

# THE SUFFERINGS AND EXCELLENCIES OF CHRIST . . .



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**Price—Threepence.**

## CONTENTS

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	Page
Threefold Character of the Sufferings of Christ .....	129
The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ .....	135
The Preciousness of Christ .....	136
Continuity of Joy .....	138
The Word of Christ .....	140
The Peace of Christ .....	143
Aaron's Beard .....	147
The Dew of Hermon .....	151
Devotedness to Christ .....	154
Love for Christ .....	159

# THE SUFFERINGS AND EXCELLENCIES OF CHRIST.

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## THE THREEFOLD CHARACTER OF THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST

Much disputation has occurred on this theme from time to time. We need to be preserved from allowing the spirit of controversy to dominate our minds. It is easy in the process of correct analysis to lose the sense of the preciousness of the subject. Every fresh distinction coming before our minds should tend to fresh exercise. With that admonition we are free to examine the subject matter.

Scripture would lead us to conclude that the sufferings of Christ were of threefold character, *viz.*:—(1) vicarious, (2) martyrial, (3) constitutional. In examining these categories in a little detail, the following thoughts amongst others pass before us.

(1) The vicarious or atoning sufferings of Christ were those which He suffered at the hand of God on account of sin, and these were exclusively confined to the brief period which the Lord repeatedly referred to as “His hour,” unique in the history of all the ages!

O solemn hour ! O hour alone !  
In solitary might.

. . . . .  
Centre of two eternities  
Which gaze with rapt adoring eyes  
Onward and back to Thee !

As soon as sin entered by the disobedient act of our first parents in Eden, God’s solution was predicted in His prophetic word to the serpent, relative to the woman’s Seed, “He shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise His

heel" (Gen. 3, 15). So throughout the Old Testament, there were abundant evidences of the coming of Christ to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Moreover, the sacrificial system made the elements of God's requirements clear. The lamb was to be without blemish, typifying that the victim must be sinless. Again a period of testing the virtue of the victim, was observed in keeping the lamb four days. So an adequate period of testimony was afforded in the case of Christ's public ministry of three and a half years, which fully showed His perfect conduct in every test. Then the thought of substitution comes in. Christ stood in the sinner's place, the Just for the unjust. The perfect One was made sin for us that we might become God's righteousness in Him. (2 Cor. 5, 21).

Propitiation is the aspect of atonement with relation to God. Every attribute of God was completely vindicated in the death of Christ. So that God's character of being just is shown to be quite consistent with His justification of the believer in Jesus. (Rom. 3, 26). Reconciliation is the aspect of atonement with relation to us and to creation. (Col. 1, 20-22).

Man's sin necessarily brought Him under the curse as inflicted by God in His inflexible righteousness and holiness. Thus the Sin-bearer on the cross was under the curse which entailed His being forsaken by God. He had been in the infinite favour of and communion with His God and Father up to that hour. The suffering was thus not only indescribable but inconceivable by the human mind and hence it is useless multiplying words on the subject.

A final quality not demonstrated by the Old Testament typology lay in the fact that the Sin-bearer must be able to exhaust the judgment of God on sin. All the antecedent sacrifices had remained in death. Thus only One who was infinite could satisfy God's righteous claims and besides glorify God as to every aspect of sin. He only could have exclaimed as He died on Calvary's tree, *Tetelestai*, lit.

"finished." That was not merely relative to His life here, but that the work of redemption was absolutely completed.

(2) The martyr sufferings of Christ were those which He suffered at the hand of man on account of righteousness. He loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. (Psa. 45, 7). But sin is essentially lawlessness. (1 John 3, 4). Again He said, "I am come as a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness." (John 12, 46). "Everyone that doeth evil hateth the light." (John 3, 20). Darkness, evil and lawlessness are elements or qualities of the world. Thus the world knew Him not and did not receive Him. Indeed He was speedily rejected as the proofs of His origin and characteristics became evident to the religious leaders. So that the prophetic word, *enunciated over 700 years previous to the occurrence*, was literally fulfilled. "He was despised and rejected of men." (Isa. 53, 3).

The Psalms were primarily the expressions of exercises through which their writers were passing at the time. Although most of them are so written as to express also the experience of the Israel of God as a remnant under governmental dealing on earth, there are expressions therein which could only be true of Christ. From these we learn that He was hated without a cause. Reproach had broken His heart. Man requited His love with hatred and so on. When we turn to the record of His pathway in the Gospels we see repeated evidences of the world's hate and persecution. But until the incident of His betrayal, He was not subjected to any physical abuse because "His hour" was not yet come. Indeed, when at that juncture He proclaimed Himself "I am," they went backward and fell to the ground. The hour was also that of man and the power of darkness. So strong bulls of Bashan beset Him round; the assembly of the wicked enclosed Him. (Psa. 22, 12, 16). They had repeatedly endeavoured to kill Him, but when every restraint was removed, the inveterate hatred of

man's heart was evinced in scourging and other indignities, when with wicked hands they crucified Him.

This aspect of the sufferings of Christ has nothing whatever to do with atonement. However, that statement cuts directly across much of the current theology which would seek to shake up the sufferings of Christ into an indistinguishable mass, so that justification may be found for the wholly unscriptural contention that man may have fellowship with Christ in the spirit of sacrifice, and so that he may contribute to his own salvation. The doctrine is not new theology, but was really initiated by Cain 6,000 years ago. The way of Cain is a broad road that ends in everlasting woe!

But notwithstanding the foregoing paragraph, there is a real fellowship of the sufferings of Christ. But it appertains entirely to His non-atonement sufferings. The Christian has the privilege of suffering for Christ and for the cause of righteousness, *i.e.*, for well-doing according to Scriptural definition. Those who will live godly or according to the will of God shall suffer persecution. (2 Tim. 3, 12). Therefore, there need be no wonder expressed if the Christian finds that he is hated of the world. (1 John 3, 13). That will be his portion according to his faithfulness in bearing testimony to the truth of God. But in doing so the Christian has rich compensation in the corresponding privilege of sharing in the personal peace and joy of Christ. (John 14, 27 and 15, 11). "If ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye." (1 Peter 3, 14).

(3) The constitutional sufferings of Christ were those He suffered because of what He was in a world which had no element in common with Him. The first and second characters of suffering were directly inflicted on Him by the hand of (a) God or (b) man. But the third character of suffering had no relation to either agency, but to the fact that His whole nature revolted at sin. He loved righteousness and hated or abhorred lawlessness or sin. He knew

no sin! Constituted as He was in a world constituted as it was and is, there could not be any other result than that He would suffer!

Throughout the Old Testament, there are abundant evidences of the deep sorrow that God felt as He contemplated the awful havoc that man had wrought in His fair creation. He was grieved at the heart as He saw man's great wickedness on the earth in the time of Noah. So much so that He repented that He had made man. (Gen. 6, 5, 6). The earth which had come from God's creatorial hand had been pronounced very good. In the interval of a few generations, it had become full of corruption and violence, while man's imagination or inmost thoughts were evil continuously. Only one bright spot in Noah was preserved for God.

Similar grief must have been God's portion when in much shorter space of time on the earth cleansed by "the flood," Noah's immediate descendants erected the Tower of Babel in defiance of the will of God. Later the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was very grievous to Him. The subsequent investigation test brought out its nature so markedly that His summary judgment could not be delayed. In the wilderness, God was continuously grieved by His people. (Ps. 78, 40). In the land, their idolatry and self-will brought them repeatedly to such a state, that His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel. (Judges 10, 16). The Psalms are expressive of similar thought. The prophets, too, afford evidence in support of the statement, *e.g.*, "In all their affliction He was afflicted." (Isa. 63, 9). Christ as God must necessarily have entered into all that these Scriptural references convey.

But we are not left to found conclusions on the statements of the Old Testament. When we turn to the record in the Gospels, we see the exquisite harmony of the feelings of Christ with those of God. In the synagogue, He was

grieved at the hardness of their hearts. He was displeased when the disciples rebuked those who brought the children for blessing. He sighed deeply in His spirit when the Pharisees sought a sign of heaven's approval of His work. He sighed in opening the ears and loosing the tongue of the afflicted man. (Mark 7, 34).

Christ was perfect in love and sympathy in the midst of the distress and need of man. As He saw the grief of Mary *and her friends, He groaned in spirit and was troubled.* On the way to the sepulchre Jesus wept. As He reached the grave, Jesus groaned in Himself. (John 11, 33-38). "He took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." (Matt. 8, 17). He sorrowed to an inconceivable degree, even over those who rejected Him. He wept over Jerusalem. (Luke 19, 41-44). He was the Man of Sorrows indeed and acquainted with grief as no one else could be, owing to His constitution as the Light and darkness being the constitution of the world.

This third character of suffering like the second had nothing to do with atonement. God's grief at man's sin in the Old Testament did not provide a remedy for man's state. So the grief of His Sent One while on earth did not solve the sin problem. God's inexorable justice demanded the death of the victim.

In Gethsemane, the first and third characters of Christ's suffering would seem to make contact. The devil tried Him in the wilderness at the outset of His ministry. He had departed from Him for a season, but in the hour of the power of darkness Satan pressed "the power of death" on the heavy spirit of Christ. So that He had to say, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." His agony was such that His sweat was as great drops of blood falling down to the ground. That suffering was antecedent to the cup of infinite sorrow which God was about to give Him to drink upon the cross.



## THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

We know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 8: 9). What grace and infinite wealth were His! He came down to the depths of poverty. The journey is sketched in chap. 2 of Philippians. He was worshipped and adored by the host of Heaven. He was a commander. Previously He had nothing to do with obedience. Let us think of what His poverty implied. The magnitude of the precipitous descent from the highest glory of Heaven to the tremendous depths of Calvary is impossible for the human mind to comprehend. As a preliminary contemplation we see that there was no room for Him in the inn. He was cradled in a manger. Great indeed would have been that humiliation for even a human potentate to be subjected to. Yet that was only the beginning of His pathway, and that path was all downward and found its culmination in the shameful death of the cross. He thought it no robbery to be equal with God. He took the course upon Himself. He was under obligation to no one. He was the Master (lit., "despot"), the Lord of the universe.

He had the glory of God in view in this; but also, "for your sakes," He became servant to God. He became, He was not made, that. He became obedient! He became a real man, and carried out man's obligations to the utmost all the way. He humbled Himself. Because of self-esteem some do not care what people think of them, but this was not so with Him. He was the first-born of all creation. That was a title of priority, or dignity. Yet He was more sensitive than any other! With such considerations, we do not want anyone else to be our Lord. He was reviled, and, finally, He was abandoned by God. He fathomed the bottomless abyss of woe and unutterable suffering. He sank in the deep water of death.

"He loved me, and gave Himself for me." (Gal. 2: 20). Through His poverty we are rich. He stood in our room

and stead. His wealth has become our wealth. We have become joint-heirs with Him. He has enriched us with the fulness of the blessed God Himself. He glorified God on the earth, and finished the work He was given to do. Soon we shall be with Him, where He is, actually; now we are there representatively in Himself. Whatever He has, we have. "For your sakes He became poor." He put it all down to those very Corinthians who had not been commendable in many relations. This applies to us in every local company of Christians. Why does He do it? His grace is manifested to affect our lives. We are given light to walk and act in our relationships with one another, so that character is given to us all round. That is a very wonderful passage indeed. May its sense get hold of us! Mere hearing is not enough, although that is a necessary antecedent. Cattle grazing in the field are said to feed. But it would be more appropriate if we said that they were feeding when they were chewing the cud. It is unlikely that we shall get hold of the truth unless we meditate thereon.

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## THE PRECIOUSNESS OF CHRIST.

Scripture Reference: John 12, 1-7.

At the supper at Bethany the different functions of the members of that devoted family aptly illustrate the several main privileges and functions of Christians. In sitting at the table with the Lord, Lazarus sets forth the privilege of fellowship even as Martha's privilege is typical of the servant, while Mary's action sets forth the return of the fruit of the heart in praise and worship.

The ointment was not merely of great value, literally "precious," but in Scripture this has always the meaning of "what is held in honour." What the world accounts as precious is merely what is an index of wealth, *e.g.*, the diamond has certain superlative physical properties. It is

the hardest of substances, and due to its having the highest index of refraction it is the most lustrous of all crystals, and combined with these outstanding qualities its scarcity has made it a costly stone. However, it has the same chemical composition as soot; its crystalline structure has been impressed by subjection to great heat and slow cooling under great pressure deep down in the earth. However, the conjunction of physical forces is conceivable whereby its lowly analogue could acquire such crystalline structure and the diamond would cease to be of abnormal value.

But Mary's ointment was not of that order at all. It was what she had treasured above everything else. There was nothing too good to bestow upon her blessed Lord, so she gladly anointed His feet and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. In its primary description, reference is undoubtedly made to the material house in which they were supping, but in its application to the Christian function, the fragrance of the ointment is only appreciated in the House of God, which is a spiritual entity composed of living stones, and thus the Apostle Peter goes on to say, "Unto you, therefore, who believe is the preciousness" (1 Peter 2, 5, 7). The appreciation of Christ is only amongst those who believe. The cultured philosopher may dilate to a great extent in marvellous language about the beautiful life of Christ and His moral influence and such like, but the fragrance of His name and the fragrance of the ointment from hearts in which God has wrought are known only by the believer. A grain of musk is said to be able to permeate every part of the air of a closed room for twenty years with its fragrance: the fragrance of Christ will fill every part of the House of God for all time, yea, for all eternity!

Jesus, Thou alone art worthy  
Ceaseless praises to receive.

Judas Iscariot's assessment of the value of the ointment was probably a true account according to the statistician,

but was no criterion as to its value to the Lord. Judas's interest had an ulterior motive, as much of modern philanthropy has too. Judas was unfaithful, although externally he must have been able to make a fair show of honesty, else he would not have had the confidence of the other disciples to allow him to continue as their treasurer. Nevertheless he could not disguise the fact from the Spirit of God, who puts on record that he "bear" what was put in the bag, *i.e.*, he was a secret purloiner. The Apostle Paul indicates that servants should not purloin but show all good fidelity that they may adorn the doctrine of God in all things. (Tit, 2, 10).

Mary's apparent extravagance received the Lord's commendation in the words, "Let her alone; against the day of My burying hath she kept this." Mary's thoughts were necessarily in prospect of that event, but the Christian's thoughts are in retrospect of His death, and the world's statistical assessment of our action is as cold and severe nowadays. They say that we could certainly put the time to far greater purpose if we were occupied in helping the poor. But in obeying His request, "This do in remembrance of Me," we too will secure the Lord's approbation, the white stone of His approval. Anything else is not worth giving a thought.

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## CONTINUITY OF JOY.

"That they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves." (John 17, 13).

Relative to His pathway on earth, the Lord is usually referred to as "the Man of Sorrows." We do not usually think of Him as filled with joy. Yet if it had not been for the testimony of Old Testament prophetic Scriptures we would not have learned much about His sorrows, *e.g.*, "A Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53, 3); "See if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow." (Lam. 1, 12), etc. In the four Gospels, it is remarkable

that there are only two direct references to the Lord's grief or sorrow in His own words, "Now is My soul troubled" (John 12, 2), and in Gethsemane, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." (Matt. 26, 38; Mark 14, 32). I am not forgetting His sighs and tears.

In contrast to the paucity of reference to His sorrow, there is repeated reference to His joy. The nearer He came to the climax of His pathway at the Cross, the more He spoke of His joy. In His early ministry, joy is not such a prominent feature. But as the shadow of Calvary loomed ahead, just when the tide of sorrow judging from ordinary observation rose to its highest, His joy triumphed over the sorrow. The radiant prayer in John 17 was uttered at the close of His ministry just as the meeting with the betrayer became imminent. From whence came His joy? He rejoiced in the will of God. From the outset there was perfect acquiescence in the purpose of God. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God!" (Heb. 10, 9). Every step in His pathway presented that quality in an unvarying way. Moreover, it was for the joy that was set before Him, that He endured the cross, despising the shame. (Heb. 12, 2). The joy of the future when He would see of the travail of His soul was the final consummation to His suffering. In Scripture, happiness is presented as a tranquil quality, based on the peace consequent on realizing the value of the Lordship of Christ, and that involves doing His will. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." (John 13, 17). Suffering for righteousness, reproach for the name of Christ, etc., all bring happiness in their course. The Sermon on the Mount was a series of instruction in the development of real happiness.

Joy seems to present the further idea of the overflowing fountain of happiness. The Psalmist said, "My heart is bubbling up with good matter." (Ps. 45, 1, marginal reading). So the hearts of the people of God should resemble a geyser which under internal pressure shoots the

water high in the air. In the Yellowstone Park, Western U.S.A., the Old Faithful Geyser shoots up a 150 feet fountain of hot water for a short period every hour. Our outbursts of joy are more uncertain than that phenomenon. We can rely on the faithfulness of God. But we shall be greatly disappointed if we count on either our own faithfulness or that of anybody else.

In Thy grace Thou now hast called us,  
Sharers of Thy joy to be,  
And to know the blessed secret  
Of His preciousness to Thee.

In being called to share divine joy, we are introduced into the home-circle of heaven and we come to know what transcends the fruits of philosophic enquiry. The sense of this in our souls preserves us from mere self-pleasing and lifts us into the higher plane of glad participation in the fellowship of His sufferings, which is the concomitant process to realizing His inexpressible joy. That realization will lead us to know that we are not the creatures of circumstances. The children of God are not whiffed about on the breeze of chance. Things do not happen to them accidentally. Everything is controlled in perfect administration.

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## THE WORD OF CHRIST.

Scripture References: Luke 10, 38-42; Colossians 3, 16.

The "one thing needful" is the knowledge of Christ, and hence the appreciation of Himself. One can only know Christ by hearing His word. His word is His revelation. The consequence of hearing His word is gradual self-effacement. John the Baptist realized this as he gave utterance to the expression, "He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3, 30). In consequence of the increased appreciation of Christ there must necessarily be self-displacement.

Mary made no attempt to justify her action under the accusation of her sister. She was content to leave the matter with her Master. There is no need to institute odious comparisons between Martha and Mary, as is the common practice with commentators. Martha's function was quite right in its proper setting. Service is necessary, but we cannot serve rightly apart from hearing His word. Ahimaaz wished to be of service in running with tidings to the king in the matter of the death of Absalom, and although more efficient physically than Cushie his running was profitless because he had no message from Joab. (2 Sam. 18, 14-32).

Martha's restlessness was out of place. Mary had spiritual sensibility. She could not have explained her action satisfactorily. Indeed, logically Martha's argument was unanswerable, as Mary seemed to be shirking work. But the Lord rebuked Martha, yet very tenderly, and at the same time He showed his appreciation of Mary's attitude. Sitting at the feet of Christ had the result of illuminating her soul. The bride in the Canticles gives expression to similar experience thus, "*I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste.*" (Song of Songs 2, 3).

The Lord speaks of Mary's portion as that good part which will not be taken from her. She was in the position of a disciple, and was therefore being instructed through hearing His word. It is our privilege to know Christ similarly. Our blessing depends upon our being led by the Holy Ghost into the knowledge of Christ. The Spirit as the "Spirit of Truth" has the special function of guiding us into all truth. He is the sole Agent in the opening up to us of the truth of God which is the revelation of God. Moreover, He shall glorify or magnify Christ, "for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you." (John 16, 14).

What are these things that are specifically described as

“ Mine ” ? All things that the Father hath are His, therefore the Spirit can say, “ He shall take of Mine, and shall show unto you.” Moreover, “ All things are delivered to Me of My Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him.” (Luke 10, 22). We have an unction from the Holy One, and as a consequence know all things. But these things communicated and unfolded find their centre in Christ—they are things of His. It is inconceivable that such an unction would illuminate us with anything else than the knowledge of Christ, *i.e.*, the essence of eternal life.

Multitudinous books have been written on the principles of teaching in the various spheres of mental apprehension, but the Spirit's sphere, mode and principles of teaching defy all explanation. The mighty power of the Spirit brings the heart of the Christian under the influence of the love of God, and as we develop in His love, our spiritual apprehension is enlarged. We are found reaching forth unto those things which are before: things which relate to eternal life. Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father—it is the same power which is now dealing with us. The Son is the object of all the Father's thought, and He is the subject of all the Father's teaching and of the proclamation of the Gospel in the widest sense of the word—Christ is indeed the central subject of Scripture.

It is of prime importance to realize that God the Father has in view a cosmos of blessing which in its infinite variety of spiritual phenomena transcends all human expression or conception, whether considered in the microscopic or the megascopic aspect. That cosmos originated in the Father's purpose, and therein everything is as precisely adjusted as in the physical cosmos, and the medium through which the life peculiar to that sphere works is the love of God.

The apostle's prayer in the third chapter of Ephesians discloses the magnitude of the sphere of which Christ is the



centre and theme, and the burden of the prayer is that we may know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge. Although this expression is paradoxical, it is simply explained when we come to see that there are two kinds of knowledge, radically different in nature and in mode of communication. But as the spiritual cosmos is opened up to our ravished gaze by the power of the Holy Spirit of God, we see how the love of God moulds everything to accomplish His will, and also to promote the good of His people. This vision eclipses the physicist's conception of a miniature solar system of electrons revolving round a centre of protons in the ultimate atom of nature.

The expression "the word of Christ" in the third chapter of Colossians is a unique usage in the apostolic writings, and it is fraught with meaning. The word of God is likened to milk in other Scriptures, and on this analogy the word of Christ may well be described as the cream on the top of the milk. The cream proclaims the richness and the quality of milk, so the word of Christ proclaims the richness and quality of the word in its personal application, and it is not to partake of a transient character, but to dwell in us richly in all wisdom. If we are to be efficient in the two-fold work of "teaching and admonishing one another," we must have wisdom which is the product of metaphorically sitting at the feet of Christ and hearing His word as Mary did, and there will be the concomitant "singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord." The word of Christ is the solution of all the questions which continually arise, with the tendency of wrecking Christian unity in the visible sphere.

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### THE PEACE OF CHRIST.

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you."—John 14, 27.

Peace is a familiar term in Scripture, but its significance depends on the particular context or setting in which it is

found. In its connection with Christ, the initial idea is that He made peace by the blood of His cross. (Col. 1, 20). In the peace-offering of the third chapter of Leviticus, the elements of communion or fellowship are taught on the basis that peace is made in the death of Christ. The natural chaos which reigns in the human heart has been done away, and a new domain has been introduced in which everything is controlled after God's order.

The individual bowing the knee, believing in the heart unto righteousness, confessing Jesus as Lord, finds that the same basis on which he is justified provides him with the second of the kingdom blessings in its initial aspect of "peace with God." (Rom. 5, 1). But the blessing does not stop there, he finds that he is enclosed in a new envelope of peace into which the confusion dominating the world has no ingress.

Sin in the flesh has been condemned before God and put away by the death of Christ. (Rom. 8). Moreover, the whole order of man, whose sole aim was his own glory, has been removed through the same death; that is, for God and for faith. And while he still fills the world with the confusion of his own lawlessness, yet his trial is over and he only awaits the execution of God's just judgment.

In the Levitical type, we eat the peace-offering in the presence of God (which would naturally inspire fear), rejoicing that God has ended the confusion, and that there is a sphere into which we can withdraw from the world to feed on the offering of Christ. "He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him." (John 6, 56). Could there be any experience equal to that? What a transition from the husks which the world affords, to feed on the finest of the wheat! He who offered Himself by the Eternal Spirit without spot to God, is alive from amongst the dead, and He is our peace. (Eph. 2, 14). This is the first consequence of His having made peace.

He has broken down the middle wall of partition separat-

ing Jew and Gentile; but they are not merely fused into one entity retaining their natural characteristics, for He made in Himself of twain, one new man, so making peace, that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross. (Eph. 2: 15, 16). These two dissimilar elements are no longer marked by their original features once they are found in Himself, *i.e.*, in the one body. Moreover, the Scripture goes on to say that "through Him both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." He who rose from the dead has given His Spirit to all who believe God; so Jew and Gentile receiving the Spirit have the enmity emphasized by the Law of Commandments applicable to the flesh set aside. The intrusion of the flesh can only introduce distance between Christians.

Speaking metaphorically, if the six-inch brick wall separating Jew and Gentile was obliterated in the death of Christ, what about all the brown paper partitions which have been erected by over-zealous legalists, separating Christians from each other? It is certain that they will be reduced to pulp by the infiltration of the water of life—the Word of God. So we need to be under the influence of the Word. No other agency will effect the practical union of Christians.

The world is characterized by chaos. Men conjure pictures of the Utopia in which all confusion and the strife of tongues will have ceased, and so a League of Nations vainly operates in the midst of warring nations (or preparing for war as fast as their shattered resources will admit, notwithstanding the profession of peaceful aims). Scripture shows that the League of Nations is a forlorn hope, destined to prove a disappointment and failure. The only sphere where peace is really known is where the Lordship of Christ is owned.

When the Lord cast a legion of devils out of the demoniac, the latter was found sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. He was no longer the sport of demoniacal

influence, but at the disposal of his new Master. The man was in a state of peace, typifying the conditions obtaining in the millennium, when all the confusion will have been brought to an end. But the Gadarenes preferred the presence of demons to the presence of the Lord, and they besought Him to depart from them. The curiosity-mongers were afraid of the state of peace, although they were not afraid of the devil's power. The imaginary state of peace is one in which every person may do what is right in his own eyes, but that must necessarily result in confusion, as there is no consonance in the human will. There is a complete resolution of these forces into a common resultant, *viz.*, the Lord's will, when the gospel, which is the power of God, intervenes.

So the Lord's words on the night of His betrayal, "Peace I leave with you," have a special inflexion of meaning in the further communication, "My peace I give unto you." Again, the apostle enjoins the Colossian Christians, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts." (Col. 3, 15). There must be complete acquiescence in the will of God if peace is to supervene. In being transformed by the renewing of our mind, we prove or test what is that good, acceptable, perfect will of God. (Rom. 12, 2). The Scripture says "let," *i.e.*, "allow," which suggests that there are hindrances to the peace of Christ having a free course of control, but we are responsible to remove these hindrances.

There will be no need for a president in our discussions if the peace of Christ presides at our council board, for that is the present purpose of our being called in one body, and in the process we shall be marked by thankful hearts. The natural tendency is for everyone to have a right to express his opinion, and so a Babel of voices will proclaim the failure of human effort in bringing about millennial conditions.

"In the world ye shall have tribulation." But the Lord spoke words of comfort to His own in order that they

might understand that in Himself they might have peace. (John 16, 33). His peace is given to us; not as the world gives, in a conditional way, since His gifts and calling are without repentance, *i.e.*, there is no retraction of what He gives.

The result of truly apprehending the significance of His unchanging peace given to us, and our being enclosed in an impervious envelope of peace, is that we are found conducting ourselves soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; being marked by acquiescence in God's will and confidence in Him that He can, in His own convenient time, effect His own will.

Meanwhile, the personal peace of Christ rules in our hearts, giving a practical demonstration of God's dwelling in His house.

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### AARON'S BEARD.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity! Like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments. (Ps. 133: 1, 2).

Everything in Christianity tends to express unity, even as the same principle was true of God's earthly people. But if this was a desirable end in the old dispensation, how much greater significance must we attach thereto when the Holy Spirit is present uniting every member of the body of Christ to the Head in heaven. Hence the unity of the Spirit must result on earth. We may walk in the Spirit as individuals, but the unity of the Spirit involves relationship to others. Unity is not by Lordship which relates to the individual. Christ is Head, not Lord, to the body, although individual obedience will help to express the unity. But all unity is in and by the Spirit. The unity of the Spirit is an abstract idea, rupture of intercourse between the saints of God will

not invalidate the unity of the Spirit but such a regrettable incident will hinder this unity from being practically expressed or illustrated. Most of the difficulties amongst Christians arise from giving undue prominence to natural considerations and also through lack of apprehension of the nature of the unity of the Spirit. For a brief period after Pentecost we have a clear view of how the unity of the Spirit is maintained, when all who believed continued with one accord in the temple (Acts 2, 46) and the multitudes of those who believed were of one heart and one soul. (Acts 4, 32).

Although the truth has been covered over with the dust of centuries, whenever there has been a response to the light of God's revelation, something similar if on a smaller scale has followed. Personal, social, ecclesiastical and national distinctions have been obliterated, and Christians have taken up their responsibilities as still living in this life but in the light of another world. (The Age of the Ages, Eph. 3, 21). They viewed their responsibilities in their correct perspective, and as subservient to the heavenly calling. The holiness of God's House was maintained, and hearts were united in devotedness to the interests of an absent Lord in glory but still rejected by the world as much as when He was here. In the psalm the fact of "brethren dwelling together in unity" is likened to the holy anointing oil put on the head and running down Aaron's beard. This truth finds its substantiation in Christ as the One who is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows and who as the Holy One ministers to us the unction or anointing which abides in us and teaches all things to us. But this anointing recognises nothing of the flesh: "Upon man's flesh it shall not be poured." (Ex. 30, 32). Ever since the first attempt relative to the erection of the tower of Babel, man has sought to establish a unity of his own device, but God has never allowed such to last for a long period. He has always introduced a circumstance which wrecked a

man-made unity. The best-laid schemes continually miscarry. Mere organisation will not hold Christians together in peace. The only security lies in allowing the Spirit of God to have His way with us. There will then be a display of the love of God and we shall give expression to what will obtain uninterruptedly throughout the universe in a future day.

Oh, what a home! there fullest love  
Flows through its courts of light;  
The Son's divine affections flow  
Throughout its depth and height.

The composition of the holy anointing oil was not to be imitated. Ananias and Sapphira were the first who sought to simulate the action of the Spirit of God when they professed to give the whole proceeds of the sale of their property to the Lord's service and incurred the judgment of God. God is sovereign and must punish any infringement of His rights. So that mere natural fervour in God's service, no matter how commendable it may seem to be in the eyes of men, will only meet with the Lord's scathing rebuke. Moreover, it will mar the dissemination of the fragrance of Christ. We can only contribute to the advancement of God's interests according to our apprehension and appreciation of the excellencies of Christ. In spite of the specious pleas usually advanced, every imitation of the unity of the Spirit is bound to fail ultimately. The upholding of a Christian's social status is a great hindrance in keeping the unity of the Spirit because there is no respect of persons with God. An early example of grit getting into the mechanism is shown when the Grecian Christians thought that the Hebrew widows were getting an advantage in the daily ministration. (Acts 6). But observe the magnanimity of the apostles who invited the murmurers to choose seven men of honest report and full of the Holy Ghost to look after the business. Strife soon ends when one of the two elements disappears. Abram could put the question of pasture un-

reservedly to the choice of Lot, because he had his eye on "the future" which rested on the stability of God and not on the precarious nature of human choice. The sequel shewed that he was endowed with "long-sightedness." For the above reasons Aaron's beard stopped at the skirts of his garments. Man would have argued that good would result by allowing the beard to reach the ground, and so to give the desert the benefit of the oil. Following the type, God does not communicate his Spirit to a stranger nor to the world. The garments speak of the display of the heavenly character of Christ, and this can only be effected by the saints of God in the power of the Holy Ghost, and so Aaron's beard stopped at the limits of God's requirements.

Recently we listened to a scientist discoursing on the lubrication of wool preparatory for manufacture. He stated that the finest wool hair had a diameter of one-two thousandth part of an inch, and thus one pound weight of such wool had the immense surface area of 1100 square feet, and more wonderful still two ounces of oil were spread over this surface in a film less than one-forty thousandth part of an inch thick. These are marvellous facts brought to light by modern scientific measurement. But following the Scripture illustration, the Christian knows a much more intangible film than the wool hair lubrication. The Spirit of God typified by the oil on Aaron's beard transcends any physical anointing, and, moreover, can only be appreciated by an intuition which did not come to him in virtue of possessing human descent, but in consequence of being born of God linked with the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

The process summarised as "being diligent in keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" is previously stated in detail as walking worthy of the calling with

(1) *All lowliness* which is descriptive of the Christian's normal state, before God and is consequent on being consciously in the presence of God.

(2) *Meekness* relates to our conduct towards other people



and will follow on true humility. If there be a proper sense of our own nothingness and being in the presence of God, there will not be any cause for complaint on the score of arrogance and superciliousness towards our brethren.

(3) *Long-suffering*. This will eliminate all harshness from our dealings. What is so natural to us is excluded by the Spirit's power producing a trait which was so prominent in the Lord's life while here. Who but He would have borne with Judas Iscariot until the moment he went out into the darkness of the night unable to bear the presence of Infinite Light and Love.

(4) *Forbearing one another in Love*. We frequently "bear" or suffer those whom we cannot expel from our company, but that is not the meaning of the term. Forbearance has the force of "suffering gladly." The Apostle averred that the Corinthians suffered fools gladly (using the same word in 2 Cor. 11, 19); a procedure not commonly observed among men.

O Patient, spotless One!  
Our hearts in meekness train  
To bear thy yoke, and learn of Thee,  
That we may rest obtain.

While we appreciate the great accession in apprehension of light during the last generation, the question arises as to whether the light has been received so as to become formative in our souls, and to what extent we have been led consciously by the Spirit into what is characteristic of Christianity.

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### THE DEW OF HERMON.

"As the dew of Hermon that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing—  
life for evermore." (Ps. 133, 3).

Although doubtless this psalm refers primarily to Israel the state portrayed is aptly descriptive of God's thoughts for

His people in every dispensation, and is one which we may earnestly desire as being in accord with "the way of superlative excellence" shown by the Apostle in 1 Cor. 13 and of the diligent keeping of the unity of the Spirit in the co-bond of peace. (Eph. 4, 3). The unity of the Spirit is the power by which the Holy Ghost harmoniously associates very diverse elements in God's work relative to the Church. This is a hidden power, not recognised by the world, but is rendered evident by God's people exhibiting peace as the uniting bond. The world cannot see or understand the unity of the Spirit, but the maintenance or rupture of peace is readily observed. So the abstract truth of God is concretely illustrated by those who profess to belong to Him. All the subtlety of the enemy is directed against this desirable end being attained, therefore there is a call for diligence. The unity of the Spirit is marked by perennial freshness. Zion means a "high and very dry place," but the dew of Hermon descending upon its mountains was the only means afforded for changing its character. So the only influence which will keep our souls fresh is the power of the Spirit, causing us to own practically the headship of Christ, and to enjoy God's favour, manifested to our souls and bodies in unceasing goodness and mercy.

That all Thy gracious favour  
May to my soul be known;  
And, versed in this Thy goodness  
My hopes Thyself shall crown.

In this refreshing process our souls expand in the atmosphere of God's love, and we experimentally prove the meaning of the song of Moses:

"My doctrine shall drop as the rain  
My speech shall distil as the dew,  
As the small rain upon the tender herb,  
And as the showers upon the grass."

(Deut. 32: 2).

And also the song of the Psalmist:

“The people shall be willing  
In the day of Thy power,  
In the beauty of holiness,  
From the womb of the morning,  
Thou hast the dew of thy youth.”

(Ps. 110: 3).

Physically, at the end of the Millennium, the saints of God constituting the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, in spite of the flow of time, will be marked by the dew of youth, “as a bride adorned for her husband.” But at present we have the benefit of the same revivifying power for the maintenance of freshness of soul. No mere high place of privilege, no mere association where the truth is known, will maintain us in that delectable state. The mountains of Zion, although high were naturally very dry, but the dew of Hermon produced a rich crop of smiling verdure.

Subjection of spirit to Him, who is the Head, will alone enable us to exemplify the unity which He wishes to see in His saints. United by the living link of the Holy Spirit to our Head in Heaven, living in the light of the knowledge of God, fully revealed in the face of Christ, we shall apprehend, maintain, and express the unity of the Spirit in the co-bond of peace. Every effort of the enemy to bring in dissension and disruption will then fail. The conditions will exist for the collective as well as the individual enjoyment of eternal life, the *summum bonum* of God’s blessing. Note the presence of the adverb “there” in the third verse of the 133rd Psalm. It is in the condition of unity that the Lord commands the peerless blessing of the experimental enjoyment of eternal life, which, the apostle John informs us, is the knowledge of Him that is true—the true God and His son Jesus Christ. We shall thus be enabled to dwell together in unity to the glory of God, and morally suitable to Him who has saved us and called us with a Holy calling.

We must feel sorry for those who allow themselves to be

defrauded out of their birthright as children of God, *i.e.*, the present enjoyment of eternal life. The incessant quibbling about points which are frequently forgotten ten years later, is somewhat like the waters rushing down the narrow gorge of the Jordan, carrying much solid matter in solution into the great depression of the Dead Sea, which is nearly 1300 ft. below sea level. Hence no water can escape by outlet drainage. But the sun's rays falling on the surface of the lake change the liquid water into vapour, lifting it high above the sources of the Jordan and in course of time the winds cause part of it to become the dew of Hermon, which revives the verdure of the mountains of Zion. However, observe that not one solid particle is lifted from the sea by this process. The Dead Sea becomes gradually saltier and the solid matter accumulates. Does the above process not exemplify conditions which are not unfamiliar amongst the people of God? Wrangling factions tumble down the gorge of fierce dissension into a Dead Sea of absolute futility, in which the spirits of men become saltier and more bitter in the deadness for God. The only remedy is in the objective presentation of Christ. We need positive ministry. The light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ alone will lift us above the dissension and will cause our thoughts and speech to distil and condense as the dew of Hermon spreading refreshment instead of discontent wherever we go. In doing so, we leave those who choose to shut out the light of God to continue in the lake of bitterness which will mean loss now and at the judgment seat of Christ.

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### **DEVOTEDNESS TO CHRIST.**

*(Substance of an Address at Edinburgh on Jan. 1st, 1930).*

Scriptures read: 2 Cor. 5. 14, 15; Rom. 8. 34, 35, 37-39; Heb. 7. 23-25; John 14. 2, 3; 17. 23, 26.

Personal devotedness to Christ is a laudable ambition. Current evangelical literature presents various solutions to

the problem, but unless the solutions are based on the foundation of the Word of God they cannot be helpful. Hence at the outset we refer to Scriptural passages which present the matter in a perfectly clear light.

From 2 Corinthians 5, 14 we see that the essential spring of devotedness is the constraining power of the love of Christ, because the apostle and his associates had come to a certain judgment as to the bearing of the death of Christ. The love of Christ first came to us in a state of death. His death proved that all were dead\* and that no solution of the problem was admissible other than that He should die. The heart of every Christian should be affected by the fact that we were all in death, which is the judgment of sin, and that Christ actually came into the place where we were. When we realize that love was behind the action, then that love constrains us, and now that His death and resurrection have formed a new envelope of life into which we have been introduced in the superlative grace of God, we have no longer any right to an opinion as to how that life should be directed. Christ came into death that He might establish over us an absolute irrevocable claim, the claim of love.

A claim to the contrary effect would not be argued by any advocate in a court of law. Such a contrary claim would find a parallel in the following supposition. If a commercial man failed in business and was not able to pay the proverbial "penny in the pound," but was absolutely without assets against overwhelming liabilities, then, in the event of that firm being re-constituted with external capital and under new management, it would be readily conceded to be gross impertinence for the debtor to offer advice as to how the business should be conducted subsequently.

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\* Some expositors say that the dead state was in consequence of the death of Christ, but the grammatical structure as well as the context show unmistakably that the dead condition was an antecedent and not a consequent of His death. The latter dictum is substantiated by other passages of Scripture.

But the conditions in the case of a Christian are even more acutely accentuated than the illustration shows.

In effect Christ says to us, "There is no love like mine. You were all in death, the universal condition, and I came into that condition and rose clear out of it, that I might subsequently have over you a claim which could not be gainsaid by any adverse advocate." Hence when that is apprehended by the Christian there must be a response to the death of Christ in devotedness to His interests.

But the fact of the death of Christ does not exhaust the argument. The love of Christ was not exhausted in death. It is now manifested in the power of an endless life. We turn to the end of the eighth chapter of Romans and to a parallel passage in the seventh chapter of Hebrews, where we see that Christ's intercession springs from His love. He first expressed His love in death, but now that He lives the next great consequence of His love is His intercession. He saves to the uttermost with the end in view that we should be more than conquerors over every circumstance.

The expression, "Save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him," is often paraphrased as His being an "all-the-way-home Saviour." One would not seek to disparage a cherished thought which is fully supported by other Scriptures, but the context of this particular Scripture lays stress on the microscopic rather than the telescopic view of salvation. It is blessedly true that the end is as secure as the beginning, but often it is not realized that our course is under perfect administration. The minutest details of our lives are delicately adjusted and harmonize with the trend of the ways of God. When we apprehend this harmony we exclaim with the apostle, "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God."

Moreover, the new Priest at the right hand of God has a continuing priesthood, in contrast to the conditions of office in the old dispensation. Historians tell us that there were eighty-four performers of the high priestly function, and

simple arithmetic gives a period of eighteen years as their average tenure of the office. "They were not suffered to continue by reason of death." But because the new Priest continues ever He has an unchanging priesthood. Moreover, there is no possibility of lapse of His function during its duration, as seemed inevitable in the beautiful type of Exodus 17. when the hands of Moses held up in intercession became heavy, and required to be reinforced by the support of Aaron and Hur. The priesthood of Christ knows no discontinuity nor variation in intensity. He intercedes for us because He loves us, and we are more than conquerors over every difficulty through Him who loves us.

The apostle raises the question, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Tribulation and the other enemies of the wilderness journey are powerless, and we join the apostle in his unfaltering persuasion that no conceivable agency, be it in the psychical sphere as angel, principality or power, or in the physical sphere of time and space, can separate us from the love of God which has secured us in the new envelope of Christ Jesus our Lord.

*Prominent features of the priesthood of Christ are typified* in the high priest's bearing the names of the children of Israel on his shoulder, the place of strength, and on his breast, the place of affection. Intercession is the fruit of affection, and the practical result is that we are supported in this world by intercession of Christ. Thus we shall be able to maintain the position of devoted Christians, as our hearts are under the influence of the love of Christ.

But the culmination of the love of Christ is not reached in His death nor in His intercession for us, but in leading us to His Father's house, as stated in the beginning of the fourteenth chapter of John's Gospel. Someone has well said that we are "the Father's love gift to the Son," but we are His gift with the object in view of bringing us home. The love of Christ will never be satisfied short of having us there. "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself."

That moment has not yet arrived, but meanwhile He brings us to the Father's heart. He declares the Father's name, and causes us to know the love of the Father. He causes us to know that we are loved of the Father with the same love as He Himself is loved. (John 17, 23). In declaring the Father's name he declares the Father's love. He declares that "the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17, 26).

When we apprehend that, we can appreciate the apostolic prayer in the third chapter of the Ephesian epistle. We become enlightened as to the mind of God, so that we comprehend with all saints the dimensions of the sphere of purpose, and a further step is to know the love of Christ which transcends knowledge. This seeming paradox vanishes, when we realize that our knowledge will always be qualitative. To make a quantitative analysis of the love of God is conclusively beyond our powers. But the experimental result is that in the currency of our explorations in the sphere of purpose, jointly with our testing the love of Christ, we are in the process of being filled to all the fulness of God. So that there need be no lack of power.

That the character of God should be displayed in His saints on earth was the apostle's great desire. When Christ was here there was a perfect expression of God in Him. If all His people apprehended the love of Christ, there would be a corresponding expression of God now. "No man has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is perfected in us." (I John 4, 12). The same expression is stated of Christ in John 1, 18.

Christ was once here in testimony. Nothing short of the display of Christ now will suit God, therefore the church is to be filled with the fulness of God; and the secret of this being effected is through the knowledge of the love of Christ. Nothing else can make a Christian devoted. The apprehension of formal doctrine will not bring the desired result to pass. The object of devotion is Christ Himself.



Mary sat at the feet of Jesus and heard His Word because she responded to His love. John leaned on His bosom and His heart-throbs were communicated to him. Every increment of appreciation brings a further increment of support in the continuance of devotedness to the interests of Christ.

In conclusion, may we recapitulate the elements in the chain of development of devotedness to Christ? (1) His absolute claim in death. (2) The consequence of His love in intercession in the power of an endless life at the right-hand of God. (3) The continuance of His love in leading us out of the world to His Father's house, and the loving care which He manifests towards us on the way there, must bring to bear upon our course of action an irresistible conclusion that we should be loyal to Christ and His interests. May this prove to every one of us more than a beautiful sentiment, but a living bright reality indeed!

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## LOVE FOR CHRIST.

In Matt. 26, when the whole current was going against Christ, there was a woman who showed her love for Him in a remarkable way, and her commendation was that wherever the Gospel would be preached this that she had done would be spoken of as a memorial of her. She was in the current of His mind, and though what she did was in all human weakness, the Lord took notice of the spring of her action. There is no power in corporate action, unless the individuals are personally strong. The strength of a chain depends upon its weakest link, and therefore we must be strengthened by the personal love of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Epistle to the Ephesians with all its height finishes with the words, "Grace with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." If this is right, everything else will be secured. Do you love the Lord to

take you by the hand and lead you? Peter speaks of Him as the One "whom not having seen, ye love."

Deut. 6: 4, 5 shows that the Lord our God, Jehovah, requires the affection of the whole heart. The reason is found in chap. 10, 12. Chap. 11: 13-15 shows if they would only love the Lord with all their heart, everything they could wish for they would have. Thus the important thing is to love the Lord. Deut. 30, 1 shows the back-sliding heart finding the power of the world too strong, but He is faithful and just to forgive. If reality of heart is there, the Lord is ever the same. He allows chastening to come in that we may be restored. Then in the 15th verse of the same chapter, life is spoken of and contrasted with death, and good with evil, and then we are exhorted to choose life. That is the antidote. Again in Ps. 18, 1, "I will love Thee, O Lord." It is David's autobiography, his own history. Solomon also loved the Lord, and he could speak of Him as the chiefest among ten thousand. He is easily first against 9,999 rivals, and then the writer becomes lost in the sense of His love, and takes Him out of all comparison by saying, "He is altogether lovely." If we realize this then it will be easy to serve Him. It is not naturally easy to be insignificant, but if we become such we shall be glad to sweep a crossing in His interests.

His dealings with men are all in order that His will may be accomplished. Jacob's thigh was put out of joint. Saul became Paul. Self becomes pulverized in order that He may use us. We are so apt to look at the object or result of ministry rather than the source from which it springs, and so are apt to place first our instrumentality in the conversion of many souls rather than the doing of His will. The branch of the appletree is never fruitful, unless it abides in the stem. There is no effort on the part of the vine, and there should be no effort on our part either, except that of exercise. The sap of new life passes through us.

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