; but the young men shouted for joy. Instead of mingling their songs of praise at God's goodness in permitting them "a reviving in the midst of the days"; they acted as a wet blanket on those who appreciated this gracious act of God.

The Christian's song is a spontaneous thing, generated in his soul under the sense of God's forgiving grace: "He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God" (Ps. 40:1-3). This song is to be continued through life, for he is urged: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). Singing will be also one of his occupations for eternity, for we read in the book of Revelation of the songs of heaven, which combine to give the praise and glory to the One Who alone is worthy—"the Lamb that was slain and that liveth again" (Rev. 5).

Have we lost our sense of appreciation for Divine melody? Have we hung our harps upon the willows of Babylon? (Ps. 137). Have we lost our song?

Do our fellow believer's songs of worship and praise no longer find a ready response or evoke a hearty "amen" in our hearts? If so, we are in a bad way, for we are out of harmony with heaven, and sadly need to have our youth renewed.

4. *Lost Appreciation*, vs. 35. "Wherefore then should thy servant be a *burden* unto my Lord the King?" He failed to appreciate what was in David's heart and mind, and imagined he would only be an added burden to the King! What a poor conception he had of David's grace, power, provision and glory! Instead of gladly availing himself of the privileges and blessings planned for him by David, he drew back, thinking of himself and the "burden" he would be. Thus he denied David the pleasure of his company, the joy of his fellowship, and the opportunity to express to him, personally, his appreciation of his loyalty to him.

Surely the failure of the believer to enjoy the fellowship of the One who invites him to share it, evidences premature senile decay. The One who has saved us by His grace wants us to walk with Him, live with Him and, in this way, satisfy the desire of His Own heart, for "His delights were with the sons of men" (Prov. 8:30-31). He desires to "sup with us and we with Him" (Rev. 3:20). Shall we deny to Him this fellowship He desires with us? Nay, let us rather gladly allow him to bring us into His banqueting house and spread over us His banner which is love (S. of S. 2:4). No believer who lives in communion with his Lord is burdensome to Him but, on the contrary, is a delight to His heart.

5. *Lost Strength*, vs. 36. "Thy servant will go a *little* way over Jordan with the King." Barzillai felt incapable of going *all* the way, so compromised with a *partial* obedience to the King's invitation. We surely can see in this a sign of spiritual decay in a Christian. Partial obedience, partial love, par-

tial devotion and partial service for Christ are alike unsatisfactory. He wants our whole-souled love, obedience and sacrificial service. Spiritual weakness still exacts its fearful toll, and robs the Lord of that which is His rightful due.

How pitiful it is to see a Christian whose step should be firm, whose zeal should be unbounded, and whose service should be wholehearted; dragging along with shuffling steps, in a halfhearted and weary manner, doing the Lord's work as though it were a monotonous drudgery, and something that should be gotten through in as painless a manner as possible. Surely these things ought not so to be.

6. *Lost Citizenship*, vs. 37. "Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again that I may die in my own city." One feels like saying: "Poor old Barzillai!" All his thoughts could rise to was a dwelling in his own city and a nice comfortable grave at the end of his life! He might have journeyed to the place where God had put His name, Jerusalem: the place of peace, vision and blessing; but no, his own city, and not God's dwelling was his ambition.

Surely this is one of the saddest indications of spiritual senility! Instead of being interested in God's things and the desires of His heart, the senile believer turns to his own interests, and they become the all-absorbing passion of his life. He rests quite complacently and comfortably in a ceiled house, while the house of the Lord lies waste (Haggai 1: 2-5). His affection is set, not on things above, where his life is hid with Christ in God; but on earthly things, where the moth and rust corrupt, and the thief breaks through and steals (Col. 3:1-3; Matt. 6:19-21). He is thus self-concerned; instead of Christ-centered, and his life is marked by a failure to appreciate the all-importance of the Kingdom of God as distinct from this world. He loses sight of the unseen and eternal things in the light of the

seen and temporal. (II Cor. 4:18). He apparently forgets, or at least fails to appreciate, that his citizenship is in heaven, from whence one day his Savior is to appear (Phil. 3:21).

Here then are the marks of old age. May they not be true of any reader, in a spiritual sense! Now let us think briefly of

II. The Renewal of One's Spiritual Youth.

Youth is the time of vision, ambition, love, enthusiasm, loyalty, courage, challenge and strength. The poet has caught the spirit of youth in the lines that follow:

How beautiful is youth! How bright it gleams
With its illusions, aspirations, dreams!
Book of beginnings, story without end,
Each maid a heroine, and each man a friend!
All possibilities are in its hands,
No danger daunts it, and no foe withstands;
In its sublime audacity of faith,
"Be thou removed!" It to the mountain saith,
And with ambitious feet, secure and proud,
Ascends the ladder leaning on a cloud!

The question is, can this spiritual youth be recaptured? Can it be renewed? Is God able to maintain in the believer, these characteristics of youth? Is God able to restore the love, joy, zeal, desire for service that first marked the believer when he was saved? Surely the answer is an emphatic "yes."

The keynote of this 103rd Psalm is praise. The first two verses constitute the middle verses of the Bible, and they express what should characterize the believer in every age—gratitude, remembrance and praise to God for all His benefits so graciously bestowed. It is when we forget God and fail to appreciate and praise Him for His mercies and blessings, that premature old age creeps on us. To have one's spiritual youth renewed is to live in conscious

communion with God, and under the continual sense of His goodness and grace, as evidenced by His benefits. Surely as the child of God contemplates these, and remembers that they have all come to him in grace, and at the cost of the life's blood of the Son of God; he can do no more than sing with David: "Bless the Lord, O my soul and all that is within me, bless His holy name."

The lost perception of spiritual realities; the lost taste for spiritual food; the lost interest in spiritual activity; the lost appreciation of Christ's fellowship; the lost strength for spiritual service, and the lost sense of spiritual citizenship, will surely be restored as the Christian concentrates his heart's attention and affection upon the Lord Himself, and all the spiritual blessings that are his in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

Under the genial rays of the love of God, appreciated and enjoyed, this premature spiritual senility, now confessed and judged in the presence of God, gives place to the warm enthusiasm of a renewed youth, and God thus fulfills His promise: "And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm and the caterpillar and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty, and praise the name of the Lord your God that hath dealt wondrously with you" (Joel 2:25).

May it be yours and mine to have upon us, continually, "the dew of our youth," in the sense that our love for Him shall grow deeper, our devotion to Him become more ardent, and our service for Him more wholehearted; so that it may be true of us that our "youth is renewed, day by day, like the eagles!"

A RENEWED MIND BY YIELDEDNESS TO GOD

(Romans 12:1-2)

It is a recognized fact that we live in the realm of our minds, and that "the mind is the measure of the man." We can rise no higher than our thoughts, for what we *think*, we *are*. It has been well said: "A person is literally the sum total of his thinking. What is a thought? It cannot be seen, heard, touched, smelled or tasted; and yet it is infinitely more powerful than anything that can be seen, heard, touched, smelled or tasted. It is the source of creative ability, motion, action of expression, and all force and power. Every word spoken, every deed done, every step taken is the result of thought. Every ship, watch and machine first existed in someone's thought. Every event in human history was cradled in thought. You are your *thought*, and your thought is *you*. What you think most about is constantly and inexorably weaving itself into the fabric of your destiny." These weighty words may well challenge each reader.

The human personality expresses itself in a three-fold way. By an *intellect* that enables him to acquire, retain and reproduce knowledge; by the *emotions*, by which he is enabled to react to what he sees, hears, tastes, touches and smells; and by his *will*, by which he is enabled to determine and carry out his determination. Each individual is a distinct personality, different from any other individual on the face of the earth.

In view of the emphasis placed on the *mind* in Scripture, the inspired words of Paul need to be laid to heart, and well pondered by each believer. He speaks of the "renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." The appreciation of the latter is determined by the condition of the former. If

we would prove the perfection of God's will in our lives, we must experience this constant renewal of our minds. With this fact before us, the importance of the subject will surely be recognized by each believer.

We shall consider three things in connection with "the mind" in Scripture. First, the *natural mind*; second, the *spiritual mind* and third, the *renewed mind*.

I. The Natural Mind.

By this is meant the mind which man possesses as a result of his physical birth, and which is a part of the sinful nature inherited from Adam. The Scripture makes clear that every human being born into the world is a sinner by nature. As a result of Adam's sin in the garden of Eden, he acquired something he did not previously possess, and that was a sinful nature. This sinful nature is transmitted, by birth, to each member of the human race descended from him. This is what is meant by the theological term: "Ruin by the Fall."

God leaves us in no doubt as to the state of man's mind by nature. Let us look at a few passages from the Bible.

1. *It is at enmity to God.* "You . . . were sometime alienated and enemies in your minds" (Col. 1:21). "The carnal (or natural) mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). This surely indicates very clearly what man's attitude to God is; and explains why the history of humanity has been a record of rebellion against God, which culminated in the rejection and crucifixion of His Son. Man, naturally, *loves* himself, *tolerates* his fellow men, and *hates* God. He neither desires God, His Son, His word, or His salvation.

2. *It is darkened.* "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph. 4:18). Again we are told: "The god of this age (Satan) has blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ . . . should shine unto them" (II Cor. 4:4). This explains why "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14). However intellectually acute a person may be, this does not fit him for an understanding of the things of God. Only as a man is enlightened by the Spirit of God can he comprehend the word of God. This fact is evidenced in our higher schools of learning, where the Bible is openly denied and derided by the majority of so-called "learned men." One might just as well attempt to describe the gorgeous colors of a sunset to a person born blind, as to clarify spiritual realities to an unregenerated man.

3. *It is reprobate.* That is, it is inherently sinful, void of right judgment, and set on accomplishing its own aims. This explains idolatry, which is often interpreted as the reaching out of man for God; but which the Scriptures declare is the result of a deliberate turning away from God. See Rom. 1:20-23. The result of this deliberate shutting of one's eyes to the fact of God and the knowledge of right and wrong has exacted a fearful toll, for we read: "Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things that are not convenient" (Rom. 1:28). The moral cesspool of iniquity this world has become is due to this reprobate mind, which gives the moral twist that sends men into deeper and darker depths of sin and shame.

4. *It is proud.* Far from being repentant, man boasts of his independence of God, and the sufficiency of his own resources in the way of science, invention and philosophy. God speaks of those who attempt to be "wise above that which is written," and describes the sinner as being "vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind" (Col. 2:18). One of the characteristics of "the perilous times that shall come" is that men will be "highminded, and lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (II Tim. 3:1-4). In Ephesians 4:17, God also speaks of those who walk in "the vanity of their mind." In his fancied knowledge and vaunted acumen, man has vainly attempted to rule his fellow man, with the inevitable result that history's pages are written largely in blood.

If "the mind is the measure of the man," then God's picture of it as found in His word, is certainly not calculated to cause any inflation of his ego. This is the main reason for the unpopularity of the Bible: it is so painfully frank, and leaves man in no uncertainty as to the condition of his mind, the motivating principle of his life.

A summary of man's condition by nature is found in the third chapter of Romans, and concludes with the sweeping assertion: "There is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Now let us consider,

II. The Spiritual Mind.

Since man's mind is, by nature, at enmity to God, darkened by sin, reprobate and proud; it follows logically, that man is a helpless, hopeless, undone and undeserving sinner, unable to do one thing to merit the favor of God, or to dwell in the home of God. Therefore, if ever man is to be saved and brought to God, it must be because of the act of God Himself.

This introduces the subject of the gospel of the grace of God. Nineteen hundred years ago, God sent forth His Son, coequal and eternal with Himself, to secure man's redemption from sin's penalty and power. Clothed with humanity, Christ accomplished this grand work at the infinite cost of His own life. He willingly assumed the liability of our guilt, and bore our sins in His own body on the tree; thus accomplishing all the work necessary for the salvation of every sinner who will trust in Him. Risen and now glorified, He lives to save to the uttermost, and to keep by His mighty power, each sinner who will own Him henceforth as the Lord of his life. Upon this reception of Christ as Savior and acknowledgement of Him as Lord, the Holy Spirit indwells the believer and imparts to him a new nature, and thus the Christian is made "a partaker of the Divine nature" (II Peter 1:4). This nature results in a different mind being evidenced in the believer. Let us see what God's word has to say about this new mind.

1. *It is a spiritual mind* (Rom. 8:6). He is now able to spiritually discern things that were previously incomprehensible. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace." The Christian now takes sides with God against himself and bows to the Divine revelation as authoritative and final. The word of God becomes a new book, for "the eyes of his understanding" have become enlightened" (Eph. 1:18). The indwelling Spirit of God is now able to do His work in the believer, and fulfil the promise Christ made regarding Him: "He shall teach you all things . . . He will guide you into all truth . . . He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you" (John 14:26; 16:13-14). Being possessed of this spiritual mind, the child of God can now "discern spiritual things," and understand what the will of God is for him (I Cor. 2:13-16).

2. *It is a Christlike mind.* In I Cor. 2:16 the tremendous statement is made of believers: "Ye have the mind of Christ." The same Holy Spirit, under whose absolute control Christ lived on earth as Son of Man, now indwells the believer. Just as "Christ, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God" (Heb. 9:14); so we, in the energy of the same Spirit, may present our bodies to God as a living sacrifice. In Philippians 2 the exhortation of Paul is: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus;" and then follows a description of the mind of Christ, and its expression in a life of absolute devotion to God.

3. *It is a sound mind.* II Tim. 1:7. The possession of this mind does not rob the believer of his intelligence, common sense, or mental balance; but lifts these to a higher plane, the spiritual. Fanaticism, with its irresponsible orgies, disorderly conduct, and confusion of thought, is not of the spiritual mind, for "God hath not given to us the spirit of fear, but of love and of a sound mind." It is not without significance that the last mentioned quality of the fruit of the Spirit is *self-control* (Gal. 5:23). God wants His people to be sound in mind, for this will result in them "being sound in the faith" (Tit. 1:13). Modern cultism, with its mania for extravagances, thrills and theatricals, is anything but an exhibition of a sound mind.

4. *It is a humble mind.* Paul could testify that he "served the Lord with all humility of mind" (Acts 20:19). If anyone had the right to advertise his intelligence, spiritually and zeal, surely he had; but no, he could say: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 3:12). True spirituality of life needs no self-advertisement on the part of the believer who is manifesting it. It is a poor business when one has to inform others of one's own godliness, for the obvious inference is they never would have suspected it otherwise. Now let us think of:

III. The Renewed Mind.

It is not enough that God has communicated to us a Divine nature and a spiritual mind. This mind needs constant renewal, care and cultivation. Just as a fire, if it is to burn brightly and steadily, needs constant renewal in the shape of fuel, air and cleaning; so our minds need to be continually refueled and attended to with thoughts from God's word, fellowship with God's Son, the leading and comfort of God's Spirit, and exercise in God's service.

We must exercise the most vigilant care as to what we allow to enter our minds and dwell there. We need ever to remember that we still have the flesh within us, which is unchanged and unchangeable in its attitude of enmity to God. This calls for ceaseless watchfulness, spiritual discernment, and merciless self-judgment. Many a child of God, with all the possibilities of living a life well pleasing to God, has made a dismal failure of his Christian life, because he neglected this need for the renewing of his spiritual mind. He allowed his thought life to become dominated by self-interests, self-gratification, impurity and worldly lusts. It should surely be of great importance to us to learn how the mind may be renewed.

1. *By a whole-hearted presentation of our bodies to God.* Read carefully and prayerfully Romans 12:1-2. Our bodies may either become the vehicle through which God expresses Himself; or the avenue of mere self-expression. It depends entirely on who occupies the throne of the heart. As we deliberately and intelligently place our bodies, with all their faculties, at the complete disposal of God, He can use them for His glory.

2. *By meditation in the word of God.* This is not the mere reading of the Scriptures, but the careful and studious deliberation of what is written.

The question was once raised as to the best method of preventing a boy from eating green apples. The answer was: fill him with ripe apples! How can we keep our minds free from impure thoughts? By filling up on good thoughts from the Divine revelation. Read Phil. 4:8, and note carefully the emphasis on the concluding words: "*Think on these things.*" As we concentrate on the true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and the things of good report; there will be no room for the other things that defile the imagination. It has been well said: "We cannot prevent the birds from flying over our heads, but we can prevent them from making their nests in our hair!" We cannot prevent stray and God-dishonoring thoughts from rising; but we can and must prevent them from taking up their residence in our minds.

3. *By using discrimination in what we see, hear and read.* Let us not allow our minds to become a kind of free dump for any old rubbish in the way of questionable reading matter, or in listening to evil speaking or scandal, but let us challenge the right of each thought to enter.

Thus, as we live our lives in yieldedness of heart and dependence on God in prayer, in the study of and meditation in the Scriptures, and with discriminating self-discipline; we shall experience what this "renewing of our mind" is, and live lives pleasing to Him "Whose we are and Whom we serve."

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May these thoughts on the subject of *Christian renewal* be blessed to all our hearts, and may it be ours to know something of the renewed "right spirit" by self-examination and confession; of that renewed strength by prayerful waiting upon God; of renewed communion by self-judgment and resti-

tution; of renewed youth by praise; and the renewed mind by yieldedness of heart to God. Thus shall God's desire for His people be fulfilled in us: "That the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and ye in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" II Thess. 1:12.

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