

Wheels Within Wheels and other Messages

by

Ernest Barker

Author of

"The Shepherd Psalm and the Shepherd Discourse."

"The Glorious Appearing."

"Twenty-One Difficult Texts."

"The Life of Joseph," etc.

with a Foreword by W. E. Vine, M.A.

Second and Revised Edition.

JOHN RITCHIE, Ltd.,
Printers and Publishers of Christian Literature,
Kilmarnock, Scotland.

Made in Great Britain.

PREFACE.

AMID life's strenuous demands many of us can only snatch a few brief moments here and there for that renewing of the mind which is closely allied to spiritual progress, and which is so frequently obtained by the reading of healthful literature. Herein lies one advantage of this volume. Each "Message" is intact and can be read within the space of thirty minutes.

By far the majority of the truths dealt with are intensely practical, and are calculated to encourage consistency of life, effectiveness of service, and confidence in a never-failing God in trying circumstances.

These "Messages" have already proved a source of blessing and comfort to scores of believers, and they are now sent forth united into one volume with the fervent hope that others may share whatever help and joy God may be pleased to impart through their instrumentality.

Chapter 13 is for the encouragement of those who have a sincere longing to know more of the Scriptures, and if perchance this book should fall into the hands of one who is a stranger to the grace of God revealed in Christ Jesus, it is quite within the realms of possibility that a careful and prayerful perusal of "Doubts and Difficulties Concerning Salvation" may bring light where there is darkness; liberty where there is bondage; and full assurance where there is perplexity.

ERNEST BARKER.

Streatham, April, 1927.

LETTERS OF APPRECIATION.

Christ Church,
Westminster Bridge Road,
London, S.E.1.
12th May, 1927.

Dear Mr. Barker,

I ought, before now, to have thanked your kind thoughtfulness in sending me a copy of "Wheels within Wheels." Your inscription is most kind, and I am so glad to see how much your thinking and exposition ring true to the Gospel, so far as I understand it.

I hope that the circulation may be commensurate with its high ideals and practical suggestions.

With kind regards and Christian greeting,

Yours sincerely,

F. B. MEYER.

July 7th, 1927.
133, Ashley Gardens,
London, S.W.1.

Ernest Barker, Esq.

Dear Friend,—I am delighted with your excellent book—"Wheels within Wheels."

I have read it entirely with profit and pleasure. Warm thanks for it.

It is very timely, full of help, and sure to do good.

Give us more of such soul-enriching work.

Much love,

DINSDALE T. YOUNG.

A Copy of this well known book has been graciously accepted by Her Majesty the Queen.

FOREWORD.

ONE of the urgent needs to-day is that of bringing Christians face to face with the Word of God and its teachings. Whatever serves this purpose by way of unfolding its truths, without any attempt to read preconceived ideas into it, is of very great value. One of the most subtle and specious forms of opposition to the truth is the abundance of publications of one sort and another, by means of which propagandists of error make an appeal to the Word of God, presuming to set forth its truths, which they read in the light of certain tenets which have been advanced by one and another during the present age. This mode of attack on the part of the adversary makes it essential that the reader should know His Bible thoroughly, as a result of patient and prayerful meditation therein. We may well be thankful for every book which, as in the case of this volume, is free from the dangerous element referred to. The object of the messages which follow is so to handle the Word of God as to impart comfort to those who are in spiritual difficulty, and to help Christians to a life of more implicit trust in God and entire conformity to His will, and to that efficiency in service for Christ which can be imparted only by the power of the Holy Spirit by means of the inspired Word. That the following pages will help toward these ends is the confident expectation of the writer who gladly pens these lines on behalf of the author.

W. E. VINE.

INDEX.

Chapter I. (Part One)	11
Wheels Within Wheels.	
(Part Two)	24
Wheels Within Wheels.	
Chapter II.	37
The Believer's Standing in Christ.	
Chapter III.	44
Impeded Progress.	
Chapter IV.	50
The Eternal Security of the Believer.	
Chapter V.	62
Sinless Perfection: A Scriptural Investigation.	
Chapter VI. (Part One)	74
The "Tongues" Movement and the Movement of the Tongue—The "Tongues" Movement.	
(Part Two)	79
The "Tongues" Movement and the Movement of the Tongue—The Movement of the Tongue.	
Chapter VII.	91
Christian Courage.	
Chapter VIII.	99
Laying Up Treasure.	
Chapter IX.	110
A Bulwark of Trust.	

Index—Continued.

Chapter X.	.....	119
The Secret of Permanent Happiness.		
Chapter XI.	.....	131
The Secret of Power for Life and Service.		
Chapter XII.	.....	143
Paul the Apostle: A Model Servant of Jesus Christ.		
Chapter XIII.	.....	158
Suggestions Concerning Personal Bible Study.		
Chapter XIV.	.....	179
Doubts and Difficulties Concerning Salvation.		

Wheels Within Wheels ;

or,

Proving an Unqualified Promise.

PART I.

“ And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *His purpose* ” (Rom. 8, 28).

THIS verse is, in some respects, one of the most wonderful verses in the Bible, and, in order to enable us to see something of its importance as well as its beauty, we will travel through it step by step, remembering as we pass along that not only each verse, but each clause, and each word of Scripture has its significance.

The first step is, “ *And we know.* ” Faith is not satisfied with thinking; faith must have a foundation on which to rest; therefore, faith must *know*. As believers we know a great many things which are worth knowing, and these can easily be ascertained by tracing the verb “to know” through the Scriptures.

The second step is “ And we know that *all things.* ”

Wheels Within Wheels.

These two words occur frequently, both in the Old and New Testaments, and a careful examination of the places where they are found, together with their connections, would prove a fascinating and instructive study.

The third step is, "And we know that all things

WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD."

This is indeed wonderful. All things might have worked together for ill; had we received our deserts they would have done so, but God has not dealt with us after our sins, neither has He rewarded us according to our iniquities. He has dealt with us in *grace*, and, therefore, all things work together for good. We do well to remember that, in all the "ins and outs" of our daily experience, God is behind the scenes and is always working, ruling, and overruling, every thing in His own way for His eternal glory, and our present and future blessing. The words in Psalm 119, verse 68, can only be true of God Himself, "Thou art good, and doest good." Yes, God is good, the very essence of goodness, and because of this He doeth good. The Lord Jesus was the perfect manifestation of God, and, therefore, of Him we read in Acts, chapter 10, verse 38, that He "went about doing good."

The fourth step is, "And we know that all things work together for good

TO THEM THAT LOVE GOD."

The passage does not read, "to those whom God loves," and the distinction is exceedingly important to bear in mind. God loves everybody, but everybody does not love God. We read that God loved the world (and He loves

Wheels Within Wheels.

the world still) but the world does not love Him. There are a certain number who love Him, not professionally, but really, and if the question is raised as to why we love Him, the only adequate answer is, "Because He first loved us." And yet, how cold, how thin, how small, how poor is our love compared with what it should be. We marvel that we do not love Him more, but when we probe our hearts for the cause of its lack of intensity we arrive, sooner or later, at the inevitable conclusion that it is because of our lack of appreciation of His love toward us. When His mighty love was first shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, then it was that our love went back to Him in response, and it is only as we realise increasingly the height and depth of that love which passeth knowledge that we shall resultantly love Him as we should. However, to revert to our point, Romans, chapter 8, verse 28, cannot be claimed by any unregenerate person; it is exclusively for God's people, "to them that love God."

The fifth step is, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God,

TO THEM WHO ARE THE CALLED ACCORDING
TO HIS PURPOSE."

Thank God this is inserted. We hide our faces with shame when we think of our poverty-stricken love to Him, but we lift them with joy unspeakable when we lay hold of the tremendous fact that we are an interested party in His eternal purpose which originated with Himself in the past dateless eternity, and which will be culminated and consummated when we are conformed to the image of His Son in the ages to come.

Wheels Within Wheels.

Furthermore, nothing can frustrate or alter God's purpose. It is irrevocable as is His truth, and according to that irreversible purpose we have been called.

Having travelled through the verse by these short stages, we will now look at this wonderful truth in another way. To a very great extent our lives are made up of contrasts—light and shade; sunshine and storm; joy and sorrow; success and failure; health and sickness; realisation and disappointment! *ups and downs*. Now, it is comparatively easy for us to understand how the brighter and pleasanter things of life work together for good, *e.g.*, the sunshine, joy, health, success, etc., but it is difficult to understand how the dark and unpleasant things do so, *e.g.*, the storms, failures, sorrows, disappointments, etc. But the fact is that they *all* work together for good. God help us to grip this stupendous fact. *All things*—the great things and the little things; the ugly things and the nice things; the sweet things and the bitter things; the rough things and the smooth things; the crooked things and the straight things; the light things and the dark things—yes, *ALL THINGS*—not fifty per cent. of them; not ninety-nine per cent. of them, but *all* of them. Truly this is one of the great outstanding miracles of our daily life.

A remarkable scene is presented in the opening verses of John, chapter 13. The Lord knew that His hour had come; He knew that He would depart out of this world unto the Father; He knew that the Father had given all things into His hands; He knew that He was come from God and went to God; and He who knew all this, the Lord of life and glory, the Creator of the entire universe, the Eternal Son of God, actually laid aside His

Wheels Within Wheels.

outer garments, girded Himself with a towel, poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet. Verily, He was the embodiment of humility. "Then cometh He to Simon Peter," and that impetuous disciple said in a tone of genuine surprise, "Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?" (The emphasis in the Greek rests upon the two pronouns "*Thou*" and "*My*," expressing the vivid contrast between them). Our Lord's answer was as beautiful as it was consoling, "What I do thou knowest (perceivest) not now; but thou shalt know (understand) hereafter." These ever memorable words apply to many, possibly the majority, of God's dealings with us. How many experiences there are through which we pass, the reason for which we are at a complete loss to understand. There are times when God seems to hide His face, and to veil the purpose of His loving heart. We frequently wonder why He allows us to have so many strange experiences. Some of His loved ones lie on a bed of sickness for months together; some are suddenly, without any warning, plunged into the valley of sorrow and bereavement; some continue in business splendidly for a time, when, on a sudden, the business fails, and financial ruin ensues; some who mean well and act with the best of motives are entirely misunderstood, and are consequently censured rather than commended; some have their hopes raised to the highest possible point, only to see them ruthlessly dashed to the ground. Yes, there are occasions when

EVERY THING SEEMS TO GO WRONG,

and, being human, we reason with ourselves as to the "why and wherefore." How difficult it is with many of us in such circumstances to acquiesce willingly in these

Wheels Within Wheels.

divine interpositions. O that we might hear the voice of our Beloved saying in that calm, gentle, and loving tone, of which He alone is capable, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." It is possible for us sometimes to understand the purpose behind God's dealings with us at the time we experience them, but in any case *we shall surely understand all things* in that coming day when that which is covered shall be revealed, and that which is hid shall be made known, and *then* we shall find that God has been behind the scenes every step of the way and that all things have been working together for good.

How delightfully interesting and instructive is the 8th chapter of Deuteronomy relative to this subject. There we have a dazzling picture of divine love and care manifested towards the children of Israel. Blessing follows blessing with extraordinary rapidity. In verse 2 we see that God *led* His people; verse 3, He *fed* them; verse 4, He *clothed* them; verse 15, He *gave them water* out of the rock of flint (almost the last place in the world from which one would expect water to issue). But why did God so deal with His earthly people? Why all these blessings so undeserved, and yet so freely bestowed? The reason is stated at the end of verse 16,

"TO DO THEE GOOD

at thy latter end."

There is no need to ask ourselves if God has blessed us more than we have deserved. The fact is that He literally deluges us with blessing day by day, hour by hour. How many divine favours are crowded into one short day of

Wheels Within Wheels.

our experience? In Psalm 139, verses 17-18, David mentions two characteristics of God's thoughts toward him—they were *precious* and *innumerable*; and such are His thoughts toward us. He has made every provision for us during our pilgrimage journey. Every earthly blessing, which we so often take as a matter of course without any expression of appreciation, as well as every spiritual blessing, comes from His loving hand by the way of the Cross. And why does God deal so graciously with us? Surely *to do us good*, not only at our latter end, but also during each passing hour.

Another suggestive passage bearing upon this truth is the early part of Jeremiah, chapter 24, and as we carefully read verse 5 we see that God had sent His people into the hands of the Chaldeans, because of their stubbornness and disobedience, in order to teach them the lesson they so urgently needed to learn, viz., that of dependence upon Himself. Now, here we see God's judgment upon His erring people, in contrast to His blessings recorded in Deuteronomy, chapter 8, but the divine purpose proved the same in both instances, because the last three words in Jeremiah, chapter 24, verse 5, are "*for their good*."

When we get cold and careless it is essential that He should deal with us accordingly, and, therefore, He has to use disciplinary measures, correcting us by means of the rod of chastisement, and leading us into the path of affliction :

BUT IT IS ALL FOR OUR GOOD.

He doth not *willingly* afflict the children of men, but He sometimes afflicts them *necessarily*, and behind the rod, the

Wheels Within Wheels.

correction, and the affliction there is a love stretching back to a past eternity.

Eliphaz the Temanite was right when he reminded Job that the Lord made sore only that He might bind up; and that He wounded only that His hands might make whole (Job 5, 18). The Lord frequently stirs up our nest; upsets our calculations; frustrates our plans, only that He might "leave a blessing behind Him," and so whichever way we may consider the divine dispensations to usward who believe, we find that "*all things* work together for good to them that love God."

Having examined this remarkable verse in various ways, we will now look at a few incidents recorded in Scripture, some comparatively small and some on a larger scale, and endeavour to see in them the overruling hand of an all-wise and ever-gracious God.

1. AQUILA AND PRISCILLA.

The first mention of these two devoted servants of God is in Acts, chapter 18, verses 1-3. By occupation they were tentmakers, and for some time they had been residing in the world's capital. It is quite safe to assume that, whilst in Rome, they were fairly successful in their craft, as a large number of tents were undoubtedly used by the Roman soldiers. It is, moreover, quite within the realms of possibility that they had made definite plans for the further development of their business as well as for their future generally. Suddenly, however, all their arrangements were completely overthrown by a cruel edict on the part of the unscrupulous Emperor Claudius, that all Jews should depart from Rome. Consequently, Aquila and his wife were compelled to seek

Wheels Within Wheels.

a home elsewhere, and the place they decided upon was Corinth. No doubt they were at a complete loss to understand why they should be called upon to suffer such inconvenience, but *God was behind the scenes*, planning all things for their blessing.

The Apostle Paul left Athens, and came to Corinth where he found Aquila and Priscilla. Being himself a tentmaker, an amicable arrangement was made whereby they occupied the same house together, with the result there was inaugurated a friendship which was not only never to be dissolved, but which was to be cemented as days advanced. How Aquila and his helpmeet endeared themselves to the Apostle can be estimated by a careful examination of Romans, chapter 16, verses 3-4; whilst, on the other hand, we can easily imagine what an inestimable help and comfort the Apostle was to them. Thus we see that an apparent catastrophe eventuated in *untold blessing*.

2. PHILEMON.

In the shortest Pauline epistle we have on record, Philemon is mentioned as a beloved brother and fellow-labourer, implying that his life was as consistent as his profession. Some time previous to the writing of this letter, Philemon had taken into his home a slave, named Onesimus, and had doubtless shown the kindness of God unto him, with the ultimate object of winning the dear fellow for Christ. This undertaking, however, did not develop as Philemon wished. Instead of manifesting any desire God-ward, Onesimus cruelly robbed his benefactor and fled to Rome. At the time this most unfortunate event happened Philemon perhaps wondered why God allowed

Wheels Within Wheels.

such an untoward circumstance to take place, little knowing what a remarkable sequel would transpire.

Whilst in Rome, Onesimus heard the Gospel from Paul's lips and was gloriously converted. Let us endeavour to depict the subsequent unfoldings of this extraordinary incident. Paul sends Onesimus back to Philemon with the message, "*Receive him as myself*" (that is, "reckon to him my merit"), followed by the further injunction, "*If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account*" (that is, "reckon to me his demerit"). Philemon, therefore, had the supreme joy of welcoming Onesimus into his home for the second time, not now as a servant, but infinitely above a servant, *a brother beloved*, and, as the name implies, *profitable*. In view of all this the significant words in verse 15 should be carefully noted—"*For perhaps he departed from thee for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever.*" This remarkable statement clearly suggests that the hand of God could be seen bringing abiding good out of a temporary disaster.

Onesimus departed *for a season* as a slave and a thief, that Philemon might have the joy of receiving him *for ever* as a devoted brother in Christ. This does not mean that God was responsible for the misdemeanour of Onesimus, but rather that He graciously overruled the event to the eternal blessing of both master and slave.

3. THE APOSTLE PAUL.

The Apostle's life was exemplary, so much so that he was able to exhort his fellow-believers to follow him as he followed Christ. It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of the influence he exercised, the testimony he

Wheels Within Wheels.

bore, the truths he enunciated, the letters he wrote. Christ was the mainspring as well as the main theme of the whole of his heavenly career. Wherever he went he carried with him a reflection of his Saviour. He lived a life of beautiful unselfishness, always thinking of others and seeking their highest welfare. He placed himself at the disposal of his fellow-saints, praying for them, instructing them, pleading with them, exhorting them, loving them as only one could love them who himself was constrained by the mighty love of Christ, seeking by all legitimate means to lift them on to a higher plane of spiritual experience.

Toward the close of his life's journey, Paul was unceremoniously placed in a Roman prison, greatly to the joy of his enemies who thought that in this way his lips would be practically sealed, his influence curtailed, his power to spread the Gospel of Christ reduced to a minimum. As a matter of fact his incarceration had exactly the opposite effect, so that he could write to his beloved Philippians and tell them the joyful news that the things which happened unto him *turned out rather unto the advancement of the glad tidings*. This advancement of the Gospel was effected in many ways, of which we will quote three, evidencing as they do the fact that, behind the cruel machinations of the enemy, God was working out His own eternal designs.

1. *His bonds in Christ were manifest in all the prætorium, and in all other places.* His enemies little expected such an outcome as this. Many of Cæsar's soldiers and servants became monuments of divine grace, and this accounts for the magnificent Apostolic greeting in Philippians, chapter 4, 22.
2. *The Gospel was preached with greater boldness than previously.* God's servant was bound, but God's Word was

Wheels Within Wheels.

boundless, and many of the brethren in the Lord increased in confidence through Paul's bonds and were enabled to proclaim the Gospel the more fearlessly. 3. *Five of the most beautiful of the Pauline epistles were written during the apostle's imprisonment*, and when we read and study the sublime teaching of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, and 2 Timothy, we do well to remember that these letters emanated from a Roman prison. It is, therefore, gloriously possible for us to thank God that His beloved servant had the honour of being "an ambassador in a chain" (Eph. 6, 20), seeing that "all things worked together for good" not only to the great apostle himself, but also through him to his fellow-saints who were then living, as well as to those who have since believed.

4. THE APOSTLE JOHN.

John is designated "the disciple whom Jesus loved" no less than five times (reminding us of Benjamin's portion). He enjoyed a great measure of the Lord's confidence; he leaned on the Saviour's breast at supper time; he wrote the fourth Gospel, in which so many of us revel. Like his namesake the Baptist, he was "a burning and a shining light," and because of his loyalty to the Word of God, coupled with his unflinching testimony for Christ, he was cruelly banished to the lonely isle of Patmos, where he was separated from his friends and from the outside world. What an unfortunate catastrophe! What a sudden curtailment of a life so eminently useful! Yet here again we see God working in His own peculiar way. John's enemies happily overlooked the fact that, although they succeeded

Wheels Within Wheels.

in separating him from his earthly friends, they could not separate him from THE FRIEND which sticketh closer than a brother.

One of the most remarkable portions of literature in the world is the last book in the Bible, where the curtain separating time from eternity is withdrawn, and where the future is unfolded as nowhere else in Scripture. Where was the book of the Revelation written? Where were all those unique and wonderful visions imparted to God's servant? ON THE ISLE CALLED PATMOS, whither the apostle of love was banished "for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."

Yes, my beloved fellow-believer, what was true in those far-off apostolic days is equally true in our day, "*All things* work together for good to them that love God."

Wheels Within Wheels ;

or,

Proving an Unqualified Promise.

PART II.

THE minute concern on the part of God toward His own, as already considered in various ways in Part I. of this treatise, is beautifully illustrated in the realm of nature.

God not only made the sun and moon—"He made the stars also." There is not an astronomer living who can tell us the exact number of these "shining diamonds" in the heavens, and although names have been given to a large number of them, yet what are they among so many? But He who made them both knows their precise number, and calls them *all* by their names (Psa. 147, 4); and if He has taken such infinite trouble with these heavenly bodies, how much more must He care for those who have been redeemed at the awful cost of the sacrifice of His Son?

God made the lovely birds of paradise with their magnificent plumage; also the peacock with its unique, exquisitely coloured, fan-shape tail; but He made the sparrows also. The sparrow is one of the commonest of birds, and there

Wheels Within Wheels.

is not an ornithologist living who can inform us exactly how many of these little creatures there are in existence. And yet we are distinctly told that not a single sparrow falls on the ground unnoticed by our loving Father.

God formed the hairs of our head as well as the intricate mechanism of our brain. He would be a foolish person indeed who attempted to count the hairs of his head (assuming, of course, that there are not any missing through age or other causes). But God's care towards us is so vast that He has numbered *each one*.

In the following biographical sketches we shall, I trust, be enabled to perceive still further the gracious controlling hand of One who loves His children more than tongue can tell or heart can conceive, and apply the same glorious principle to our own circumstances.

JOSEPH.

Joseph is first introduced to us in Scripture at the comparatively early age of seventeen, and, not forgetting the fact that he is one of the most beautiful types of the Lord Jesus in the Old Testament, we will endeavour to trace the varied epochs of his extraordinary career in order that we might see the gracious hand of God constantly moving for the permanent blessing, not only of himself, but also of those at whose hands he had received so much undeserved cruelty.

It is always hard to be misunderstood by, and to bear the insults and maltreatment of, the outside world, but it is infinitely harder to be thus treated by our own kith and kin, and this is exactly what Joseph endured *in full measure*. And so we read at the very outset of his recorded biography

Wheels Within Wheels.

that his brethren hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him. As a result of his two remarkable dreams their hatred increased. Yes, they envied their brother, first because his father loved him, and also because of the unmistakable indication that in the unalterable will of God they would sooner or later own his dominion over them.

His brethren determined that, whatever happened, his dreams should not be realised. Accordingly, their first intention was to slay Joseph, and then to cast his lifeless body into some pit. This unmentionable conspiracy was, however, overruled, and although Joseph *was* eventually thrown into a pit, he was cast in alive, the foul object being that he should die of starvation and thirst. This brutal design was also frustrated, and Joseph was eventually taken out of the pit, only to be made an object of merchandise, and so the next thing we see is that he is sold as a slave for twenty pieces of silver to a company of Midianitish merchantmen who happened to be passing by on their way to Egypt. This act terminated the *direct unbrotherly* conduct of his brethren, though his subsequent transference to Potiphar (who purchased him from the Ishmaelites), and his incarceration in the Egyptian prison were cruel hardships for which his brothers were also primarily responsible. Thus we see Joseph in the prison where the king's prisoners were bound, having been "stolen away" out of the land of the Hebrews, and *having done nothing* that he should be put into such a dungeon (Gen. 40, 15).

There are two outstanding facts which characterise Joseph's life up to this point, yea, and onwards. The first is *the beautiful absence of any spirit of retaliation*, and the

Wheels Within Wheels.

second is *the recognition of the unfailing presence of Jehovah.*

In the providence of God, Joseph is released from his prison to interpret Pharaoh's two dreams, which foretold that there would be seven years of plenty followed by a corresponding period of famine, so severe that the entire land would be consumed. Consequently, Joseph is set over all the land of Egypt, made to ride in the second chariot, and recognised by the people as the appointed Governor. And now the tables are turned. Joseph's dreams begin to be fulfilled, and the reasons why God allowed him to endure so many unjust and cruel afflictions are about to be manifested.

The seven years of plenty are ended, and the seven years of famine arrive; "and all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn." How beautifully and vividly is the story unfolded as we wend our way, step by step, and mark the various devices which Joseph originated for the welfare of his brethren!

Jacob commissioned his ten sons to go down into Egypt to buy corn, carefully retaining Benjamin for fear that evil might befall him. Immediately on their arrival these ten sons unconsciously did what they decided some years before they would never do. They "bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth." At first, Joseph feigned harshness, and accused them of being spies, though in reality his soul was melted in love toward them. He then demanded them to return to their father, and to fetch their brother Benjamin in order to prove their sincerity, keeping Simeon meanwhile as surety, though he was careful to fill their sacks with corn, and also to restore their money,

Wheels Within Wheels.

besides giving them provision for the journey.

Jacob's anguish on hearing the news was pitiful in the extreme. At first he vigorously protested, but afterwards, when he saw that such a course was inevitable, he relented, and this brings us to one of the most pathetic scenes recorded in Scripture. *Joseph and Benjamin, his own brother, are face to face.* God had been arranging for this historic meeting for some time past. If David "exceeded" as he embraced his friend Jonathan, when their ways so sadly parted asunder, it is certain that Joseph "exceeded" as he looked into the face of Benjamin, and said, "God be gracious unto thee, my son"; his heart being so full that he immediately retired to his chamber and wept.

After Joseph's attempt to keep Benjamin by means of the silver cup (which was found in the bag of the youngest brother), and Judah's wonderful intervention and pleading to prevent such a catastrophe, we arrive at a chapter (Gen. 45) which not only stands out as being one of the most exquisitely beautiful portions in the book of Genesis, but also as containing one of the most graphic and heart-melting interviews on record. In this chapter Joseph reveals himself to his brethren. Instead of manifesting any ill-feeling towards them, he emphasises no less than three times within the compass of four verses (vv. 5 to 8) that *God had sent him before them* in order to preserve their lives by a great deliverance; and when we turn to the last chapter and verse 20, we see the whole story of Joseph summed up in a few words: "But as for you, ye thought evil against me, BUT GOD MEANT IT UNTO good."

How marvellously did God work all things together for good throughout the extraordinary career of this extra-

Wheels Within Wheels.

ordinary man. The pit, the bargaining with the Ishmaelites, the prison, the hatred, the envy, the malice — *all* were gloriously overruled and made to end in immeasurable blessing. Well might we exclaim with the great apostle, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

JOB.

To trace God's dealings with Job is a task both pleasing and profitable. His character and station in life are portrayed in the opening verses of the book which bears his name. He was perfect, upright, God-fearing, one to whom evil was repugnant, a father of ten children, and a wealthy farmer possessing eleven hundred and fifty head of cattle. In fact, he was the greatest of all men of the East.

There came a time when Satan suggested that Job only feared God for personal gain, and challenged the Lord to touch all that Job had in order to prove the shallowness of his faith. God gave Satan permission to test His servant on the distinct understanding that he should not touch Job himself. This unfolds the comforting truth that *the devil cannot touch us without Divine permission*. Thus it came to pass that Job experienced one of the severest testings that ever a man was called upon to endure. Within an incredibly short time his five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred she asses, seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels were all gone, so that instead of being the richest man in the East, he came to be one of the very poorest. But the worst blow was yet to fall. Scarcely had the news of the loss of his stock-in-trade reached him, when he was

Wheels Within Wheels.

informed of the death of his seven sons through a terrible catastrophe which apparently involved the death of his three daughters as well.

When the arch-enemy saw that all this failed to mar Job's integrity, he determined to go a step further, and he, therefore, challenged God to put forth His hand and touch Job's person. Once again divine permission was granted on the condition that Job's life should be spared, and consequently we find him covered with grievous boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. Those who have experienced the pain and inconvenience of only *one* boil can readily imagine what a terrible ordeal Job passed through when "he took a potsherd to scrape himself withal"; but even this Satanic contrivance failed to impair Job's integrity.

Do we not see in all this an example of those experiences in life which are so difficult to understand? Why was God's servant thus tried? What had he done to deserve this treatment? Surely the words, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter," were especially applicable in Job's case, inasmuch as it is necessary for us to look at the *last chapter* to see the glorious unfoldings of God's purposes toward His servant. Throughout Job's life the Lord was very pitiful and of tender mercy (James 5, 11), though for a long time He veiled His loving-kindness; and when at last His servant was brought to see his own utter weakness and worthlessness, and was able to forget himself and to pray for his friends, *then* the Lord "turned the captivity of Job," and gave him *twice as much* in the way of earthly blessing as he had before. And so we see the "end of the Lord" in the history of this almost

Wheels Within Wheels.

unique man, but let us never forget *that the Lord saw the end from the beginning*, and ever had the blessing and welfare of His servant in view. It is interesting to notice that almost mid-way between the first and the last chapters of the book of Job, these beautiful words are recorded, "But He knoweth the way that I take: *when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold*" (chapter 23, 10). How great a source of comfort these words have been to many of God's tried and afflicted saints it is impossible to estimate. "*All things work together for good.*"

THE JEWS IN THE DAYS OF MORDECAI.

King Ahasueras had quarrelled with his wife, turned her out of doors, and refused to have anything more to do with her. Esther, Mordecai's niece, was chosen in her stead. To commemorate this event a feast was made, called Esther's feast, and whilst these festivities were in progress, or shortly afterwards, a seemingly small incident transpired, the result of which was extraordinarily far-reaching. Mordecai was sitting in the king's gate when he overheard a conspiracy on the part of two of the king's chamberlains who sought the king's hurt. Word was despatched to Esther, who informed the king, who punished the offenders and had the event chronicled in Mordecai's name.

About this time Haman the Agagite, one of the cruellest haters of the Jews mentioned in the Bible, was promoted in the kingdom, so that all the king's servants bowed down and revered him, an exhibition of obsequiousness which strongly appealed to his proud heart and swollen head. Mordecai, however, refused to participate in this hero-

Wheels Within Wheels.

worship, and when Haman noticed that, he was so thoroughly enraged that he determined not only to destroy Mordecai, but also all the Jews in the kingdom. The arrangements for the accomplishment of this diabolical act were made carefully and deliberately, but God was at the helm guiding the ship through the troubled waters, and overruling the various details for the safety and joy of His people.

The lot was cast to decide the exact day of the great slaughter. It was cast in the *first month*, Nisan, and it fell on the *thirteenth day of the last month*, Adar, so that

***GOD HAD NEARLY TWELVE MONTHS IN WHICH
TO WORK***

on behalf of the terror-stricken Jews. The king's permission was cunningly and wickedly secured by Haman, and letters were despatched to every province to destroy all Jews, young and old, little children and helpless women, on the day appointed. Little wonder that "the city Shushan was perplexed."

Mordecai, upon hearing the dreadful news, at once sent word to Esther to intervene on behalf of her people, and when Esther at first refused, he warned her that if she held her peace it would be at her own peril, adding the significant words, "*And who knoweth whether thou art come into the kingdom for such a time as this?*" Upon this, Esther, taking her life in her hand, and with the ever-memorable words on her lips, "If I perish, I perish," entered the royal presence, and although she had not been into the inner court for thirty days, she obtained favour in the king's sight, and requested that both the king and Haman

Wheels Within Wheels.

should attend a banquet which she had prepared. This request was at once granted, and when the feast was held Esther expressed a further desire that the king and his prime minister should attend a second banquet on the morrow.

Now, these two feasts form an important feature of this fascinating story, as we shall see. Haman went forth in high glee, and boasted before his wife and friends of his riches, his children, his standing in the kingdom, and the esteem in which he *thought* the queen held him, but, he said, "all this availeth me nothing so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." A solution of the problem was at once forthcoming, namely, that a gallows, fifty cubits in height, should be reared, and permission obtained from the king to hang Mordecai thereon, so that Haman might attend the banquet with his mind free from all anxiety.

Humanly speaking, things looked exceedingly black for Mordecai and his kinsmen. When the lot was cast God had eleven months in which to work for His people, but now it was necessary for something to be done *within a few hours* if Mordecai's life was to be saved. Can God work as effectively in a few hours as He can in eleven months? Yes, He can—

AND HE DID.

Shall we endeavour to picture the various happenings during that eventful night and early morning just previous to the intended execution of the queen's uncle. (1) The king could not sleep. (2) He commanded to have the records of the kingdom read before him. (3) He heard

Wheels Within Wheels.

that Mordecai had saved his life when Bigthana and Teresh sought to lay hands on him. (4) He asked what reward had been given to Mordecai for this noble act, and was told that nothing had been done for him. (5) He asked who was in the court, and was informed that Haman was there (the prime minister had arrived early to obtain the royal permission to hang Mordecai). (6) He commanded Haman to appear before him. (7) He asked Haman what should be done to the man whom the king delighted to honour, and, in answering this interrogation, Haman (assuming that the king was *undoubtedly* referring to himself) suggested a glorious display of regal splendour and dignity. (8) He commanded his arrogant prime minister to do *all* that he had said to Mordecai the Jew, *and to do it quickly* (Esther 6).

After heaping all this glory upon Mordecai, Haman hastened to his house mourning, humbled to the very dust. He had a sadder tale to tell his wife and friends this time, and whilst they were talking he was summoned to Esther's second banquet. At this feast Esther divulged the dastardly plot, adding, "the adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman." The result was that Haman was hanged that morning on the very gallows he had prepared for Mordecai, so wonderfully and rapidly had God worked in making gloriously possible what seemed to be so utterly impossible.

But even now the sky was by no means clear, because, **according** to the law of the Medes and Persians the king's decree, which was prompted by Haman, was bound to be carried out. How did God order this?

*BY HAVING HAMAN'S AUTHORITY
TRANSFERRED TO MORDECAI.*

Wheels Within Wheels.

Accordingly, letters were despatched to all parts of the kingdom, authorising the Jews to stand together for their life, to destroy, to slay, and cause to perish all the power of their enemies upon that momentous day in their history, the thirteenth of the month Adar. What a tremendous change was thus wrought! The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour, and what was even more remarkable still, *many of the people of the land became Jews*, "for fear of the Jews fell upon them."

At last the historic day arrived, which ended in a glorious and complete victory won by the Jews, aided, of course, by the enormous power exercised by Mordecai, for the fear of him fell upon the rulers, lieutenants and officers of the king, who helped the Jews to gain the day. This wonderful victory, this crowning mercy, was commemorated by a feast called "the feast of Purim," which is kept to this very day by God's ancient people.

Thus we see *WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS* ever revolving, and purposes within purposes ever unfolding in this extraordinarily thrilling story. God worked on behalf of His people in a way which He alone could have devised.

He is the same wonder-working Jehovah to-day. Our difficulties are, after all, only opportunities for Him to solve them, and as we cultivate the wise habit of acknowledging Him in all our ways, we shall find by experience that He is constantly directing our paths, *and working all things together for our good and for His own eternal glory.*

THE WONDERFUL WEAVER'S WEAVING.

Are "ALL THINGS"? (yes) "together"? (yes) now working
For good, to those who love their Father—God?
Oh yes! But "What I do thou knowest NOT—now:
But thou shalt know hereafter," said my Lord.

So—ALL THINGS means just ALL, together working,
(Not taken singly), woven in by Him
Who knows the wondrous pattern He is weaving:
He sees, though to our sight its all so dim!

We cannot see: we cannot know beforehand;
But this is just where trust in Him comes in.
"Our light affliction is but for a moment"—
"Eternal weight of glory" lies within.

Yes! all things; dark and light; the sad, the joyous,
He knows; He loves; He cares. O how He loved
When He came down, and suffered **all things** for us.
Could ever love more wondrously be proved?

If we could only get one glimpse of Glory,
Then we should grasp the words God's Spirit sealed:
"I reckon that our sufferings are not worthy
To be compared with Glory, when revealed."

But "all things" does not always mean the sad ones:
"For the great love wherewith He loves us so"
Gives glorious joy and blessing to His children
That echoes back to Him with hearts aglow.

And "how shall He not with Him also freely
Give **all things** to us?" Yes, He surely will!
The Holy Spirit's "for us": God is "for us":
And Christ is "for us." ALL His love will fill.

So never doubt that ALL THINGS work together.
The Hand that holds the shuttle is God's Hand;
And we shall praise Him for these very ALL THINGS
When we are safe at home—in Glory Land.

(Rom. 8. 2, 8, 18, 28; 2 Cor. 4. 17 and 18).

Composed by Mrs. L. M. WARNER.

The Believer's Standing in Christ.

WE do well to remember that whatever God has done for us, or given to us, is *through His Son*. It was impossible for God to bless us on the basis of merit, and the only reason He is able to look upon us with complacency is because Jesus died and rose again.

Now there are the past, present, and future aspects of the divine scheme of grace, and we will consider each separately.

1. PAST (Eph. 1, 4).

When a person has definitely accepted the Saviour, one of the greatest discoveries it is possible for him to make is that he was chosen in Christ before the world began. Such an idea as this never entered our minds in our unregenerate state. It is only the mind which is enlightened by the Spirit of God that can in any measure appreciate this tremendous fact. Think of it, and let the grandeur of the thought captivate you, that before time had its birth, in the distant eternal ages, *you* were an interested party in the purposes of God, and an object of His grace. (See 2 Tim. 1, 9).

The Believer's Standing in Christ.

The question naturally arises—In what sense am I to understand this wonderful truth?

Perhaps a simple illustration will help. A very clever artist decides to paint a picture which he desires to be his masterpiece. Before doing so, however, he turns the matter over carefully in his mind. He occupies a long time mentally arranging the most minute details connected with the background, the foreground, the figures, the colours, etc. In fact the entire picture is a finished article in his mind before the brush touches the canvas, and when the painting is eventually completed, it is really a duplicate of that which had been so carefully thought out beforehand.

In like manner, though on an infinitely vaster scale, the divine plan of redemption was a completed fact in the mind of God before the world began, and Christ was the channel through Whom it was to be accomplished.

Now, in the Bible we find that believers are designated a temple, in which God has His dwelling place (See Eph. 2, 21-22), and *every* believer is a living stone in that spiritual edifice. We cannot tell how many stones have already been dovetailed into this magnificent structure, but, however great the number is, they all contribute to the building in its completeness. The most important stone, of course, is the chief corner stone, and that Stone is Christ Himself. Hence the significance of the profound statement, "the Stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the Head of the corner." Very soon this wonderful building will be manifested in all its perfection, *without a single stone missing*, but in the mind of God all this was complete

The Believer's Standing in Christ.

in eternity past before a stone was laid, or a soul was saved.

Believers are also referred to as a *body*. (See Eph. 4, and 1 Cor. 12.) As the physical body has many members, and yet is one body, so the body of Christ is composed of *all* who believe in Him. God alone knows the **exact** number, but however many there are, they all go to make up the body in its fulness. Obviously, the most essential part of the body is the head which controls the rest, and just as Christ is the chief corner stone of the temple, so He is the Head of the body, the guiding and controlling power. Apart from Him we *are* nothing, and *have* nothing. He is the Head, we are the members, and sooner or later this wonderful body, God's masterpiece, will be seen in glory in all its divine perfection without the most insignificant member being absent. Yet, in the purpose of God this body was complete before the world was. "Chosen in Him." How wonderful! (See Rom. 8, 29-30).

2. PRESENT. (Colossians 2, 10).

This passage unfolds the present aspect of our standing in Christ. Observe carefully the words, "*Ye are*"; not "*ye were*," though that is true, as we have just seen; not "*ye will be*," though that is also true, as we shall see presently; but "*ye are*," here and now, as complete as you will be in Heaven. Then kindly notice the words "*in Him*." *We are not complete in ourselves*. Scripture teaches the very reverse. Paul was one of the most beautiful characters that ever lived, and yet in Romans, chapter 7, verse 18, this devoted servant of Christ says, "For I know that **in me** (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing." And remember, that Paul wrote these words with reference to a *believer*.

The Believer's Standing in Christ.

They formed a true picture *of himself* in the experience through which he passed before he had emerged into liberty. Let us lay hold upon this two-fold fact— we are *not complete in ourselves*, but we are complete in Christ.

There is a beautiful connection between verse 9 and verse 10 of our chapter. The former verse tells us that “in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” That is to say, all the attributes, glories, and perfections of the Triune God are centred in Christ. He is the complete manifestation of all that God is; and verse 10 informs us that we, poor, helpless, failing creatures though we be, are complete in Him. If this fail to stir us to a deep sense of gratitude, our hearts must be miniature icebergs.

Now how did all this come about? The answer is seen in Hebrews, chapter 10, verse 14, which conveys the truth that God sees us perfect in His holy sight *because of the perfection of the sacrifice of Christ*. In verse 1, we are distinctly told that those sacrifices which were offered yearly under the law could never make the sinner perfect, no, not for five minutes, but through the *one* offering of Jesus, *every saint* is perfected *for ever*. What a stupendous sacrifice that must have been!

There is yet another passage on this “present aspect” which is superlatively important. In 2 Corinthians, chapter 5, verse 17, the Apostle says, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (*or creation*): old things are passed away: behold all things are become new.” Paul does not say that the Church as a whole is a new creation, as one might have expected, but the words are, “If *any man* be in

The Believer's Standing in Christ.

Christ," that is, each individual believer is a new creation, implying a new state of things entirely: not the old life improved, not an endless series of patchwork, but a new standing, a new condition, *a new beginning*, and, so far as God views us, old things have passed away, all things have become new.

Let me illustrate this. A wealthy man, to whom money is no object, decides to build a house. He puts into it the best material and the finest workmanship, and when the work is finished it is the admiration of the whole neighbourhood. Years pass by and tell their tale upon that building, until one day it is discovered that the foundations are giving way; cracks are seen in the walls; and, what is more serious still, the drains are out of order, so that the place is rendered positively unhealthy. Consequently the building is condemned and the owner has it pulled down and *every particle of it removed out of sight*. He then erects another house on the same site, far more beautiful than the first in design and material. The walls are made of jasper; the foundations are tessellated with all manner of precious stones; the floors are of pure gold; the doors are made of pearl; and the entire building is finally covered with gold. Now, something like this has taken place with us in the sovereign grace of God, Who has removed from His sight every vestige of the former state of things, and has created us anew in Christ Jesus for His own glory. The prodigal son was stripped of his rags, cleansed from his filth, and clothed with the most beautiful robe in the house. So we are complete in Him, Who of God has been made unto us

The Believer's Standing in Christ.

wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

3. FUTURE (Eph. 2, 7).

This passage unfolds the future aspect of this grand scheme of grace. Mark the statement, "that in the *ages* to come"; not *days*, nor *years*, nor *centuries*, but *ages*! This carries our mind forward to the eternal future when God purposes to show—what? Well, He will certainly manifest His wisdom, His greatness, and His power, but here we are told that He will show "*the exceeding riches of His grace.*"

What a tremendous display is to be seen by-and-by! If we glance at the preceding verses we shall see that He has quickened us together with Christ; raised us up together; and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Him. Why? Not merely for our blessing and enjoyment, but primarily for His own satisfaction, that in the coming ages He might show to a wondering universe what He could do. Then notice the word "exceeding." Three times it occurs in this epistle. In chapter 1, verse 19, we see the "*exceeding* greatness of His power"; in chapter 3, verse 20, we perceive His ability to do "*exceeding* abundantly above all we ask or think," and in the verse under consideration we are reminded of the "*exceeding* riches of His grace." It is all of grace from first to last. We were saved by grace; we are kept by grace; if we are enabled to serve Him in any way, it is only by His grace; and very soon grace will crown the work it has begun.

In order that we may the more clearly understand something of the eternal glories of the future, a careful investigation of the following verses will assist us:—

The Believer's Standing in Christ.

John 17, 24. Here our Lord expresses His fervent desire that "His own" might be with Him where He is; *that they might behold His glory*. What a remarkable sight will burst upon our vision when we cast our eyes upon that glory which He had with the Father before the world was!

Colossians 3, 4. In this passage the inspired apostle informs us that when Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory. This will be a glory far surpassing that of the mount of transfiguration, and, wonder of wonders, we are to appear with Him in it.

Romans 8, 18. Here Paul refers to *the glory which shall be revealed in us*, in contrast to the short-lived sufferings of this present time.

Now bring these three passages in proximity to each other, and this three-fold prospect will be disclosed:—

1. *We are to behold His glory.*
2. *We are to appear with Him in glory.*
3. *His glory is to be revealed in us.*

What a future! Although it does not yet appear what we shall be when, "in the ages to come He will show the exceeding riches of His grace," yet enough has been revealed to make our hearts overflow with divine joy, and our voices ring with His eternal praise.

Impeded Progress.

“Ye did run well: who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?” (Galatians 5, 7).

THESE words were sadly true of the Galatian believers. They *may* be true of my reader also.

Perhaps it will be helpful to consider this verse under three headings. And as we dwell upon them may God speak to our hearts, and help us to make any adjustment that may be necessary in our conduct as believers.

1. THE CALAMITY.

The words “*Ye did run well*” imply that these believers had not always been in the condition in which the Apostle found them when he wrote this letter. They had begun the Christian life well; they could not have begun better. During this short period of good running they were rejoicing in two great fundamental truths, the work of Christ on the Cross as their only ground of acceptance before God, and the reception of the Holy Spirit by the hearing of faith (chapter 3, verse 1-3). This is how they began to live the life that is life indeed, and consequently they were rejoicing in those heavenly and eternal blessings which were their spiritual birthright. They were standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had liberated

Impeded Progress.

them; they were walking in the Spirit, living in the Spirit, willing to be led by Him, and manifesting His beautiful graces. The flesh was in its right place, the place of subservience, and the spiritual life was dominant.

But a sad calamity had overtaken these believers, and the Apostle refers to this in words which are unmistakable. *"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you (or 'fascinated you with false representations') before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth ('graphically presented') crucified among you?" "Where is then the blessedness ye spake of?" "Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?"*

All these interrogations show that something very serious had taken place. What had really happened? Unhappily they had failed to continue as they had begun. Instead of continuing to recognise that Christ's sacrificial work was sufficient, they had gone back to the law with its awful bondage. Like Lazarus when he came out of the tomb, they were bound hand and foot with grave clothes. Instead of continuing to rejoice in the fact that they had received the Holy Spirit on the principle of faith, and seeking to live accordingly, they were endeavouring to perfect themselves by the flesh. This is what Paul means when he says in chapter 5, verse 4, "Ye are fallen from grace." He does not imply that they were lost, because that was impossible if they belonged to Christ. They had backslidden from grace to law, from faith to works. No longer were they living a Spirit-controlled life; no longer was the flesh in its right place; no longer was the spiritual life dominant. On the contrary, they were devouring one another—each one was apparently doing his utmost to consume the spiritual vitality

Impeded Progress.

of his fellow-believer. It is difficult to conceive a more pitiable condition than that into which these Galatian believers had degenerated.

2. THE CAUSE.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that sowed good seed in his field, but while men slept the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way."

This is exactly what happened. Some men had surreptitiously crept in and sowed tares among the wheat, and with the baneful influence of their false teaching had succeeded in luring these Galatian believers from the simplicity that is in Christ. They had troubled the calm waters, not as in the case of Bethesda's pool for the purpose of healing and blessing, but for the propagation of evil doctrine. Observe the word Paul uses: "*Who* did hinder you?" The Apostle gives these men their correct designation when he refers to them as "troublers." (See ch. 1, 7: 5, 10-12). May God in His mercy save us from becoming a prey to the false teachings which abound on every hand, and grant us grace to hold fast His faithful Word with all the tenacity of which we are capable.

But there are other ways in which our running may be impeded, and I want to alter the personal interrogative pronoun "Who?" to the impersonal "What?"

There is the love of money, as in the case of Jehoshaphat. He began well by walking in the first ways of David his father, and by seeking the Lord God, and walking in His commandments. Therefore the Lord blessed Jehoshaphat, and he had riches and honour in abundance. But he foolishly trusted in his riches and joined affinity with Ahab,

Impeded Progress.

the enemy of the Lord, at the awful expense of his spiritual advancement.

The love of the world may hinder our running, as in the case of Demas. He ran well for a time, but gradually became altogether occupied with the things of time and sense, so that when Paul wrote his last letter to Timothy he had to say, "*Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present age.*"

Love of the old life may hinder our progress as in the case of Simon, the sorcerer, who appears to have begun well. He believed the things which Phillip spake, was baptised, and continued with God's servant some time. But one day he saw that the Holy Spirit was granted by the laying on of the Apostles' hands, when the old desire overcame him, so that Peter had to say, "*Thy money perish with thee.*"

Self-interest may hinder our running, as in the case of the Corinthians. They ran well for a time; they were enriched with every spiritual enrichment; they came behind in no gift, waiting for Christ from Heaven, but self-interest intruded, and one thing followed another until they were actually divided among themselves, and lost whatever spiritual power for testimony they had.

I wonder if this appeals to my reader? You may remember when you loved the Lord intensely; when you rejoiced in His Word; when you were keenly interested in His service. But maybe that love has declined; that joy has abated; that keenness has lost its edge.

"What did hinder you?"

3. THE CURE.

We have seen the Calamity and the Cause. What is the

Impeded Progress.

Cure? Surely it is nothing more nor less than *confession* and *retraction*. Confess the whole thing to God unreservedly, and then retrace your steps. Return to the point where you went astray. Recognise afresh that the sacrifice of Christ is all-sufficient, and is your only ground of acceptance before God. Remember that the Holy Spirit is indwelling you, and is willing and waiting to lead you into all truth as a student, to bless you as a saint, to guide you as a pilgrim, and to use you as a servant. Get into touch with your living Saviour. Renounce your confidence in the flesh with its insidious desires inwardly, and its abominable manifestations outwardly. Let the love of Christ fill your heart and permeate every avenue of your being.

Let us now examine two passages relative to this important theme. The first is John 20, 4, "*So they ran both together; and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.*" The second is Matt. 28, 8, "*And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring His disciples word.*"

In the first passage we see two brethren running, *but in the wrong direction*. They were running *to the sepulchre*. What did they find on their arrival? *Grave clothes*. They did not find the Lord there, because He was risen. They found nothing but grave clothes.

In the second passage we see two sisters running, *but in the right direction*, running well, notwithstanding their natural disadvantages, running *from* the sepulchre to convey the glorious news that the Lord was risen from the dead. Beloved fellow-believer, don't run toward the sepulchre, because if you do, you will find a sign-post pointing to "grave clothes, law, bondage." Run in the opposite

Impeded Progress.

direction, and you will discover a more beautiful sign-post bearing the words, "To Christ risen, and you risen with Him, blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Him." And as we are thus occupied with our unseen Lord, we shall rejoice in the liberty wherewith He has freed us. We shall know the supreme joy of walking, living, being led by, and manifesting the fruit of the Spirit, to the eternal glory of God.

The Eternal Security of the Believer.

OF the many perplexing questions which arise from time to time in the mind of a young believer, it would be difficult to discover one more vital than the question of his eternal security, the obvious reason being that it is a question which concerns not only the present period of time, but also the *endless future*.

We will at once honestly confess that there are certain passages in the Bible which appear at *first sight* to convey the impression that it is dreadfully possible for a child of God to be ultimately lost. On the other hand there are passages which teach most clearly and emphatically that such a disaster is impossible, and the question naturally arises—What should be our attitude in the face of these apparent contradictions?

If we have arrived at the happy conclusion that no one passage in Scripture can really contradict another, then our course is quite clear, viz : to accept and enjoy to the full those statements which are so clear as to admit of no doubt, and to hold the interpretation of the others, as it were, in abeyance until we receive further light upon them.

If we endeavour to lay aside all preconceived ideas on this subject, and if we are willing to approach the Word

The Eternal Security of the Believer.

of God, as far as possible, with an open mind, the result may be that darkness will give place to light, and hesitancy to full assurance.

Let us be very clear as to what is meant by the word "Believer." A believer is one who has abandoned his own thoughts on the matter of God's salvation; who has renounced all confidence in his own righteousness, and so-called good works; *and who has calmly and deliberately ventured his entire trust on the vicarious death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

For the sake of simplicity and convenience we will consider this all-important subject in various aspects, and we will contemplate it first of all in the light of

THE MIGHTY LOVE OF GOD.

How little we understand the *vastness* of God's love, which after all is scarcely to be wondered at since the great Apostle refers to it as that "which surpasseth knowledge." Like every other attribute of the Godhead, what we *don't* know about it is far more than what we *do* know.

"I have loved you" was an emphatic utterance on the part of Jehovah to His backsliding people, recorded in the opening verses of the last book of the Old Testament. (Mal. 1, 2). Yes, He had loved them from their infancy as a nation—from the time when they were in Egyptian bondage, tyrannised by Pharaoh and the taskmasters (Hosea 11, 1). He loved them so intensely that, in a perfect combination of divine wisdom and power, He delivered them from their oppression, and "bare them on eagles' wings" unto Himself. But this was by no means the starting point of His love. In fact, in order to trace

The Eternal Security of the Believer.

its beginning, we must go back to a period anterior to the call of Abraham, the father of God's earthly people: farther back even than the creation of the universe—*we must penetrate the endless ages of a past eternity*. In other words, God's love, like Himself, *knew no beginning* (Jer. 31, 3). All this was true concerning Israel, though it is remarkable how little that love was appreciated. But we as believers enjoy an infinitely closer relationship than ever Israel enjoyed, and although the *character* of God's love is unalterable, yet the *measure and appreciation* of His love depends upon the closeness of relationship. This leads us to a "thing most wonderful—almost too wonderful to be." The fourth evangelist records the statement, "The Father loveth the Son" (John 3, 35), and no sooner do we endeavour to grasp the true meaning of these five words than we find ourselves entirely out of our depth. How great, how vast, how intense was that love which the Father had (and still has) toward the Son? With comparative ease we ask the question, but who is competent to suggest the answer? The fact is that there is not a believer on earth nor an angel in Heaven, who can fathom that love which is so perfectly reciprocal between God and Christ. But however great, however vast, however intense is that love,

IN THE SAME MEASURE

we are loved by the Father and the Son. (We have only to read carefully the first part of John 15, 9, and the latter part of John 17, 23, to see how beautifully true this is). The greatest possible exhibition of human love must necessarily fade into insignificance when compared with that which is divine. We cannot, therefore, be surprised when

The Eternal Security of the Believer.

we read concerning the Lord Jesus "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the *end*" (John 13, 1). How frequently those disciples failed; how often they saddened the heart of their Master; how many times they were characterised by self-interest, and self-assertiveness; and yet all these sad inconsistencies failed to alter His love to them, much less to detach them from it altogether. Yes, He loved them *unto the end*—right up to the Cross, and beyond it.

Does He love us one whit less than He loved those disciples? Nay, that love wherewith He loved us from the beginning was stronger than death; it was so invincible that many waters failed to quench it, and having thus loved us, He will surely love us TO THE END, past middle age, beyond old age, and right on to eternity itself. Just as the absence of love on our part failed to prevent Him from loving us *before* we became His, so *now nothing can lessen* that love which has been so wondrously shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

In the Epistles we sometimes read of "the love of God," and at other times "the love of Christ," but let us ever remember *that it is exactly the same love*, though mentioned *in* these two distinct ways because of the particular setting in which they severally occur. Thus in Rom. 8, 35 we read of "the love of Christ," and in verse 39, "the love of God." Now who can separate us from the love of Christ? This question originated with the Apostle Paul, and since the day he threw out the challenge that interrogative pronoun "Who?" has echoed and re-echoed through the ages. Paul himself suggests seven items, all or any of which might appear at a first glance as likely to detach us from that love, but he dismisses the very thought of separation

The Eternal Security of the Believer.

when he says in a note of supreme triumph: "Nay, in *all* these things we are *more than conquerors* through Him that loved us," whilst in the closing verses of the chapter he searches the recesses of his fertile mind and brings to the surface all the tremendous possibilities of separation he can think of, and then he effectively precludes all else in the words "Nor any other **CREATED THING.**"

The love of God in Christ is beyond the grasp of angels; beyond the knowledge of man; and beyond the reach of the arch-enemy of our souls. If we only appreciated as we ought how much *God* loves us, and the extent to which *Christ* loves us, there would quickly be a termination to all misgiving as to our eternal future.

We will now view this subject in the light of

THE MIGHTY POWER OF GOD.

The closing words of our last paragraph suggest one reason why so many Christians are in a state of uncertainty concerning the future. Another reason for this uncertainty is seen in our Lord's words in Matt. chapter 22, verse 29: "*Ye do err not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.*"

If the *love* of God is beyond the range of our finite capacity, surely the *power* of God is not less unsearchable.

The very reading of a chapter such as Isaiah 40, is an exercise which is profitable from every point of view—educationally as well as spiritually. In that chapter we have one of the grandest descriptions of the majesty and power of God that is to be found in the realm of literature. Let us remind ourselves of some of the evidences of **His** greatness. Verse 12 implies that He has measured the vast

The Eternal Security of the Believer.

oceans of the universe in the hollow of His hand; He has measured Heaven with the span of His fingers; He has drawn a measuring-line across the dust of the earth; He has even weighed the mountains and the hills in His balance. Yes, He knows the exact weight of Mount Everest, as well as that of Mount Snowdon. As we continue our interesting journey through the chapter, we see that the mighty nations of the earth are before Him as a drop of a bucket; He takes up the great islands of the seas—the British Isles, New Zealand, Australia, etc.—and regards them all “a very little thing.” He sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and from thence looks down upon the inhabitants thereof and beholds them as insignificant *grass-hoppers*. He regards the heavens as His curtain, which He spreads out as a tent to dwell in. How wonderful is all this! Truly “His greatness is unsearchable,” and is it not comforting to remember the words of the Apostle Peter when he tells us that we are *kept* by this mighty power of God?

Now shall we endeavour to grasp what this power has accomplished for us. He Who said: “Let there be light” has “made *us* meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light”: He Who established the world by His wisdom “keeps the feet of His saints”: He Who created the firmament and called it *Heaven* has made Heaven secure for all His children: He Who preserves the multitudinous and multifarious items of creation, preserves His *own* in Christ Jesus. (See Jude 1): He Who exercised the surpassing greatness of His power in the glorious resurrection of Christ from the dead will once more put forth that same power when the dead in Christ shall rise, and the

The Eternal Security of the Believer.

living shall be changed, *all* to be caught away to meet the Lord in the air, and then to be escorted by Him in holy triumph to the Father's house. Surely we ought to be *confident of this very thing* that He Who has begun a good work in us, will see to it that that work will be completed in the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1, 6).

THE TASK OF COMPLETION IS HIS, NOT OURS.

He began the work—He will crown it eventually.

In view of all these foregoing statements shall we calmly and joyfully refer to our Lord's ever memorable words in John, chapter 10, verses 27 to 30? "*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck (or "snatch") them out of My hand. My Father which gave them Me is greater than all, and no one is able to pluck (or "snatch") them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one.*"

I hesitate to add a word of comment upon these words lest their sublime grandeur should be spoiled. Shall we not take the promise "*And they shall never perish*" to ourselves and thank God for it? None but the Lord Jesus could ever have uttered such words, and surely, *surely* He did not mean to mislead us. Those blessed hands which were nailed to the tree because of our sins, now hold us fast—so fast that no one can snatch us from them. Moreover, to make the matter *doubly sure*, He refers to His Father as being "greater than all." Now we cannot get beyond that—no one can—and when we have the clear statement direct from our Lord's lips that "No one can pluck them out of My Father's hand," we must be alto-

The Eternal Security of the Believer.

gether out of harmony with God's mind if there is a shadow of suspicion lurking in our minds as to our eternal future. We are in the safe keeping of Christ's hands: We are in the equally safe custody of the Father's hands—and they two are ONE

It becomes us now to consider this subject in the light of

THE MIGHTY PROMISE OF GOD.

There are *thousands* of "exceeding great and precious promises" in the Scriptures, and *each promise is sealed with the blood of the eternal covenant, and effectually secured by the indissoluble bands of God's unfailing faithfulness.* Perhaps one of the most familiar, as well as one of the most beautiful, of these promises is recorded in Hebrews, chapter 13, verse 5, "For He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." One of the charming characteristics of this promise lies in the fact that it is *absolutely unconditional.* The phrase "For He hath said" should at once not only arrest our attention, but be sufficient to dismiss all doubts and fears; and yet how slow we are to follow Paul's example when, in the midst of tempest, darkness, and distress, he could say: "I BELIEVE GOD" (Acts 27, 25).

The promise we are considering was originally given to Joshua when, after the death of Moses, that great warrior took over the responsibility of leading the children of Israel into the Promised Land; yea, and even before then. (See Deut. 31, 6; 8: Joshua 1, 5). The words "As I was with Moses, so shall I be with thee," which are so beautifully linked on to the promise, have a special significance seeing that Joshua was Moses' minister and was therefore the most qualified to know how unfailingly God had been

The Eternal Security of the Believer.

with His servant the great law-giver. If the question is raised as to whether or not God kept His word, we have only to glance at the closing verses of Joshua, chapter 23, in order to see the glorious testimony of God's servant on the very day of his death—"Not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; *all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.*"

This promise is the priceless possession of all God's people. We may forget Him, but He can never forget us. Yea, we may even forsake Him, but He will never forsake us. His very character is involved in this matter. "For the Lord will not forsake His people **FOR HIS GREAT NAME'S SAKE**" (1 Samuel 12, 22). He *will not* because *He cannot*. How grand!

We do well to remind ourselves that the words in Hebrews, chapter 13, verse 5, have, in the Greek, no less than five negatives—"I will *not, not* leave thee; I will *not, not, not* forsake thee," so that we can easily remember them as

A PROMISE TIED WITH FIVE KNOTS.

Now, every blessing has its foundation at Calvary, and the reason why God has undertaken never to leave us, nor to forsake us, is because of the piercing cry of the Lord Jesus on the Cross, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The hiding of God's face from Christ made it gloriously possible for God to smile upon us—because He forsook Christ He can *never* forsake us. For this selfsame reason the Lord Jesus could say to His loved ones before departing from them, "Lo, I am with you *all the days*, even unto the end of the age."

The Eternal Security of the Believer.

God has graciously given us every possible encouragement to rest on His unchanging word. When He promised Abraham compound blessing, multiplied by compound multiplication, He actually confirmed that promise by an oath. Why? "That by two immutable things (first the promise, and then the oath by which that promise was confirmed), in which it was impossible for God to lie, WE might have a strong consolation." Yes, by sovereign grace we have laid hold upon that hope which is *sure and stedfast*, the hope of the near return of our absent Lord, who has already entered Heaven as our *Forerunner*, and the very fact that He is there is a pledge that *all* the redeemed will shortly be safely housed in glory when that "perfect day" dawns without a cloud upon the horizon.

If we have been sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption (Ephesians 4, 30); if we have been so wonderfully united to Christ that when He shall appear, we shall also appear with Him in glory (Colossians 3, 4); if we are the Father's love-gift to the Son, whose will it is that all those given to Him shall be with Him, where He is (John 17, 24); if Christ Himself is *in* us, the hope of glory (Colossians 1, 27); if in a coming day He purposes to present His Church unto Himself, a glorious church, absolutely complete (Ephesians 5, 27); if all this is really true (and, thank God, IT IS TRUE), *then our eternal future is as sure as God can make it.*

We must not, however, leave this subject without reviewing it in the light of

THE MIGHTY SACRIFICE OF CALVARY.

We are often apt to forget that when Christ died He

The Eternal Security of the Believer.

dealt with *all* our sins long before we had actually committed one of them. If we only remembered this important truth, a great many difficulties in our Christian life would be solved. He suffered for our sins, *past, present, and future*—the sins of our unregenerate past, as well as those we commit as believers. By that one offering all His own are perfected eternally. By that same sacrifice our sins and iniquities are obliterated from God's memory for ever. (See Hebrews 10, 14 and 17). The work on the Cross was perfect, *and every believer is, in the sight of God, as perfect as was that work.*

As Gentiles we were alienated from all the blessings and advantages enjoyed by Israel. In other words, there existed a "middle wall of partition" between us and them. Worse than this, we were without Christ, without hope, and without God in the world, so that an impassable gulf separated us from Him. But, through the death of Christ that middle wall has been broken down, *never to be re-erected*, and that awful gulf has been bridged so perfectly that *we can never again be shut out from the presence of God.* (See Eph. 2, 12-16).

Further, the life we have through the death of the Lord Jesus is "hid with Christ in God." Yes, fellow-believer, **HID**—God has hidden it, and His hiding place is Christ. This is indeed wonderful. We read that in Christ are *hid* all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and they are hid so effectively as to be altogether inaccessible to the arch-enemy himself.

In like manner *our life is beyond his reach as well.* If there *could* be anything more decisive than this on the vital question of our eternal security, it is contained in these words: "Christ is our life," which can only mean that we

The Eternal Security of the Believer.

are inseparably linked with Him; nay, more; they imply that *we are part of Him*. All this is set forth in two of the most remarkable verses in the Pauline Epistles—(Col. 3, 3-4).

“CHRIST IS OUR LIFE,”

therefore, if a believer is ultimately lost, *Christ must be lost, too*. This is the only conclusion to which we can come if we are willing to accept the clear teaching of the Scriptures.

Finally, we might well ponder the words spoken by Judah to his father Jacob on behalf of Benjamin. They are found in Genesis, chapter 43, verse 9, and they are so beautiful and instructive that we will quote them in full:—
“*I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever.*”
Surely this was the attitude the Lord Jesus adopted on our behalf. He became our surety—He therefore is responsible for our safety. With all reverence, and realising the gravity of the statement, we say without hesitation that if anyone who has definitely placed his entire confidence in the Saviour is not in Heaven ultimately **CHRIST WILL BEAR THE BLAME FOR EVER**.

“God hath given to us eternal life,” *and the continuity of this life cannot be broken.*

Sinless Perfection :

A Scriptural Investigation.

AS the Christian advances in spiritual things, he increasingly recognises his own weaknesses and failings. We all have our peculiar temptations, trials, and difficulties to overcome, and there are times when, to many believers, the tide seems so strongly adverse, and the battle so fierce, that victory appears to be a long way off. The adversary knows our most vulnerable points, and he therefore pays by far the greater amount of his attention to these weak defences.

Although "the sin which doth so easily beset us" mentioned in Hebrews, chapter 12, verse 1, possibly refers to the sin of unbelief (in direct contrast to the victories of *faith* recorded in the previous chapter), yet with each one of us there is an outstanding weakness which overcomes us more easily than any other, *and that weakness may only be known between God and ourselves* — one of those SECRET FAULTS to which David alludes in Psalm 19, verse 12.

The word VICTORY is one of the grandest words in the English language, and when the Apostle mentions the phrase

" MORE THAN CONQUERORS "

in Romans, chapter 8, verse 37, he suggests the possibility of complete victory for every believer.

Sinless Perfection.

But this is only possible in so far as we realise two things, namely :—OUR OWN WEAKNESS on the one hand, and the ALMIGHTY POWER OF GOD on the other. The reason why Goliath was defeated was because his entire confidence was in himself ; and the reason why David was victorious was because his entire confidence was *in the Lord*. The timely warning of the Apostle in 1 Corinthians, chapter 10, verse 12, “Wherefore let him that *thinketh* he standeth, take heed lest he fall,” ought to be ever remembered by each one of us. Peter *thought* he was able to stand when he boasted that whoever might prove unfaithful, *he* would remain true to his Lord, even though that devotion should mean prison, yea, death itself. Poor Peter ! It was not long before he proved by bitter experience that, however willing was the spirit, the flesh was *weak*—far weaker than he had ever imagined.

Now, with every believer there is an incessant

INTERNAL WARFARE

waging between the flesh and the spirit, each one endeavouring to obtain the upper hand. Therefore, no child of God can say that he or she has attained to such a spiritual altitude as to be beyond the power of the flesh. It is quite true that the Lord Jesus said on more than one occasion :

“GO AND SIN NO MORE,”

and this was absolutely necessary, seeing the only standard He recognised was that of perfection. We could not imagine Him saying : “Go and sin *a few times more*” : nor was it possible for Him to say : “Go and sin *once more*.” In the very nature of things the only injunction He

Sinless Perfection.

could give was : "Go and sin *no more*." Moreover, this is the only standard revealed in the Word of God for us in these days, as the Apostle John states so clearly : "My little children, these things write I unto you, *that ye sin not*" (1 John 2, 1). That this should be the aim of every true Christian no one would be foolish enough to deny.

At the same time, let us remember that the above exhortations do *not* imply the possibility of "Sinless Perfection." The flesh, which is always with us, refuses to be improved, and the sooner we face this fact the better.

When we read, carefully and prayerfully, words like these—"If we say that we have no sin *we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*" (1 John 1, 8), what is the use of boasting of a sinless life? The root-principle of sin is in each individual believer, and this will never be eradicated until we are perfected in Heaven. It is bad enough when we deceive other people, but

SELF-DECEPTION

is even more pitiable, and the Christian who has the effrontery to say that he has no sin is, according to the above passage, a self-deceiver, and, what is more serious still, destitute of the truth.

Again, in the same chapter and the last verse, the inspired writer says : "If we say that we have not sinned, *we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us*."

Whenever you hear a Christian say that he is sinlessly perfect, or whenever you hear of one adopting that attitude, you may safely conclude that he is *anything but perfect*, for the simple reason that if he were he would be the very last person to spread the matter abroad.

Sinless Perfection.

But the most serious aspect of all is this—when we boast that we have not sinned for a specified period

WE CONSTITUTE GOD A LIAR.

We may argue for days, endeavouring to vindicate our position, but all the time we are faced with these solemn words : “ *We make Him a liar.*” Surely the possibility of such an attitude, involving such an assertion, is sufficient to make an angel tremble.

Let us assume for one brief moment that it were possible for this root-principle of sin to be removed. What an extraordinary situation would be thus brought about. The root being completely extirpated, *it would be impossible for us henceforth to think a wrong thought; to say an unkind word; or to commit a single act of indiscretion.* Surely not one of us would be so foolish as to support so outrageous a proposition. As reasonable beings, we are bound to admit that we are all subject to failure, and by admitting this we at once fall into line with the Word of God.

Moreover, we all agree that the Apostle Paul was an outstanding character, not only in effective service, but also in holiness of life. If one might use such an expression without being misunderstood, he came as near to “Sinless Perfection” as any believer in the history of the Church. And yet this devoted servant of Christ says in Philippians, chapter 3, verse 12, “Not as though I had already attained *either were already perfect.*”

I pity the Christian who is bold enough to compare his life with that of the saintly Apostle, and to say that he has succeeded where Paul failed. Such an affirmation would only manifest a lamentable exhibition of unjustifiable arrogance.

Sinless Perfection.

Perhaps the reader will retort—Does not the Bible say
“*SIN SHALL NOT HAVE DOMINION OVER YOU*”?

Yes, and the words are found in Romans, chapter 6, verse 14, but why isolate this passage from its context? Look at these words in the light of the entire chapter and you will be enabled to see more clearly what the writer means.

Instead of suggesting the possibility of “Sinless Perfection,” the Apostle teaches *the exact opposite*. When he says in verse 13: “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin,” he clearly refers to that liability to evil which is latent in every believer, but which, thank God, can be thwarted by adopting the reverse attitude, namely, by yielding ourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, *and it is only as we thus yield ourselves to God that sin shall be conquered*. The verb “to yield” occurs five times in this chapter and forms one of the keys which unlock the truths contained therein. Verse 14 ought, therefore, to be regarded as a *conditional* promise, because if it were *unconditional* no Christian would ever be overtaken in any sinful thought, word, or deed. Thus we see that Paul, by his wonderful argument, guards us on the one hand against the danger of assuming a false condition of sinlessness, and on the other hand against entertaining the false impression that it is impossible for us to overcome.

There is another passage which appears, at first sight, to suggest that a state of sinless perfection is possible, viz.:—1 John 3, 9—“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” Many sincere believers have been greatly puzzled over this verse, but surely the

Sinless Perfection.

explanation is perfectly simple. That which is born of God is obviously the *new nature*.

When we received the Lord Jesus as Saviour, we commenced a new life, *i.e.*, we were BORN OF GOD, and we simultaneously took our place, by divine authority, as members of His family. We should ever bear in mind that this

NEW NATURE NEVER SINS.

In 1 John, chapter 3, the Christian is viewed in connection with his new nature, and, regarded in this way, as the Apostle says so definitely, "He cannot sin." It is exceedingly important that we be clear upon this matter. It is no less important that we be clear as to its spiritual counterpart, namely:—*The old nature is still with us.*

When we read that "our old man" was crucified with Christ, it means that our status as children of Adam came to an end, judicially, at the Cross. So far as the believer's daily conduct is concerned, he is distinctly exhorted to *put off* the "old man" with his deeds.

As we carefully study the epistles, we constantly discover expressions such as *the flesh*—*the carnal mind*—*the old leaven*—*the earthly members*, etc.—expressions which apply to the people of God. And these ugly things will obtain the mastery if we are not very careful; consequently individual Christians are told to "*crucify*" the flesh; to "put to death" the earthly members, whilst collectively they are exhorted to "purge out" the old leaven. The new nature is *sinless*—

THE OLD NATURE IS SINFUL.

If we glance back at 1 John, chapter 3, verse 6, we see exactly the same principle in operation. "Whosoever abideth

Sinless Perfection.

in Him sinneth not." That is to say, so long as we are abiding in Christ (enjoying constant fellowship with Him), we cannot sin, but remember that *the "old man" can never abide in Christ.* It is only the "new man," that which is born of God, which thus abides in Him.

The words in Hebrews, chapter 7, verse 25, "Wherefore He is able also to save them completely that come unto God by Him," were written for the benefit of every child of God. The first portion of the statement refers to the Lord Jesus—the second portion refers to us. Only they who come unto God by Him know the uttermost of His saving grace. It, therefore, follows of necessity, that if we are to experience the "completeness" of salvation DAILY, there must be a continual coming to God on our part. (See Heb. 4, 16.)

In one sense we are always in His presence, seeing He has promised never to leave nor to forsake us; and yet there is another sense in which we should be ever coming to Him for assistance, because of our proneness to wander and waver.

It is striking to notice how frequently the disciples failed, notwithstanding their great privileges. They were constantly in company with their Lord; they had Him as their perfect pattern; they saw how He lived; they heard from His own lips the exhortations "Learn of Me," "Follow Me," "Abide in Me"; and yet how frequently the Master had to rebuke them because of their numerous indiscretions. Are we better than they? By no means.

The fact is that there is a great tendency nowadays on the part of many zealous believers to press certain divine truths to the detriment of others. This is even possible with so great and important a subject as that of the Holy Spirit. How many there are who fail to grasp the fact that the pre-

Sinless Perfection.

eminent office of the Holy Spirit *is to glorify Christ*. He never speaks of Himself; He never glorifies Himself (much less does He glorify the believer); *but He makes every thing of Christ*.

“HE SHALL GLORIFY ME,”

and He accomplishes this by revelation. He delights to take of the things of Christ and to show them unto us, and as all we want to know about Christ is in His Word, the Holy Spirit uses the Scriptures as His vehicle for this purpose.

So that if our knowledge of the Holy Spirit does not tend to make Christ increasingly real to us, we may be assured that our understanding is more or less warped.

My reader may say:—By interpreting the subject in this way, you discourage me; you disturb my mind; you upset all my calculations; you cast me well nigh into the depths of despair—you *make me feel quite angry*.

If this be so, then it proves conclusively, my friend, that you are not sinlessly perfect, because if you were you could not be discouraged, much less would you be angry.

But God willeth not that we should be discouraged, although He *does* desire us to have a well-balanced apprehension of the truth.

There was only ONE who never succumbed to temptation—the Lord Jesus Christ. He was indeed the embodiment of “Sinless Perfection.” No other human being could say as He could: “Which of you convicteth Me of sin?”

Where is He now? *In Heaven*. In what capacity? *As a merciful and faithful high priest*. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. How grand! Real sympathy is what we all need, and the Lord Jesus is able to sympathise with us in all our sorrows, temptations, and difficulties.

Sinless Perfection.

Why? *Because He has trod the path of trial and sorrow Himself.* He knew what it was to be weary, hungry, and thirsty. He was tempted in all points like unto ourselves—SIN APART — and now He is able to understand us thoroughly. Thank God, we never pass through a cloud alone; we never bear a burden alone; we never experience a trial alone. “HE IS ABLE TO SUCCOUR (RUN TO THE AID OF) THEM THAT ARE TEMPTED.”

If the question is raised “Wherein lay the advantage of His temptation seeing it was impossible for Him to yield?” the answer is “That He might be able to feel *with* us and *for* us in all our manifold trials.” “For such an high priest became us” (Heb. 7, 26). Such an One was absolutely necessary for us, and

“SUCH AN HIGH PRIEST WE HAVE”

(Heb. 8, 1). This is a part of God’s gracious provision for His people.

Immediately connected with this vitally important office of the Lord Jesus is the “throne of grace,” upon which He sits, and to which we can come with boldness at all times, and obtain MERCY for the past and the present, and GRACE for the present and the future (Heb. 4, 16). It *might* have been a throne of judgment, instead of which it is the exact opposite.

Although God never tempts us to do evil, yet He *allows* us to be tempted FOR THE FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF OUR SPIRITUAL CHARACTER. What poor weaklings we should be if we had no trials to confront, no battles to fight, no difficulties to overcome! A country without hills and valleys is dull and unin-

Sinless Perfection.

teresting, and the Christian life without its temptations and obstacles would be robbed of its charm and dignity.

Mr. Moody's definition of character—

WHAT A MAN IS IN THE DARK

—is one which we should do well to take to heart. It is not so much what we appear to others that counts, *but what we are behind the scenes, in our private life*. We need not trouble about our reputation, so long as our *character* is as it should be.

When Nehemiah's enemies endeavoured to entice him into the temple, wickedly suggesting that his life was in danger, his answer manifested the kind of man he was—
“Should such a man as I flee? And who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? *I will not go in.*”

When Micaiah was approached by the messenger who was deputed by King Ahab to bring the prophet of the Lord to prophesy before him and Jehoshaphat, as those two monarchs sat at the entrance of the gate of Samaria, he (the messenger) strongly advised God's servant to declare good unto the king, so as to harmonise with the words of the other prophets who had said: “Go up: for God will deliver (Ramoth Gilead) into the king's hand.” Micaiah's magnificent answer suggested the sort of man he was—“As the Lord liveth, even

WHAT MY GOD SAITH, THAT WILL I SPEAK.”

When Paul was before King Agrippa and gave that grand utterance for Christ recorded in Acts, chapter 26,

Sinless Perfection.

he spoke of the wonderful commission which God had entrusted to him—that he should go to both Jews and Gentiles: (1) to open their eyes, (2) to turn them from darkness to light, (3) and from the power of Satan unto God, (4) that they might receive the forgiveness of sins, (5) and an inheritance among the sanctified. And as God's devoted servant recalls this five-fold appointment, he is able to say, "Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I WAS NOT DISOBEDIENT UNTO THE HEAVENLY VISION."

Men like these, with the hall mark of *character* stamped upon their life and service for God, are worth their weight in diamonds. Not one of them was sinlessly perfect, but all of them were "more than conquerors."

One of the most encouraging verses relative to this subject of temptation is James, chapter 1, verse 12. The first part of the verse, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation," refers to the present. The latter part, "For when he is tried (approved) he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him," refers to the future.

We are not told to run away from temptation, but to resist it, and this resistance involves two things—*faith* and *patience*. Let us ever remember that God never allows us to be tempted beyond our powers of endurance, and, furthermore, when the temptation comes (however severely or unexpectedly) He makes a way to escape, thus making victory gloriously possible. (See 1 Cor. 10, 13.)

When, through the exercise of faith and patience, we succeed in overcoming temptation, dare we take any credit to ourselves? Nay! Let us frankly and gratefully acknowledge that we owe every conquest to the grace of God.

Sinless Perfection.

And yet, notwithstanding our indebtedness to this grace, a munificent reward is promised to the overcomer—

THE CROWN OF LIFE

which will be dispensed at the Judgment Seat of Christ. What particular form that crown will take we may not know, but happy are they who will be its recipients.

It is interesting to notice that this Crown of Life is promised to them that “love Him,” which beautifully implies that the measure of victory will be according to the reality of our love to Him. And when the day of glory—that “crowning day”—arrives, instead of uttering one single word about “Sinless Perfection,” we shall joyfully lay our crowns at His feet and ascribe all blessing, and honour, and glory, and power unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

The “Tongues” Movement and the Movement of the Tongue

PART I.

THE “TONGUES” MOVEMENT.

THE consideration of this subject is of the utmost importance, particularly in these “latter days.”

Many present-day theories, with their insecure foundations, have a substratum of truth, and herein lies their insidiousness. *We should hold no theory which cannot bear the test of the whole of Scripture*, and when we turn the search-light of the Word of God upon the “Tongues movement,” as it is commonly understood to-day, we find that it is in no wise consistent with the plain teaching of Scripture.

It is perfectly clear that the “gift of tongues” was granted by God to many of His servants in the very early days of Christianity, and that it was a *miraculous* gift is equally clear. One reason why these miraculous gifts were granted was for the stabilising and advancement of the truth during the Church’s infancy. People at that time had not

The "Tongues" Movement.

the Word of God in its completeness and, therefore, God gave them "signs and wonders" that they might recognise His power, acknowledge His claims, and turn to Him.

Seeing that we now have the complete revelation of God in the Scriptures, there is not the same need for these gifts of a miraculous nature. To prove this it is only necessary to recognise the fact that there is at least one miracle which is never seen to-day, viz. :—*the raising of the dead*. The Apostles were able to accomplish this miracle, but since their day it has ceased. Let us, therefore, ever remember that in these last days *God speaks through His written Word*.

But the real test of the genuineness of the "gift of tongues" is, after all, exceedingly simple. On the day of Pentecost the disciples were filled with the Holy Ghost, "and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." The significance of this lies in the fact that there were dwelling in Jerusalem at that time representative Jews from every nation under Heaven. Now, carefully observe what follows :—"Every man heard them speak in his own language." This is mentioned no less than three times within the compass of a few verses (Acts 2, 6-11), and the statement implies that God's servants were enabled to discourse in other languages *without previous acquaintance with them*. This is the Scriptural import of the "gift of tongues."

IS THIS SEEN TO-DAY?

Do our friends who boast of having this "gift" speak in a foreign language—so clearly that the people in that particular part of the world can understand them—without previously studying that language? For instance, could any

The "Tongues" Movement.

of them, without a knowledge of the Chinese language, preach or pray in Chinese in such a way that the preaching or praying would be intelligible to a Chinaman?

If this were done, I should be compelled to believe in the "gift of tongues" movement, but unless and until I have incontrovertible evidence of such a miracle taking place, I certainly may be excused from accepting a religious counterfeit.

Perhaps the most exhaustive chapter in the Bible on the subject of "Tongues" is 1 Corinthians, chapter 14, and a critical examination of this chapter ought to show us exactly what our attitude should be in respect of this matter.

In the light of this important chapter, the genuineness or otherwise of the so-called "gift of tongues," in those gatherings where the "gift" is supposed to be exercised, should be patent to any observant mind. The following are *some* of the tests:—If the Church of God be not edified; if there be no interpreter; if the language used be not easily understood; if instead of godly order there be confusion—then the "movement" in question is NOT OF GOD and should be *condemned* rather than commended.

Perhaps we could better visualise the situation if the aforesaid chapter were analysed, thus:—

PROPHECY.

He that prophesieth is preferred to him that speaketh with tongues (vv. 1 and 5).

He speaketh to men to edification, exhortation, and comfort (v. 3).

TONGUES.

He that speaketh with tongues speaketh to God, *but no man understandeth* (v. 2).

The "Tongues" Movement.

He edifieth the Church
(v. 4).

He is greater than he that
speaketh with tongues (v.
5).

He is God's *trumpet*
which gives no uncertain
sound (v. 8).

He is God's voice with a
distinct articulation (v. 10).

It is *two thousand times*
better to speak with the
understanding than in an
unknown tongue (v. 19).

Originally given as a sign
for believers (v. 22).

Tends to orderliness and
conviction of the unlearned
(v. 24).

He should speak that all
may learn and be exhorted
(v. 31).

Let *all things* be done UNTO EDIFYING (v. 26).

Let *all things* be done DECENTLY AND IN ORDER
(v. 40).

He edifieth himself (v. 4).

He needeth to interpret
(vv. 5, 13, and 27).

*He speaketh into the air
(v. 9).

*He is a barbarian unto
his hearers, and *vice-versa*
(v. 11).

His understanding is un-
fruitful (v. 14).

*The uninstructed re-
mains ignorant, and is not
edified (vv. 16 and 17).

Originally given as a sign
for *unbelievers* (v. 22).

*Tends to confusion, and
the speaker makes himself
liable to be designated a
madman (vv. 23 and 33).

If there be no interpreter,
he is to remain quiet (v. 28).

* That is, if what is spoken is not easily understood.

The "Tongues" Movement.

Thus we see how, in every way, prophecy† is preferred to speaking with "tongues." How any clear-minded (not to say spiritually-minded) person can place any reliance upon the present-day tongue movement, after a thoughtful investigation of such a chapter as we have examined, surpasses comprehension. It only remains to be said of such a person—to use the words of the Apostle—"If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant" (v. 38).

"Whether there be tongues, THEY SHALL CEASE"
(1 Cor. 13, 8).

† The verb "to prophesy" can be used in two ways :—(1) To foretell the future; (2) to speak as God's oracle. It is obviously the latter sense in which the term is used in 1 Corinthians, chapter 14.

The “Tongues” Movement and the Movement of the Tongue.

PART II.

THE MOVEMENT OF THE TONGUE.

“THE TONGUE IS A LITTLE MEMBER, AND BOASTETH GREAT THINGS.”—James 3, 5.

I SHOULD like to have had an interview with James on the subject of

“THE USE AND THE ABUSE OF THE TONGUE.”

Such an interview would have been exceptionally interesting and profitable, but it has been truly said that if we cannot hear a person speak, the next best thing is to read his writings, and as we study this third chapter of James' Epistle we see what his thoughts were concerning this somewhat delicate, yet exceedingly important matter.

James is, perhaps, the severest writer in the New Testament, and the reason, or at last *one* reason, for this is that he is so intensely practical. He does not elaborate on doctrinal truths, but he handles those things which have to do

The Movement of the Tongue.

with our daily experience. And, moreover, *he never wastes words* : he never chooses a circuitous route to arrive at what he has to say. He always aims straight at the mark, and, what is more, *he hits it every time*.

It is quite true that the pen is mightier than the sword. David proved this when he despatched that abominably wicked note to Joab, saying : " Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him that he may be smitten and die." That suggestion emanated from hell. It meant that whoever died, Joab was to see to it that Uriah should be killed. Yes, the pen is mightier than the sword, *but the tongue is mightier than both of them put together*. The wise man says in Proverbs, chapter 18, verse 21, " Death and life are in the power of the tongue." That is to say that this little member is capable of as much evil on the one hand as it is capable of good on the other.

We are blessed with two eyes, two ears, two hands, and two feet, but we have only one tongue. *Thank God for this*. One dare not contemplate what would happen if we had more than one. Though it is shut in by two lips, and two rows of teeth, yet again and again it breaks through its barriers, and, if allowed to roam at will, incalculable mischief ensues.

I make bold to suggest that more havoc has been wrought in the Church of God through the *indiscreet use of the tongue* than anything else. It is painful to contemplate the cruel backbiting, bitterness, slander, and acrimony, of which even believers have been guilty. How true are the words in verse 2 of our chapter, " In many things we all offend." This does not mean that there are many things in which we offend everybody, but rather that *there are many things in which we are all offenders*, and speech is one of the most glaring of those " things," because if we are able to bridle

The Movement of the Tongue.

our tongue we can bridle our whole body.

How sad it is when husband and wife (both of whom are Christians) wrangle and quarrel, each one endeavouring to have the "last word." Equally sad is it when brother and sister in the same house have bitter words, notwithstanding the fact that they both belong to Christ. "My brethren, these things ought *not* so to be."

It is very striking to notice that the greatest men in history have failed at this very point. We look into the Old Testament and survey the history of God's heroes, only to find that there were occasions when they allowed their tongues to obtain the mastery over them.

ABRAHAM is the outstanding character of faith. He is especially designated "the friend of God"; he knew Jehovah so intimately that before Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, God actually unfolded His intentions to him. And yet, when Abram went down into Egypt because of the famine in Canaan, he allowed his tongue to overpower him when he put a lie on Sarah's lips and said, "Tell the Egyptians that you are not my wife but my sister."

MOSES was also a remarkable character. It is generally admitted that he was one of the greatest leaders of men that ever lived. He was also the great law-giver. "The Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend," so close was the fellowship between God and His servant. He was not only a devoted servant of the Lord, but—what was far more important—*he was a man of God*. Moreover, Moses was the meekest of all men, and yet this remarkable man failed in this very matter of speech when he practically lost his temper and said, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?"

The Movement of the Tongue.

DAVID was a man after God's own heart—the sweet singer of Israel—respected and even beloved by his people. God so highly honoured him as to promise that Christ should ultimately sit on his throne (Luke 1, 32). And yet even David spake unadvisedly with his lips on more than one occasion.

We pass from the Old Dispensation to the New, only to find the same failing. One of the most prominent characters in the New Testament is PETER, a man for whom, notwithstanding his many faults, one has the highest regard and the profoundest admiration. It was Peter, whose lamp of testimony shone so brightly when he made the grand confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." It was Peter who, at Pentecost, preached with such extraordinary power that about 3,000 souls were brought to the Lord. It was Peter who raised Æneas from a bed of sickness (upon which he had lain for eight years), and subsequently raised Dorcas from death to life, and who, towards the close of his earthly pilgrimage, wrote two beautiful Epistles which have proved so great a help and blessing to tens of thousands of God's people. And yet Peter failed in the same way as did the great men of the Old Testament, particularly when, before a servant maid in the court of the high priest's palace, he denied, with oaths and curses, two things :—

- (1) That he ever knew the Lord, and
- (2) That he was ever identified with Him.

JOHN THE APOSTLE was characterised by *love and tenderness*. Five times he is referred to as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." He wrote more about love than any other writer in the sacred Scriptures. He gave us, under the directing hand of God, the fourth Gospel (in which so

The Movement of the Tongue.

many of us revel); also those three sublime letters which he wrote to the "royal family of Heaven"; also the remarkable book of the Revelation. Yes, John was a beautiful character, and yet he failed in this very matter of vocal discretion, and that was when, in company with his brother James, he asked divine permission to call fire down from Heaven in order to consume the inhabitants of a certain village of the Samaritans, because they refused to receive his Master.

We study the life of the APOSTLE PAUL—or, rather, we endeavour so to do—and we are amazed at the life he lived. What an influence he exercised: what a giant he was—a giant in intellect; a giant in grace; a giant in the battle for the truth; head and shoulders taller than any of his contemporaries in the things of God; a man absolutely devoted to the service of Christ, and filled to overflowing with a passion for the welfare of those around him. And yet the great Apostle failed in exactly the same way as the others, not only when he had that most unfortunate contention with his true yoke-fellow Barnabas, but also when he was before the Sanhedrim and the high priest commanded those that stood by to smite him on the mouth, and Paul said warmly, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall." But let me hasten to say the Apostle did what some of us find very difficult to do—he *apologised when he discovered his indiscretion*. It needs a great supply of grace to own that one is in the wrong, and to say so.

Having seen that the greatest men in history failed by "offending in word," are we able to cast stones at them? Nay, let us frankly acknowledge that we too have failed, only with this difference—we *have failed more lamentably than they*.

The Movement of the Tongue.

We do well to examine the book of Proverbs and notice carefully what Solomon has to say concerning this "movement of the tongue." If we do this with the object of paying attention to the warnings, and obeying the exhortations, our examination will prove a blessing to ourselves as well as to others.

In chapter 6, verse 17, is mentioned

THE LYING TONGUE.

This is one of the seven things which the Lord abominates, and it comes second in the God-dishonouring category. It seems scarcely creditable that this could be a characteristic of any of God's redeemed people, yet the very fact that the Apostle said to the Ephesian believers, "Wherefore putting away *lying*, speak every man *truth* with his neighbour" is sufficient evidence of the sad possibility. Lying may have been an outstanding feature in the former experience of these Ephesians, but *truth* was to be one of their prominent virtues as believers—and as with them, so with us.

Then in chapter 17, verse 20, Solomon mentions

THE PERVERSE TONGUE.

This is the rudder which is constantly turned the wrong way, and, as we can easily imagine, it is always the forerunner of mischief. How sad it is that certain Christians seem to be so extraordinarily antagonistic! However graciously and considerately one may seek to act towards them, they persist in adopting an attitude of contrariness. One reason for this is *pride of heart*: another is the tendency with such people to over-estimate their own importance and ability.

The Movement of the Tongue.

Then again in chapter 25, verse 23, we see mentioned

THE BACKBITING TONGUE.

This is one of the most deadly weapons in existence, and it is accountable for some of the most heart-rending experiences in the history of God's people. Some have fallen into this snare so completely that "backbiting" has become well nigh habitual with them. When one Christian slanders another behind his or her back, the information passes from one to another with extraordinary rapidity and, as a rule, the scandal increases to such an alarming extent that what was perhaps originally a slight misunderstanding becomes an almost unspeakable crime. The words, "a whisperer separateth chief friends" were painfully true when the arch-enemy whispered to Eve in the garden, an artifice which caused the sad spiritual gap between our first parents and their Creator. The words are also true when a child of God wickedly whispers something of a derogatory nature about a fellow believer to a third party, thus causing endless unpleasantness and friction. The *Scriptural* method is set forth clearly in Matthew, chapter 18, verse 15, "If thy brother trespass against thee, *go and tell him his fault between thee and him ALONE.*" If believers always acted on this principle an enormous number of misunderstandings would be obviated.

In chapter 28, verse 23, reference is made to

THE FLATTERING TONGUE.

If possible, this weapon is even more deadly than the one just mentioned. The owner of this poisonous arrow will speak prettily in your presence, but when your face is turned will stab you a deadly blow *in the back.* Far

The Movement of the Tongue.

better rebuke a man, when rebuke is necessary, than flatter him. A word of encouragement, when deserved, goes a long way (especially when it is discreetly given by our elder brethren to the younger), but "flattery" is akin to "jealousy"—CRUEL AS THE GRAVE.

All this constitutes so ugly a picture, that perhaps we had better look *on the other side* and notice what Solomon has to say concerning the better and more profitable use of this "boastful little member."

Thus in chapter 10, verse 20 he mentions

THE RIGHTEOUS TONGUE.

This, in contrast to the perverse tongue, is the rudder which is always turned the *right* way. The words "we came with a *straight course* to Samothracia" were true of Paul and those who were sailing with him, and the righteous tongue always steers this "straight course," and necessarily so when we remember that "righteousness" means a perfectly straight line which God Himself has drawn.

Solomon tells us that such an acquisition as this is as "choice silver," and happy is he who, by the grace of God, has cultivated it.

Then in chapter 12, verse 18, we read of

THE WISE TONGUE.

How happy when righteousness and wisdom go hand in hand, and the person who possesses the *righteous* tongue also speaks *wisely*! This reminds us very forcibly of the words in James, chapter 3, verse 13, "Who is a *wise* man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness and

The Movement of the Tongue.

wisdom." How *unwise* we are on occasions! What a muddle we make of things when we speak without thinking! We need the "wise" tongue when we deal with anxious souls. We need it when the tradesman comes to our door and does not happen to have the exact article we require. We need it in the office, in the home, in the assembly—we need it *at all-times*.

Again, in chapter 15, verse 4, is mentioned

THE WHOLESOME TONGUE.

This particular member is needful inasmuch as it possesses valuable medicinal properties. It is "a tree of life." It heals rather than wounds; it encourages rather than hinders; it establishes rather than demolishes; *it glorifies Christ rather than its owner*. Some words are as sharp and as dangerous as razors; some are as cold as icicles; some are so void of grace that they wither the soul. Hence the essential importance of cultivating this "healthful" member.

Once more, in chapter 31, verse 26, we read of

THE IDEAL TONGUE.

This priceless jewel is the possession of the ideal woman who is so beautifully portrayed in this last chapter of Proverbs. Many are her virtues, not the least of which is "the law of kindness" which is on her tongue. *Such a sister with such a treasure is worth her weight in rubies*. There are numerous "laws" mentioned in Scripture, and this "law of kindness" is one of the most beautiful of them all. *Kindness does not mean weakness*. There are occasions when firmness and even rebuke are necessary, but if behind the law of correction there lies the law of

The Movement of the Tongue.

kindness, some real work will be accomplished with which God will be well pleased.

Now, in these four characteristics of the "movement of the tongue" we have a perfect picture of the Master. Let us look at it briefly.

He possessed the *Righteous* tongue. After delivering that most remarkable discourse known as the Sermon on the Mount (which discourse is based entirely on the principle of righteousness), the people "were astonished at His doctrine, for He spake with authority and not as the scribes." In fact, *all* His utterances were undeviatingly righteous.

He likewise manifested the *Wise* tongue throughout His earthly life and ministry. When the people said in amazement "Whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works?" they little knew in whose presence they were. The Lord Jesus was the source, secret, and spring of all true wisdom. He was wisdom personified—the Eternal Son of God—so that He could say "*Learn of Me*," and just as all His utterances were based on the principle of eternal righteousness, so those very same utterances manifested eternal wisdom.

And how delightful it is to observe that He possessed the *Wholesome* (healthful) tongue in all its perfection. How healing were His words to the "woman which was a sinner"—"*Thy sins be forgiven thee*." How frequently He repeated the encouraging words "Be of good cheer" to those who were disconsolate. When He was in the Nazarene Synagogue and read the extraordinary prophetic Scripture of Isaiah, chapter 61, and informed the people that that very prophecy was being fulfilled in their midst, "They all bare Him witness and wondered at the *gracious words* which

The Movement of the Tongue.

proceeded out of His mouth "; and these " words of grace " characterised Him from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. We hear Him speaking similar words of *healing* in resurrection. His first salutation to the disciples, after the experience of the Cross, in the upper room was " Peace be unto you," and when those same disciples trembled with fear because of their inability to recognise Him, He calmed their fears by saying in tones of tenderest love, " Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself." It surely behoves us to remember that He is our perfect Example in this as in all other virtues.

Yet again, His was the *Ideal* tongue. The " law of kindness " was ever on His lips. How *kind* He was to those who came to Him in all their entire helplessness — how lovingly and gently He spoke to them! Were there ever more lovely and loving words uttered than those recorded in John, chapters 14 to 16, where we are able to read His last discourse of any length to His loved ones before He left them? In every respect He was THE HEAVENLY IDEAL. Never a wrong word escaped His lips. He was the only one who never " offended in word " in the obvious sense in which James uses the expression. No truer statement was ever uttered than that of the soldiers who were commissioned to take Him and came back without Him, and who gave as their reason—NEVER MAN SPAKE LIKE THIS MAN. Time and again His enemies endeavoured to entangle Him in His speech. They put to Him the most cunning and difficult questions that their wicked hearts could conceive. But they were utterly incompetent to ask Him a question which He was not able to answer *perfectly*, though, on the other hand, He could easily put questions to them which so completely baffled their in-

The Movement of the Tongue.

genuity that "no man was able to answer Him a word," and so, rather than expose their ignorance, they preferred to remain silent.

To return to ourselves with all our imperfections : shall we face this matter of "the movement of the tongue" fairly and squarely as in God's holy presence? James says "the tongue can no man tame." Man can tame insects, fishes, birds, and even wild beasts, *but he cannot tame his own tongue*. This is something which is altogether beyond our power. Again and again it becomes our master, notwithstanding our efforts to keep it within bounds. Beloved reader, neither you nor I can tame this little member, BUT GOD CAN, and He *will* if we but give Him the opportunity. Moreover, James continues his unsparing denunciation by saying, "It is an unruly evil." *It absolutely refuses to be controlled*. We have endeavoured to control it times without number, and, although there have been occasions when we have been enabled by God's grace to utilise it for His glory, yet how frequently has it issued "deadly poison" rather than life-giving utterances? You and I *cannot* control this "boastful little member," BUT GOD CAN, and He *will* if we but let Him. *Then*—and not till then—shall our speech be *always* unto edification, ministering grace unto our hearers.

Christian Courage.

(*As Exemplified in Three New Testament Characters.*)

“ Be not thou therefore *ashamed* of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner ” (2 Tim. 1, 8).

“ For the which cause I also suffer these things, nevertheless I am not *ashamed* ” (2 Tim. 1, 12).

“ The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not *ashamed* of my chain ” (2 Tim. 1, 16).

IN each of these verses the word “ashamed” is conspicuously mentioned, and on each occasion it is mentioned negatively. In the first verse the word is connected with TIMOTHY; in the second with PAUL; and in the last with ONESIPHORUS. We will consider these in their reverse order.

I. ONESIPHORUS.

There were certain brethren for whom Paul had a high regard. Timothy was one, Epaphroditus was another, Epaphras was another. There were undoubtedly many others, but no list of the Apostle's most faithful friends would be complete if Onesiphorus were omitted, the reasons

Christian Courage.

for which must be patent to any careful reader of the opening chapter of Paul's last Epistle.

The great Apostle of the Gentiles was a prisoner, a circumstance he regarded as being one of the greatest privileges of his life. He refers to this fact many times in his Epistles, but one of the most significant passages is Ephesians, chapter 6, verse 20, where he speaks of himself as "an ambassador in bonds" (*Gr.* "in a chain"). What a magnificent picture is presented in this phrase. Endeavour to appreciate it in all its grandeur: Paul, an ambassador of Jesus Christ, the greatest of all potentates, the Lord of all creation, the eternal Son of God. But observe that the Apostle was an ambassador "*in a chain.*" Ordinarily, ambassadors were treated with the greatest possible courtesy and respect, but Paul was the exception which proved the rule.

Unfortunately this imprisonment had a very discouraging effect upon his Asiatic associates. They had turned away from him. Their courage failed them when it was put to the test. They disliked the idea of identifying themselves with God's imprisoned saint. *They were ashamed of his chain.* Not only so, but the Apostle tells us in chapter 4, verse 16, that at his first defence before Nero no man stood with him, but all forsook him, including his European friends as well as those from Asia Minor.

In contrast to all this pusillanimous conduct, Onesiphorus stands out in bold relief. He saw in Paul's chain nothing to be ashamed of, but everything to be proud of. He would rather see that iron chain encircling Paul's hands than a chain of the costliest pearls encircling his neck.

An important passage in this connection occurs in Hebrews, chapter 10, verses 32 and 33. "But call to

Christian Courage.

remembrance the former days in which, having been enlightened, ye endured a great conflict of sufferings; *partly*, being made a spectacle both in reproaches and tribulations; and *partly*, having become partners of those who were passing through (them)," and immediately afterwards the writer mentions the sympathy those believers had with him *in his bonds*, which, incidentally, appears to suggest that the writer of this Epistle to the Hebrews was Paul himself.

However, those "former days" were happy days, when those saints experienced the joy of the Lord in full measure, and were quite willing to suffer for the testimony of Christ, choosing rather to bear affliction with God's despised servants than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. *Onesiphorus experienced the honour of this twofold identification.* It undoubtedly cost him a great deal to stand alone by the side of the aged Apostle, but he was willing to endure any privation in order to achieve this object.

But observe how genuine was the devotion of this dear man. "When he was in Rome,

HE SOUGHT ME OUT VERY DILIGENTLY,

and found me." This implies that he had great difficulty in finding the Apostle. Enormous obstacles confronted him whichever way he turned; but he refused to be daunted; he overcame every difficulty, until, at last, success crowned his efforts, and he had the supreme joy of seeing the Apostle face to face. Paul thought a great deal of this heroic act of self-renunciation on the part of Onesiphorus. The Lord thought more of it than Paul did, and in a coming day that noble man of God will receive a fitting reward for his willingness to become a companion of Christ's misused, imprisoned servant.

Christian Courage.

II. PAUL.

We now come to the Apostle's noble testimony, "NEVERTHELESS, I AM NOT ASHAMED." He had been definitely and divinely appointed a preacher, and an Apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles, and the outcome of this high and holy calling was, from a natural standpoint, anything but desirable. He was cruelly incarcerated in a Roman prison, but as he reflects upon his imprisonment, his chain, and his previous persecutions, he says in a note of triumph: "Nevertheless, I am not ashamed."

According to Romans, chapter 1, verse 16, he was not ashamed of the Gospel, and he was therefore not ashamed to suffer for the Gospel. He could remember many things in his past life of which

HE WAS HEARTILY ASHAMED.

He could recall those terrible days when, as Saul of Tarsus, he literally hated God's people, made havoc of the Church, haled helpless women as well as men, and committed them to prison, persecuted the saints even unto strange cities and compelled them to blaspheme, willingly gave his vote against them when they were put to death, journeyed from Jerusalem to Damascus "breathing out" threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, guarded the clothes of Stephen's murderers when that noble servant of God was stoned to death. As he thought upon these things he was filled with shame and confusion.

But a great change had taken place; the tables were turned; the lion had been changed into a lamb; the great persecutor had for many years been the target of his enemies; he who had been the cause of the death of so

Christian Courage.

many saints of God had known at least six distinct attempts upon his own life from the hands of his persecutors ; and yet he could say in a note of victorious exultation, “ Nevertheless, I am not ashamed.” In company with those who were apostles before him, he rejoiced that he was “ counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name ” (Acts 5, 41).

There is another consideration to be borne in mind. When Paul took sides with the despised Jesus of Nazareth he forfeited all worldly prospects, and there is more in this statement than perhaps lies on the surface. Paul was

A MAN OF EXTRAORDINARY ABILITY.

He had a giant intellect, he was a scholar of the highest degree. One of the greatest testimonies to his educational attainments came from Festus on that ever memorable occasion when the Apostle stood before King Agrippa to defend himself against the charges which were laid against him by the infuriated Jews. He had arrived at an important juncture of his discourse, when Festus rudely interrupted him, saying, “ Paul, thou art beside thyself ; *much learning* doth make thee mad ” (Acts 26, 24).

He was indeed a man of “ much learning.” He had been trained in all the intricacies of Jewish law and custom at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the greatest authorities in Israel at that time. He knew the letter of the Old Testament Scriptures from Genesis to Malachi ; he outshone many of his contemporaries in his zeal for the Jewish religion ; whatever he studied he mastered.

The question almost instinctively arises in one’s mind as to what height of importance Saul of Tarsus would have attained had this tremendous change never taken place ; and one is forced to the conclusion that there was not a position

Christian Courage.

in the nation of Israel, however important on the one hand, or dignified on the other, which he could not have filled. He would undoubtedly have excelled the genius of his tutor Gamaliel, but for this he had no desire. His remarkable scholastic abilities, his delicately trained mind, his vast knowledge of things generally—all were laid at the feet of his Saviour, and instead of uttering a word of regret, we hear him say with joyful acclamation, “*Nevertheless, I am not ashamed.*”

One other consideration should be remembered. Paul was now an old man. Two years previous to this he had written to Philemon, and had styled himself

“PAUL THE AGED.”

Indeed, he had now arrived at the end of his earthly pilgrimage. He was about to seal his testimony with his blood; he was ready to be offered, and the time of his dismissal was at hand. He was soon to say farewell to the world which had treated him so unkindly, and as the chapter of his remarkable history was about to close, with his past behind him, and the future, with all its tremendous issues, before him, he could say with perfect serenity, “*Nevertheless, I am not ashamed.*” And why? What was the secret of his calm confidence? Surely it was that Christ had been, and was still, a bright, living reality to him, and as he had proved the faithfulness of his Lord in the past, so he could safely entrust his future to His care.

III. TIMOTHY.

The apostolic exhortation in 2 Timothy, chapter 1, verse 8, is worthy of our most careful consideration. Paul

Christian Courage.

is charging Timothy to nail his colours to the mast; to be strong and courageous for Christ.

It would appear from 1 Corinthians, chapter 16, verse 10, that Timothy was temperamentally a nervous young man, and if this inference be correct it lends tremendous weight to Paul's desire that he should not be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, nor of the Apostle, His prisoner.

Some brethren are naturally *fearless*. It is quite an easy matter for them to confess Christ even in the most unfavourable circumstances. The danger with those brethren is that they may go too far. Their courage often outweighs and outruns their wisdom. But Timothy was not so constituted, and it needed a constant repletion of grace to enable him to manifest at all times Whose he was and Whom he served.

We do well to observe that Paul does not mislead his younger fellow-believer as to the result of this twofold identification. He does not tell Timothy that he will tread a path of roses, be applauded by those around him, and proclaimed a national hero. On the contrary, he clearly indicates that the inevitable result would be reproaches and persecutions, as the context clearly shows—"But suffer evils along with the glad tidings."

In those early days, faithfulness to Christ meant real suffering in a far greater measure than it means to-day in this country, though the words in 2 Timothy, chapter 3, verse 12, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," are still true, and if we are faithful to our calling we must not be surprised if we are slighted, misunderstood, or even despised for the sake of the Gospel which we seek to preach. *Not that we should go out of our way to bring persecution upon ourselves*

Christian Courage.

unnecessarily. If we are living in touch with God, He will open the doors of opportunity for testimony, and also grant the requisite wisdom for every emergency.

It must have been a great comfort to Timothy to know that he had not to suffer these afflictions in his own power, but

“ACCORDING TO THE POWER OF GOD.”

Only thus could he hope to endure. This same power is at our disposal, so that if, in the providence of God, we are called upon to endure hardship for the sake of Christ and the Gospel, the necessary power will be forthcoming to enable us not only to endure that hardship, but to endure it with joyfulness. Remember what that power has already accomplished.

It was displayed when the universe was called into being (Gen. 1, 1), it was exercised in our salvation “before the world began” (2 Tim. 1, 9), it was manifested in all its grandeur at the resurrection of Christ (Eph. 1, 19-20), and this *mighty*, yea, *almighty* power, is “to usward who believe,” because it is definitely stated that God has not given us the spirit of timidity, but of power, and of love, and of a perfectly balanced discretion.

If God is not ashamed to be called our God (Heb. 11, 16), if Christ is not ashamed to call us “brethren” (Heb. 2, 11), then surely we on our part ought not to be ashamed to identify ourselves with Him to Whom we owe all we have and are, nor with those who are willing to suffer “for His Name’s sake,” whatever such a course may involve, knowing full well that “our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

Laying up Treasure.

ACCORDING to the Apostolic injunction in Ephesians, chapter 5, verse 17, it is not only possible to know what the will of the Lord is concerning us, but *we are responsible for such knowledge*, and at least one way of ascertaining His will is to observe the various instructions mentioned in Scripture, and to apply them to our personal, daily experience.

Our Lord's statement in Matthew, chapter 6, verses 19-21, is a clear illustration of this suggested maxim. I am *not* to lay up treasures upon the earth—that is the will of God concerning me *negatively*. I *am* to lay up treasures in Heaven—that is the will of God concerning me *positively*.

It must be patent to every careful reader of the Scriptures that believers are a heavenly people, enriched with heavenly blessings, and possessing a heavenly prospect. They are, moreover, looking for the Saviour Who shall soon come from Heaven in order to escort them to the Father's house. Moreover, the Bible clearly distinguishes such a company from those whose hopes, aspirations, and affections are centred upon the earth. When the Apostle refers with bitter tears to professors in Philippians, chapter 3, verses 18-19, one characteristic he mentions is that

“THEY MIND EARTHLY THINGS.”

Similarly, David, in Psalm 17, verse 14, prays to be deli-

Laying Up Treasure.

vered from "men of the world, which have their portion in this life." We see men everywhere concerning whom these distinctive marks are true—they live by our side; we meet them in our business transactions; people who mind earthly things, and never seem to be able to rise above them. They live only for this world, are more or less exclusively occupied with their own interests, and anything of a spiritual character has only to be suggested when it is almost immediately dismissed from the mind.

Before considering the question as to what these earthly treasures really are, we will suggest a few reasons why we should not become obsessed with them :—

1. Because *this is not our rest* (Micah ii. 10). God's "creation" rest was disturbed, and He now rests in His love, and we must rest there too. The Lord of life and glory at times had not where to lay His head in this world which His own hands had fashioned.

2. Because *here we have no continuing city* (Heb. 13, 14). This is true of every believer. In fact, there has never been a continuing city in the history of this world. The phrase

"OUR CITIZENSHIP IS IN HEAVEN"

was written to the believers in Philippi, and this statement was a long way in advance of that made by the same writer when he said that he was a citizen of the important city of Tarsus.

3. Because *we are designated "strangers and pilgrims"* (1 Peter 2, 11).

The first of this two-fold appellation implies that we do not really belong to this world, whilst the second indicates

Laying Up Treasure.

that we are passing through it to another, and, happily, a fairer and a brighter.

Abraham and his fellow-heirs of the divine promise *confessed* that they were strangers and pilgrims in the world; and surely we should not only be willing to make the same confession, but also to exult in it.

4. *Because earthly treasures are subject to the destructive agencies of moth and rust, as well as to the unscrupulous tendencies of thieves.*

Moths are exceedingly beautiful in their formations and colours. Some of them are also very useful in producing valuable silk, but they are, nevertheless, among the most destructive creatures in existence. They silently yet surely eat their way into the most costly garments as to render them absolutely useless and valueless. Ask any housewife if this is not so!

Rust is another destructive agent, and one has only to enter a disused iron factory to see what havoc it has made.

Thieves have always been busy from the days of our first parents. They are not like the moths, beautiful and useful, but rather the opposite. Their one aim is to relieve other people of their property in order to replenish their own stock.

There is something very suggestive in our Lord's words concerning His coming, recorded in Luke, chapter 12, verse 39. If the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be *broken through*. In Matthew, chapter 24, verse 43, the wording is slightly altered—"He would not have suffered his house to be *broken up*."

Thieves do not, as a rule, send a communication to say what particular day or time they expect to arrive, and

Laying Up Treasure.

unless the householder be on his guard ; unless he take the necessary precautions, he may find, when it is too late, that his house has been broken through, or broken up, or *both*. Similarly, when we become cold and careless, and lose sight of the grand truth of His coming (thereby jeopardising our spiritual welfare, and forfeiting the enjoyment of our heavenly and eternal blessings), we shall find to our cost that the thief who "cometh not but for to steal" will succeed in breaking up our house, so that we shall be in grave danger of becoming spiritual wrecks. These are *some* of the reasons why we should not lay up earthly treasures.

Now, the question naturally arises : What are these earthly treasures? And, perhaps, an inclusive answer would be—Those things which interrupt our spiritual joy and growth. In other words, anything which may come between the soul and Christ.

There are, of course, many earthly pleasures which in themselves are not only harmless, but distinctly advantageous both physically and intellectually, and yet it is possible for these harmless things to become positively harmful by our devoting so much attention to them as to be altogether out of proportion to their importance, in which event our spiritual life is bound to suffer.

But the particular expression "earthly treasures" undoubtedly refers to what the beloved Apostle calls, "this world's substance" (1 John 3, 17).

One of the most serious mistakes it is possible for a Christian to make is to become so engrossed with the affairs of this life as to leave little or no room for those divine and eternal realities which are essential for our spiritual progress. Our Lord spoke of "the deceitfulness of riches" as being one of the things which *choke* the word, implying that where the desire for this world's goods is uppermost,

Laying Up Treasure.

the desire for the things of God is correspondingly less. Not that the possession of wealth is *necessarily sinful*, because when devoted to the glory of God, it becomes a channel of untold blessing.

If we desire to be governed and guided by the Word of God in every detail of our experience, it behoves us to see what Scripture has to say concerning this matter of earthly possessions. The wise man in Proverbs, chapter 23, verse 5, says, "Riches certainly make themselves wings: they fly away as an eagle toward Heaven."

Angels have wings made for them, but riches have the peculiar power to manufacture their own apparatus for flying, and it is scarcely necessary to state how *swiftly* they fly. How many instances are on record of men who were enormously wealthy one day, and by undue speculation or some other device were penniless the next, showing us the *uncertainty* as well as the *deceitfulness* of riches! We truly thank God for those of His saints who have prospered in this life, and yet have maintained their loyal devotion to Christ; nevertheless the danger-signal is distinctly seen in Psalm 62, verse 10, "If riches increase, *set not your heart upon them.*" How beautifully clear and illuminating are the Scriptures. The spiritually minded brother who has had wealth floating calmly and easily toward him will regard himself a *trustee*, and will only too gladly place his wealth at God's disposal.

Timothy had a number of important charges committed to him by the great Apostle, one of which he was to pass on to others—"Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches; but in the living God" (1 Tim. 6, 17). Their trust was not to be centred in their wealth, but rather in the One Who had entrusted that wealth to them, and they were to evidence

Laying Up Treasure.

this by doing good, being rich in good works, ready to distribute, ready to communicate; thus exemplifying the truth of the words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

When the rich man, mentioned in Luke, chapter 12, said that he had no room where to bestow his fruits, he might with equal eloquence have said that

HE HAD NO ROOM FOR GOD.

One has only to read the incident carefully to see that this man was entirely self-centred—no thought of the eternal future; no thought even for others. The pronouns "I" and "my" occur with a sickening redundancy. By laying up treasure for himself he exhibited the highest possible folly. He grasped at the things of this life at the awful expense of his spiritual welfare.

It is very striking to notice that the disciples fell into this error, not so much from a personal as from a national point of view. They were looking for temporal power, earthly glory, national redemption. Hence the remark of Cleopas and his fellow-traveller, "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." Their hopes for the achievement of this great object had been raised to the highest possible point, only to be ruthlessly scattered to the four winds, and their bitter disappointment may be measured by the phrase, "and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done" (Luke 24, 21). They foolishly thought that the "third day" had completely shattered their prospects, whereas the "third day" was really the foundation of all their hopes of eternal blessing.

The entire failure of the church of Laodicea was due to the fact that earthly desires and self-aggrandisement were predominant. They boasted that they were rich, and in-

Laying Up Treasure.

creased with goods, and had need of nothing, *whereas the exact reverse was true*. Instead of being truly rich, they were in

A CONDITION OF SPIRITUAL POVERTY;

instead of being increased with heavenly gifts, they were absolutely bankrupt; instead of having need of nothing, they had need of every thing that was worth having. In Laodicea we have a nominal Christian Church, the members of which laid up for themselves treasures upon earth to such an extent as to preclude any possibility of advancement in the things of God. The divine estimate of the wealth of this church was far different from the sad estimate it had formed of itself. The pregnant words "wretched," "miserable," "poor," "blind," "naked," form God's unvarnished picture of the lamentable condition of these people.

Thus we see, individually and collectively, how unwise and even perilous it is to lay up for ourselves treasures upon the earth.

We have already considered what the expression "Earthly Treasures" implies, and also the dangers relating thereto. We have now to consider how best to avoid this spiritual menace.

Both in the Gospels and in the Epistles we perceive that not merely the best but the *only* safeguard against this danger is to lay up treasures "in heaven," where they will be beyond the reach of moths, rust or thieves; and in approaching this truth we come face to face with one of the greatest secrets of a truly successful Christian life.

The question naturally arises—What did the Lord mean when He told His disciples to lay up for themselves treasures in Heaven? Perhaps the best answer is found in

Laying Up Treasure.

Colossians, chapter 3, verses 1-2, where the Apostle lays down one of the many golden rules for life and conduct which are found scattered so plentifully throughout his Epistles. "If therefore ye were raised with Christ seek the things above, where Christ is sitting on the right hand of God." The word "if" does not convey the possibility that these believers had not been raised with Christ, but rather it pre-supposes an accomplished fact. The thought in the Apostle's mind seems to have been that since so wonderful an event had taken place, how tremendous must be their privileges and consequent responsibilities.

In the eternal purpose of God every true believer died with Christ; was quickened with Him; was raised with Him; was glorified with Him; and all these items clearly indicate the truth (and it is one of the greatest truths revealed in Scripture), *that we are inseparably united to Him whom God has exalted at His own right hand.* So that in the divine reckoning, we are, at this present moment, where Christ is. At a parliamentary election it is possible to unseat a member, but,

NO ONE CAN UNSEAT A BELIEVER—

he is a fixture; and because we are thus privileged, we are to seek those things which are above. Christ is now seated on the throne of glory; death hath no more dominion over Him; and yonder in Heaven He is accomplishing His glorious work of intercession in the power of an endless life.

Now, if we are to seek those things which are above, it is well that we should have a clear conception of the significance of the word "things." What are these *things*? Obviously they are not tangible; they cannot be grasped by

Laying Up Treasure.

the natural hand. They are unseen, and, therefore, can only be appropriated by faith. They are the "unseen things" which the Apostle mentions so significantly in 2 Corinthians, chapter 4, verse 18, upon which we are to continually look. They belong to the heavenly, spiritual, and eternal sphere, and are the exact antitheses to those things which are earthly and sensual. They are, in other words, the only things which make for our spiritual advancement; the only things which are really permanent and satisfying.

The closing words in Psalm 16 may help us in this connection: "*In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*" The Lord Jesus is *now* in the Father's presence; at His right hand. Therefore fulness of joy and eternal pleasures are some of "those things" which are centred in Christ. Similarly, the great gifts of love, peace, wisdom, power, and holiness are all located there, and these are the things which we are to *seek*. Not merely are we to desire them, but to seek them as we would the rarest and most valuable of hidden treasures, seeing their price is far above rubies, and all the things we can desire are not to be compared unto them; and as we thus earnestly seek these divine realities we shall be drawn closer to Him in whose presence they are found.

In the second verse of Colossians, chapter 3, we have not only a confirmation, but also a simplification of verse 1. We seek those things which are above *by setting our mind upon them*. By this means our minds are constantly renewed, and our characters are resultantly transformed to the image of our Lord, which surely should be the main object of life.

We have only to study the life of Moses to see (*inter alia*)

Laying Up Treasure.

what tremendous responsibilities were placed upon his shoulders. He was Jehovah's mouthpiece in the presence of Pharaoh; he was the appointed leader of God's people; he was the great law giver. More than once he interceded between the righteous anger of God and the sinfulness of the children of Israel. His experience was crowded with trials, discouragements, heart-burnings, and disappointments. There were times when the people were so embittered against him that they were ready to stone him. What was the secret of his extraordinary endurance? The answer is given clearly and definitely in Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 27: "He endured as seeing Him who is invisible." In other words, Moses had his mind fixed on "things above," and we too must

"LOOK OFF UNTO JESUS"

if we are to run with patience the race which is set before us.

Now, if we are living a Spirit-controlled life, He, whose office it is to glorify Christ, will *constantly* be directing our minds to these heavenly glories, *and then we shall have no difficulty in realising the futility of heart-occupation with the things of earth.* What a vast difference there would be in our behaviour if the Holy Spirit thus had His way with us! How spontaneously would be reproduced those beautiful items which were manifested in all their perfection in the life of the Son of God, and which are enumerated for our benefit and guidance in Colossians, chapter 3, verses 12-17 — kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering, forgiveness, love, peace, and joy. How natural it would be for us to walk so as to please God!

But we must not overlook the importance of the words in Matthew, chapter 6, verse 21: "For where your

Laying Up Treasure.

treasure is, there will your heart be also." It does not need a great effort of the imagination to perceive the truth and appropriateness of these words. For example, a man living in England suddenly learns that he has had a large fortune left him away in Australia, and it is left in such a manner that he is able to draw upon it at once, a concession of which he decides to take advantage forthwith. Now, however many years he may stay in England, and however greatly he may have drawn upon the estate, his *heart* will be in Australia, where his treasure lies. In like manner our treasure is in Heaven, "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away," *and as we appropriate and appreciate this mighty truth, our hearts will be there also.*

A Bulwark of Trust.

Thoughts on the Divine Faithfulness.

IT is ever profitable to consider the attributes of the God-head and to recognise that each attribute is perfect in its character and eternal in its duration. There is something very noble in the words of Psalm 48, verses 12-13: "Walk about Zion, and go round about her . . . *mark ye well her bulwarks.*" What magnificent bulwarks they are which support God's plan of redemption—His wisdom, His righteousness, His holiness, His love, and His faithfulness! The Book of Books is crowded with invitations, promises, and encouragements, and over each invitation, each promise and each encouragement we might write: "GOD IS FAITHFUL."

When St. Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians he must have laboured with an aching heart. Things had gone altogether wrong at Corinth. The believers had strayed away from the centre, and were consequently abusing those heavenly and eternal blessings which were their spiritual birthright. A lightning glance through the Epistle will show how sadly unspiritual the saints had become. Think of it: they ought to have been *united*, instead of which they were divided against each other (chapter 1). They ought to have been *spiritually minded*, instead of which they were carnal (chapter 3). They ought to have

A Bulwark of Trust.

humbled themselves to the very dust, instead of which they were “puffed up” (chapter 5). They ought to have been *a powerful testimony to those around them*, instead of which they were a positive stumbling-block and actually resorted to the heathen courts for the adjustment of personal grievances which ought to have been dealt with by the saints (chapter 6). The Lord’s Supper ought to have been *the happiest and most sacred feast this side of Heaven*, instead of which it degenerated into an unspeakable mockery, so much so that one was hungry and another was drunken (chapter 11). Their convocations ought to have been *seasons of edification and encouragement*, instead of which they were occasions of God-dishonouring confusion (chapter 14). They ought to have held *the glorious fact of the resurrection of Christ more dearly than life*, instead of which there were some who, like the Sadducees, said that there was no such thing as the resurrection of the dead (chapter 15). All these errors had to be put right; therefore, censure after censure fell relentlessly from the pen of the inspired Apostle.

And yet, before uttering a single condemnatory word, before placing his finger upon one defect, before mentioning the heart-breaking fact that they had so sadly strayed from the centre, before reminding them of their lamentable unfaithfulness, he emphasises (in chapter 1, verse 9) the glorious truth—“GOD IS FAITHFUL.”

When we, on our part, remember our lack of devotion, our coldness of heart, our slowness to believe all that God has said, and to regulate our lives accordingly, we are filled with a sense of shame and sorrow; but when we consider *the undeviating and eternal faithfulness of our God* we are filled with joy and encouragement.

A Bulwark of Trust.

In 2 Timothy, chapter 2, verses 11-13, we find a remarkable series of "ifs," the last of which is one of the most beautiful of them all: "If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: *He cannot deny Himself.*" However changeable we may be toward Him, He can only be faithful toward us—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. We may deny Him, and He may deny us, but He cannot deny Himself. There are at least four things God *cannot do*—He cannot *die*, He cannot *lie*, He cannot *change*, He cannot *deny Himself*.

One of the outstanding evidences of God's faithfulness is recorded in Genesis, chapter 9, verse 13, where we have the first mention of the rainbow. When Noah left the ark God promised that the earth would never again be destroyed by a flood, and, willing more abundantly to show unto His creatures the immutability of His counsel, He confirmed the promise by a token: "I do set my bow in the cloud." What a wonderful piece of workmanship is the rainbow! How perfectly symmetrical, how admirably designed, how exquisitely coloured is this natural phenomenon, this joint product of storm and sunshine. We cannot wonder that it forms one of the favourite themes for poets. But when I see a rainbow I am not occupied so much with its beautiful features, nor with the perfect blending of the colours, but rather with the fact that it is an unmistakable and *undeniable* proof that "God is faithful." The rainbow at once carries the mind back to Genesis, chapter 9, and reminds one of the magnificent statement in verse 16: "And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember. . . ." We are below the clouds and are not always able to see the rainbow, but God is above the clouds, and His eye is always upon the bow, and He therefore

A Bulwark of Trust.

remembers His everlasting covenant between Himself and His creatures.

On turning to Psalm 36, verses 5-7, we find five divine attributes clustered together. His *mercy* is in the Heavens; His *righteousness* is like the great mountains; His *judgments* are a great deep; His *loving-kindness* is excellent. But observe what David says concerning His *faithfulness*. It "reacheth unto the clouds." Why the clouds, seeing some of them are not at all a great height? Surely because *it is there the rainbow is seen*.

There are many passages in the Psalms where God's faithfulness and loving-kindness are beautifully blended together. We ought not to be surprised at this, seeing that the latter is dependent upon the former. Thus, in Psalm 92, verses 1 and 2, we read that it is a good thing to show forth His *loving-kindness in the morning*, and His *faithfulness every night*, and when we remember that, according to Psalm 42, verse 8, "He will command His *loving-kindness in the daytime*," we see that all the hours of the day and night are included, so that we may confidently rely upon the faithfulness and loving-kindness of God *at all times and under all circumstances*.

There is another place where these two divine attributes are seen in their majestic beauty, viz. :—Psalm 89, verse 33, where the opening word, "nevertheless" takes us back to verse 30. God loves His children far too much to spoil them, and it therefore follows that when they forsake His law, and walk not in His judgments; when they dishonour His statutes, and fail to keep His commandments, then He must visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.

What poor specimens of believers we should be if God

A Bulwark of Trust.

allowed us to have all our own way! A spoiled child is often a disgrace to his parents, and a burden to other people, and, therefore, although no chastening is pleasant at first, yet, to those who are exercised thereby, and who are willing to submit to the providential dispensations of an all-wise Father, the outcome is "the peaceable fruit of righteousness."

When God corrects us, does He withdraw His loving-kindness, or cause his faithfulness to fail? Nay, we know Him far too well to suggest that He could do either. Behind the rod and the stripes, behind the unpleasant correction, there lie *His loving-kindness* which He will not utterly take from us, and *His faithfulness* which He will not suffer to fail. The writer of Psalm 119 says that before he was afflicted he went astray, but as a result of his affliction he had kept God's word (verse 67), and he also knew that God *in faithfulness* had afflicted him (verse 75).

Surely, all this confirms the truth that we are in the best of hands; that we are the objects of the care of a loving Father, and that *we are never outside His thoughts, day or night.*

Why is it that we are recipients of so much blessing? Why are our lives crowded every day with divine favours? Why has God dealt so bountifully with us ever since it pleased Him to reveal His Son in us? The answer to these questions is found in Lamentations, chapter 3, verse 22:—"Because His compassions fail not"; and, further, these compassions are new every morning, all because of *the greatness of His faithfulness.*

When we trace the history of Israel as a nation, we find a tremendous contrast between their attitude toward God, and His attitude toward them. Perhaps the greatest reason

A Bulwark of Trust.

God had in delivering the Children of Israel from the Egyptian thralldom was that they might be a people peculiarly His own who should henceforth glorify His Name. Instead of this purpose being fulfilled, we find the exact opposite. They tempted God in the desert; they forgot His works; they envied Moses in the camp; they murmured in their tents; they provoked the Lord to anger; they limited the Holy One of Israel; thus proving themselves a disobedient, stiff-necked, stubborn, self-willed, gainsaying, disappointing, unfaithful people. And yet, notwithstanding their failures and unrestrained sinfulness, *God manifested His love and faithfulness to them throughout their chequered history.*

If ever a man tested and proved the undeviating faithfulness of God, it was the great Apostle of the Gentiles. What a life of devotion he lived; what a testimony for his Master he bore; what a far-reaching influence for Christ he exercised! Wherever he journeyed, bonds and afflictions were awaiting him. The mind almost whirls as it endeavours to appreciate the extraordinary catalogue of persecutions and privations detailed in 2 Corinthians, chapter 11, verses 24-28. Five times he received forty stripes save one; on three occasions he was beaten with rods; once he was stoned (when he was left as dead); three times he suffered shipwreck (not including the terrible experience recorded in Acts, chapter 27); a night and a day he had been in the deep; besides weariness, painfulness, watchings, hunger, thirst, fastings, cold, and nakedness; to say nothing of those things which crowded upon him *daily*, the unceasing care of all the Churches.

We might well ask what it was that enabled the Apostle to endure this mental and physical strain; and the only

A Bulwark of Trust.

adequate answer is that he was supported by three of the greatest factors in the spiritual realm, viz., *the love, power, and faithfulness of God.*

THE EXPERIENCE OF PAUL.

Toward the close of Paul's career there comes a record of experience in which he proved in a remarkable way the faithfulness of God. The incident is related very beautifully in 2 Timothy, chapter 4, verses 16 and 17, where he says : " At my first defence no man stood with me, but all men forsook me . . . notwithstanding the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me." The sight of " Paul the aged " standing before Nero, the unscrupulous tyrant and persecutor, is one which is calculated to soften the hardest of hearts. He is forsaken by his nearest and dearest friends. He knew, in a lesser degree, of course, somewhat of his Lord's experience on the Cross when " all forsook Him and fled," and similarly he manifested his Lord's gracious spirit of forgiveness by saying, " I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge." But although he had no earthly supporter, yet he is able to record the testimony *that the Lord never failed him in his hour of trial*, and that He not only stood with him, but strengthened him in such a way that he was enabled to declare the Gospel of God's grace before an obdurate, inflexible, and utterly unreasonable tribunal. Yes, " God is faithful."

We all know what it is to be confronted with temptations, and there are occasions when these assaults of the enemy seem to come upon us to an almost overwhelming degree. Left to ourselves, we are certain to be overcome, and it is quite possible that certain believers sometimes wonder whether, after all, victory is within the realm of

A Bulwark of Trust.

possibility. Let us look at one of the great verses of Scripture on the subject of temptation (1 Cor. 10, 13), and there the words "God is faithful" are nestled almost in the centre of the passage. Were it not for the truth of this statement, we should be in despair. In fact, God is so faithful, that He will never allow us to be tempted beyond our powers of endurance, and, furthermore, when the temptation comes (however severely or unexpectedly) He makes a way to escape, thus enabling us to gain the victory *every time*.

The importance of these facts cannot be overrated, because if God allowed us to be tempted beyond our powers of endurance we should be compelled to succumb. Again, if, when the temptation arrives, there is no door of escape, our fall would be likewise inevitable. But "God is faithful" who will never allow the former, and yet will always provide for the latter.

THE CALL TO HOLINESS.

When the Apostle prayed that the believers at Thessalonica might be sanctified wholly, he knew that the God of peace alone was sufficient for the accomplishment of that desire. When, in the same verse (1 Thess. 5, 23) the Apostle's further desire was expressed that their entire spirit and soul, and body might be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus, he was also confident that God alone was equal to the occasion, and this is confirmed in the words which immediately follow, "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it."

God has called us to a holy, blameless life, not intermittently but *consistently*, every day and every hour until the Lord Himself shall come, or until we shall be taken

A Bulwark of Trust.

hence; and He who thus called us is *faithful* to all His own, so that as we recognise our entire dependence upon His almighty power and all-sufficient grace, we shall be able to think, speak, and act in a way that will be "well pleasing to Him."

When the Lord Jesus was here He was not only the Way and the Life; He was also *the Truth*. That title suggests that *He could be relied upon*. He is now in Heaven, our Great High Priest, able to save us "to the uttermost," to the completion. Why? Because He is not only a merciful, but also a *faithful* High Priest in things pertaining to God. We need One with these two indispensable qualifications, and they are both perfectly combined in Christ's glorious Person.

Finally, we might with advantage refer to the magnificent vision given to the Apostle of love, recorded in Revelation, chapter 4, where he sees a throne set in Heaven, and round about the throne there is a rainbow like unto an emerald. Why a rainbow in Heaven? There are no storms there, but one perpetual calm; no clouds, but the clear unsullied presence of God. Will not the rainbow in Heaven remind us of His eternal faithfulness, both in His covenant in creation, and also in His greater covenant in redemption?

The Secret of Permanent Happiness.

GOD'S desire is that we, His children, should be happy, not spasmodically but constantly. An extraordinary paradoxical statement occurs in 2 Corinthians, chapter 6, verse 10: "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." These words were indeed true of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and they ought to be true of *every believer*.

There were many items in Paul's life which were calculated to depress him. When he wrote to Timothy saying that Demas had forsaken him, having loved this present age; when he had to ask the Galatians who was hindering them from obeying the truth; when, with weeping eyes, he reminded the saints at Philippi of certain religious professors who were, notwithstanding their profession, enemies of the Cross of Christ; when he plainly told the Corinthians that they were carnal and walked as men—all these things weighed upon his heart and caused him real sorrow. And yet, in spite of them all, there was an undercurrent of divine joy which made his life radiant.

Similarly, there are many experiences in our lives which are exceedingly depressing, but there should be that same undercurrent of joy, constant and undisturbed.

Permanent Happiness.

Now, if we are to be “always rejoicing” we must attend assiduously to the conditions which God, directly or indirectly, has laid down in the Scriptures, a few of which we will mention :—

1. WE MUST APPRECIATE OUR STANDING IN GRACE. (Acts 16, 33.)

The Philippian jailor had been gloriously saved. Only a little while before he had been face to face with eternity—a would-be suicide. But now he is a changed man, and it is beautiful to see how rapidly the evidences of his conversion are multiplied. He washes the bloodmarks from the lacerated backs of God’s devoted servants, he is baptised; he gladly entertains Paul and Silas; he gives them a good meal (which by this time must have been most acceptable); and he REJOICES—filled to overflowing with joy and peace in believing.

Many of us can remember the “happy day, when Jesus washed our sins away” as though it were only yesterday. What varied experiences were ours then! We were rescued from the road that led to a most awful fate. The heavy burden we had been carrying for so long a time completely rolled away. Our feet were placed upon the Rock of Ages. We were constituted a “new creation” in Christ Jesus, and took our place in the family of God. *We were mighty sinners, saved by mightier grace.* And as we review God’s dealings with us and endeavour to appreciate within a little our lamentable condition by nature, and contrast that with our gigantic privileges under grace, our joy will indeed be full.

Permanent Happiness.

2. WE MUST BE CONSTANTLY OCCUPIED WITH THE UNSEEN CHRIST.

(1 Peter, 1, 8.)

The believers to whom Peter wrote had never seen the Lord Jesus in the flesh. But He was no less real to them for all that. For His sake they had suffered bitter persecution, and had been ruthlessly scattered throughout Asia Minor. Instead of being discouraged by these adverse circumstances, their love to Christ flourished, so that Peter could say, "Whom having not seen ye love."

We might pause at this juncture and ask ourselves, how real is *our* love to Him? After all, how much are *we* prepared to suffer for His sake? How many of His commandments do we keep as evidences of the reality and depth of our love? *It is useless to talk about our love to Christ if we fail to do what He says.*

But Peter goes on to say (and it is one of the profoundest and most important statements in his writings) "In whom, though now ye see Him not, yet, believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." How much of this "unspeakable joy" do we know? How much of it have we manifested during the past? Alas! in the history of some of us it has been well nigh non-existent. And why? Because we have been more occupied with ourselves than with Christ. We do well to remember that advancement in the Christian life depends upon *an adequate appreciation of the person and work of the Lord Jesus*. If we look around us we shall be distracted; if we look within we shall be disappointed; but if we "look off unto Jesus" we shall be HAPPY.

Artists' paintings of the Lord Jesus Christ do not appeal to many of us. The reason for this is not because we are

Permanent Happiness.

not art critics, but because there is a beauty, a glory, a loveliness surrounding the Son of God which no artist's brush can portray. He was "altogether lovely" to these early believers, simply because they were so constantly and thoroughly occupied with Him. To put the same truth in another way, it means that Christ is to us exactly what we make Him. If we make little of Him He will be correspondingly unreal to us. If we make much of Him (and God help us so to do) He will be everything to us, and as we are thus occupied with His glorious person OUR JOY WILL BE FULL.

3. WE MUST HAVE AN ADEQUATE APPRECIATION OF THE VALUE OF GOD'S WORD.

(See John 15, 11.)

The passage referred to is an exceedingly important one. The Lord Jesus had been unfolding many wonderful truths to His followers, and as the disciples appreciated those truths, so their joy increased. This principle applies to *all* God's Word, and if *we* desire to know the fulness of joy it is absolutely essential that we should carefully, prayerfully, and diligently study the Scriptures.

What a wonderful book the Bible is!

It shows in a way which is altogether unique how God has come to men, and how men may come to God. It reveals how the Son of God became the Son of man, that it might be possible for the sons of men to become the sons of God.

We are distinctly exhorted to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the Scriptures are God's provision for us to make this growth possible. A healthy, strong, well-proportioned man

Permanent Happiness.

generally possesses a robust appetite, and a healthy, strong, *well-proportioned* Christian will manifest a keen desire to know more of his Bible from day to day. Joshua's success was dependent upon his meditating in the law of the Lord day and night, for God had distinctly said to him, "*Then* thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and *then* thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1, 8).

It is a great comfort to know that the Bible has always held its own against all the attacks of critics, modernists, infidels, and false teachers.

No book in the world can touch the Word of the living God for circulation. Millions of copies of the Scriptures are printed and circulated yearly, and in numerous instances the very reading of them has brought life, light, liberty, joy, and every other divine blessing. All books written by men are like little ships hugging the shore, but the Bible has forged ahead to such an extent *that it has sunk below the horizon.*

Another interesting feature concerns the *translation* of the Scriptures. The book which, next to the Bible, has been translated into more languages than any other is Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." This has been translated into 118 languages, but the Bible (in its entirety or in part) has been translated into about 750 different forms of speech.*

The story of Jonah has been described as the most wonderful story ever written in so small a compass.

Renan, the French arch-critic, confessed that the Gospel of Luke was the most beautiful book in the world.

The Epistle to the Romans was regarded by the late Lord Coleridge as the profoundest book in the world.

The Epistle to the Ephesians is regarded by Professor

* Up to 1927.

Permanent Happiness.

Stalker as the profoundest and sublimest book in existence, in that it scales the highest heights of Christian doctrine and sounds the deepest depths of Christian experience.

The song of Moses, recorded in Exodus, chapter 15, is a masterpiece of English literature.

The last chapter of Ecclesiastes contains one of the most wonderful descriptions of old age and death that is to be found in the realm of literature.

How wonderfully constructed is this "Book of books"; The Old Testament is the New Testament *obscured*, whilst the New Testament is the Old Testament *revealed*. The order of the Epistles is both interesting and instructive:—

Romans—Coming out of Egypt: redemption by blood.

Corinthians—The wilderness journey: failure! failure!!

Galatians—Crossing the Jordan: crucifixion of the flesh.

Ephesians—The promised land: blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Philippians—The ideal Christian life.

Colossians—Christ all in all: "that in *all things* He might have the pre-eminence."

Thessalonians—The coming of the Lord.

One of the greatest evidences of the inspiration and reliability of the Word of God is the individual experience of the believer. With many of us there was a time when the Bible had no charm; it was dull and uninteresting. But there came a day when a great change took place, and from that time the Book of God became almost part and parcel of our existence. We found it to be the traveller's guide, the soldier's sword, the mariner's compass, the pilgrim's staff, the Christian's chart, the student's text book.

Where the Bible has been allowed to govern it has made cruel men kind; it has made the selfish unselfish; it has

Permanent Happiness.

brought joy, peace, and love into millions of homes and lives. Its assurance of the future enables believers to face the present with a greater courage.

But if the Scriptures of truth are to be to us all that God intends and desires them to be, we must make the best possible use of them, *i.e., we must study them for ourselves*, and we shall then find that one way of ascertaining God's will concerning us is to observe the various instructions we have in His Word, and to work them out in our daily experience.

Moreover, let us ever remember that the written Word reveals the living Word, and as we see Him in the holy pages, we shall not only be increasingly transformed to His likeness, *but our joy will be full.*

4. WE MUST APPRECIATE THE VALUE OF PRAYER.

(See John 16, 24.)

One of the greatest and grandest privileges we have as believers is that of direct communication with God Himself. Having revealed Himself to us as a tender, loving, sympathetic Father, He invites us to consult Him about every detail of our daily life. There is nothing too great to bring to Him, just as there is nothing too small.

Prayer is one of the greatest forces in the world. It brings us into direct touch with omnipotence. Not one of us has yet learned the tremendous possibilities of a life lived in the atmosphere of intercession.

Prayer is "the expression of the heart's desire." This is beautifully expressed in Romans, chapter 10, verse 1, where the Apostle Paul says: "*My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.*"

Permanent Happiness.

It is possible for a believer to walk with God so closely that *whatever he may ask it will be with the full assurance that the request is in harmony with God's will*, which, according to 1 John, chapter 5, verses 14-15, is an evidence that the request is heard, whilst the fact that we are heard is an evidence that the petition will be granted.

How true it is that God is even more willing to answer us than we are to receive the answer. He waits to be gracious; He delights to bless; He is ever extending His open hand; and we have only to ask that we might receive.

"Only to ask"—but, of course, we must comply with the divine conditions. The Lord Jesus refers to the grace of supplication many times in the three wonderful chapters, John, chapters 14 to 16, and in each instance He emphasises the importance of *asking in His name*. We dare not plead our own name or our own merits, but we can plead His, and—glorious truth—His Name is always available, just as His worthiness never varies.

We do well to remember that real prayers are not necessarily long ones. Most of the supplications recorded in Scripture are short, but *definite*. How frequently we address to God long, heartless, meaningless, petitions! Three of the most important factors in prevailing prayer are—*earnestness, definiteness, and importunity*.

God often works very rapidly in answer to our supplications. When Daniel and his three companions were in danger of their lives because of the inability of the wise men of Babylon to interpret the king's dream, they "desired mercies of the God of Heaven," and one of the most significant answers to prayer recorded in Scripture is expressed in one mighty statement, "Then was the secret revealed to Daniel in a night vision."

It is comforting to know that Elijah was "*a man, sub-*

Permanent Happiness.

ject to like passions as ourselves." He was not an angel. His sphere was the earth. He was subject to human limitations, weaknesses, failures. Yes, Elijah was a man, A MAN OF GOD, and he prayed *earnestly* (Gr. "with prayer"), and God answered him by a remarkable change of atmospheric conditions. Truly "the energised supplication of a righteous man is a mighty force" (James 5, 16), and if we pray earnestly as Elijah prayed, and blend thanksgiving with our supplications, OUR JOY WILL BE FULL.

5. WE MUST APPRECIATE THE VALUE OF FELLOWSHIP.

(See 1 John 1, 4.)

If prayer is one of the greatest forces in the world, fellowship is one of the greatest privileges. One reason why there is so little blessing in these days is because there is so little unity.

It is quite true that the locusts have no king, but it is equally true that they go forth, all of them, by bands, and therein lies their power of destruction. Our power for God in this world depends, to a very great extent, upon close association the one with the other. We do not, of course, advocate unity at the expense of truth, but rather *unity on the basis of truth*.

When Nehemiah was building the wall of Jerusalem there came a period when the enemy began to fume and flare. That was *when the breaches began to be stopped*. If the enemy cannot hinder the work of the Lord in any other way, he will do so by the process of "long division."

There was a period in the history of Solomon's temple when the priests were unable to stand to minister owing

Permanent Happiness.

to the glory of the Lord filling the house, and that was when the trumpeters and the singers were as ONE, to make one sound in praising the Lord (see 2 Chron. 5, 13-14: Rom. 15, 5-6).

When the tabernacle was being constructed, the ten curtains formed an important part of the structure. They were divided into two lots of five each, and were coupled together by means of loops and hooks of gold—fifty loops and fifty hooks to each curtain that they might take hold one of another, “AND IT SHALL BE ONE TABERNACLE.” Unfortunately, in these days the curtains have got sadly disconnected. We seem to have mislaid the loops and the hooks of gold, so that instead of “laying hold one of another,” we have parted asunder, and the inevitable result has been lamentable weakness and disastrous failure.

The same truth is emphasised when we come to the boards of the tabernacle, mentioned in the same chapter (Exod. 26). When these boards were set in their place they were coupled together by means of bars, the centre bar reaching from end to end. There were many knots in the individual boards, but they were *out of sight*, inasmuch as they were all overlaid with gold. We all have our own peculiar knots in the matter of different temperaments and awkward ways, but let us remember the *gold*, and that will help us to keep together and to work harmoniously.

One of the darkest periods in the history of Israel is recorded by the prophet Malachi. God’s people had abused their privileges and blessings. They had failed to keep His commandments; they had questioned His love, despised His name, offered polluted bread upon His altar, wearied Him with their words, robbed Him of His tithes and offerings, and had even said, “It is vain to serve God, and

Permanent Happiness.

what profit is it that we have kept His ordinances? ”

But in the midst of all this spiritual declension there was one bright ray of light. A few had maintained their loyalty to Jehovah and sought to please Him, and these few faithful souls kept together and spake *often* one to another. The Lord was so pleased with this that *He made a note of it* in His book of remembrance.

There are many things in this world which cannot appeal to us as heavenly citizens: there are many things in the professing Christian Church with which we can have no fellowship whatever. May God grant us grace, therefore, to follow the example set by these God-fearing Jews in Malachi's day by appreciating the fellowship of saints, and thus endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. When brethren dwell together in unity, the Lord *commands* the blessing, even life for evermore. When brethren squabble and divide, the Lord *cannot* command the blessing, and thus we “limit the Holy One of Israel.” The two great obstacles to true fellowship among God's people are :—(1) AN INCONSISTENT LIFE : (2) THE HOLDING OF UNSOUND DOCTRINE. May we be saved from both of these soul-destroying practices.

If we are to enjoy fellowship one with another, we must first know the highest of all fellowship with the Father and with the Son. This is the burden of 1 John, chapter 1. If we are right in the centre we shall be right at the circumference.

When Paul landed on the Italian shores after his eventful voyage across the Mediterranean, he saw a sight which literally gladdened his heart. A small company of faithful brethren had travelled *forty-one miles* from Rome to Appii Forum to welcome God's beloved servant, and when Paul

Permanent Happiness.

saw them “He thanked God, and took courage.” Such is the reality of fellowship, and as we rise to our privileges and appreciate the companionship of our fellow-saints, OUR JOY WILL BE FULL.

The Secret of Power for Life and Service.

GOD desires, deserves, and demands the very best of our life and service. To accomplish these two all-important activities, we need power that only God can give. In the opening verses of Matthew, chapter 10, we are informed that the disciples were *called*, *empowered* (verse 1), *sent forth*, and *commanded* (verse 5); and herein lies a fourfold principle which is as applicable now as in the days of the disciples.

If the Lord Jesus has called us unto Himself, it is that we may know the inexpressible privilege of serving Him, and for this service He gives the necessary power; and it is then that He sends us forth. If we go forth on our own responsibility, our service will be futile; but if *He* sends us forth, success is assured. He will open doors of opportunity, also tell us what we should do, what we should say, and whither we should go.

In the closing verses of this first Gospel the familiar words are recorded, "All authority is given unto Me in Heaven and on earth." How delightful it is to be reminded of this! Following upon His mighty sacrificial work on the Cross, Christ has been vested with *all* authority above and below. He rules in Heaven without a rival — angels, authorities, and powers having been made subject unto

Power for Life and Service.

Him (1 Pet. 3, 22); and by and by, when this period of grace shall have run its divinely appointed course, He will exercise full sway over this distracted, storm-tossed earth. Then will be brought to pass the saying that is written, "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Following this declaration of divine authority are the momentous words — "*Go ye, therefore.*" Never let us divorce these two statements, seeing the second is so absolutely dependent on the first. Speaking after the manner of men, the disciples were faced with an impossible commission. Who were they that they should carry the news of the Gospel to "all nations"? Many of them were "unlearned and ignorant men"—mere Galilean fishermen. An adequate appreciation on our part of *their* realisation of utter helplessness should enable us to view with greater wonderment the glorious truth that He who said to them, "*Go ye, therefore,*" had already stated that all authority was His. How frequently we forget that He in whom we are trusting for salvation, and under whose command we are fighting the good fight of faith, is One who has never yet known defeat, *and who never will.*

There is a most important connecting link between this passage in Matthew, chapter 28, and St. Luke's record of our Lord's words as given in Acts, chapter 1, verse 8. A question was put to the Lord by His loved ones concerning a matter which had been revolving in their minds for some time past—the restoration of Israel. Was this the time for that restoration to take place? Were their hopes, so recently crushed (Luke 24, 21) to be realised at last? This was apparently the chief subject engaging their thoughts. The Lord gave them little encouragement when He said

Power for Life and Service.

that that was a divine secret which the Father had not seen fit to divulge, but He gave them every encouragement when He unfolded the promise that *they* should receive power, the Holy Spirit coming upon them. But wherefore this power? "*And ye shall be witnesses unto Me.*"

Bring these two passages into proximity, and the tremendous truth is seen that *the secret of power for life and service is centred in the Risen Lord, and that power has been communicated to the believer by the advent of the Holy Ghost.* This is one of the most wonderful and important facts for us to remember in our dual-relationship as children and servants of God. We are not now under the necessity of asking the Holy Spirit to come down and to indwell us. The truth is that He *has* descended, and He is *now* indwelling us, waiting to have His own way with us.

Before leaving this verse in Acts, chapter 1, we should do well to notice the possibility of an ever-extending influence, which is the outcome of faithfulness. If our scope of usefulness is to be widened, we must be faithful where we are. In scriptural language, if we are to witness in Judea, we must be faithful in Jerusalem. If we desire our usefulness to extend to Samaria, we must be faithful in Judea. If our influence is to extend to the uttermost parts of the earth (and there is no reason why it should not do so), we must be faithful in Samaria.

Relative to this subject of the coming of the Holy Spirit, our Lord's encouraging words in John, chapter 7, verses 37-39 might well be engraved upon the tablets of our memory. The phrase "Jesus stood and cried" implies the urgency of the truth He was about to express. The entire passage may be quoted as bearing upon the subject

Power for Life and Service.

under consideration :—" If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive : for the Holy Spirit was not yet given ; because that Jesus was not yet glorified)."

But now the Lord Jesus has been glorified : the Holy Spirit has been given ; and there is, therefore, no reason why, out of our innermost parts, there should not flow RIVERS of living water, that those around us who are thirsting for God might have that thirst assuaged. Would that we could enter into the spirit of this passage, if only in a limited measure !

It is often advantageous to join together passages which are in direct contrast the one with the other. Thus, in John, chapter 15, verse 5, the six-worded statement occurs : " Without Me ye can do nothing," and in Philippians, chapter 4, verse 13, the Apostle writes with a note of victory : " I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." These two passages show as vividly as any other two in the Scriptures our own utter helplessness, and the all-sufficiency of our now exalted Lord. Apart from Him we are useless : through Him we can be useful. Without Him life is empty and fruitless : through Him life is crowded with blessing and fruitfulness. Apart from Him we are defeated at every turn : through Him we are *more than conquerors*. Without Him nothing is possible : but, thank God, through Him *nothing is impossible*.

Let us come to " visions and revelations of the Lord." When Paul was caught up to the third Heaven, he heard words which it was not permitted him to utter. In consequence of these astounding revelations, there was a great danger of God's servant thinking of himself more highly

Power for Life and Service.

than he ought to think—"lest he should be exalted above measure." This statement unlocks 2 Corinthians, chapter 12, verse 7, and, significantly enough, locks it again. To shield His servant from getting into such a condition that God could not have His way with him, a spiritual antidote was allowed to be administered in the form of a thorn in the flesh. Whatever this particular "thorn" was, it was given to the Apostle to keep him in a right attitude of soul. Thrice did God's servant pray that this might be taken from him, and thrice he *seemingly* prayed in vain. Did God answer him? *Yes!* How? Not by removing the trial, *but by granting His child grace to bear it.* This was a far more gracious answer than if the thorn had been removed, just as it is often more wonderful for God to sustain us in a trial than to prevent us from experiencing the trial altogether.

It would have been wonderful indeed had God so ordered events that the three Hebrew young men could never have been cast into the furnace, or that Daniel could never have been thrown into the den of lions, but it was infinitely more wonderful in that He preserved His loyal servants *in* the furnace without even the smell of fire passing on them, and guarded His faithful representative *in* the den of the lions of the forest without a scratch having been inflicted.

When the Lord said: "My grace is sufficient for thee," He completed the statement by adding: "*For My strength is made perfect in weakness.*" This surely implies that the thorn was so sharp that it brought the Apostle to a state of abject weakness; in other words, to a place where God *could handle him effectually.* Instead of resisting, as he might have done, Paul joyfully acquiesces in this divine interposition, and exclaims with exultation: "Most gladly,

Power for Life and Service.

therefore, will I rather *glory* in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me . . . *for when I am weak, then am I strong.*" How delightful it is to see here the perfect harmony between God's dealings with His child, in order that His strength might be perfected in human frailty, and Paul's beautiful recognition that his very impotence was but the opportunity for the manifestation of divine omnipotence.

The maxim: "Man's extremity is God's opportunity" is not only true in the instance of one seeking salvation, but also in the lifelong experience of the believer. When we learn what we really are in ourselves, or, rather, when we get to the end of ourselves—and not till then—can God use us, how, and when, and where He will.

One of the most extraordinary passages in the New Testament is Ephesians, chapter 1, verses 19-23. It is well-nigh impossible adequately to appreciate the possibilities of a life lived in the power of the truth which the words describe. The Apostle desires the Ephesians believers to know (*inter alia*) the surpassing greatness of God's power, which is to usward who believe, according to the energy of the might of His strength which He exercised in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His own right hand in the Heavenlies.

The resurrection of Christ was the greatest exhibition of divine power ever put forth in this world's history. At the creation God had only to speak, and a thing was done—He had only to command, and a thing stood fast; but when His Son was raised from the dead, it meant the putting forth of "the might of His strength." But the most wonderful thing of all is that this mighty—this almighty-power is TO USWARD WHO BELIEVE. One almost gasps at the

Power for Life and Service.

stupendousness of the thought. It really means that the whole of the surpassing greatness of the power of God is placed at our disposal, thereby enabling us not only to live according to His will, but also to render to Him the most effective service of which, *by His grace we are capable.*

But there is another side to this truth, a side which we ought to face fairly and squarely, namely, *the terrible possibility of losing this power after having experienced it.*

There are three suggestive illustrations of this danger to which we will refer briefly in the hope that they may help some who, maybe, have lost the great joy of service, if not the greater joy of salvation.

(1) *The lost axe-head.*—This short, yet instructive, incident is recorded in the early part of 2 Kings, chapter 6. The sons of the prophet thought that their dwelling was too circumscribed, and, therefore, they suggested to Elisha that they should go unto Jordan, and there build a house which would afford more spacious accommodation. To this proposition the prophet agreed, but even this did not satisfy at least one of the young men, who took upon himself the task of asking his master to accompany them. To this, also, Elisha consented, and the little band made their way to the new headquarters.

There is ever a charm attached to any work we may undertake in which we ourselves are the most interested parties, and consequently these men worked with a will in cutting down wood for their new home. But something happened. "As one was felling a beam, the axe-head fell into the water." Now the axe-head was the most important part of that implement. Without it the workman was helpless. He might have struck at the tree all day with the handle without making the slightest impression—*the power had gone.* Nor was this the most serious part of the catas-

Power for Life and Service.

trophe. *That instrument did not belong to him*, and we can easily imagine the agitation of our friend as he went to Elisha, and exclaimed with deep emotion: "Alas, my master! for it was borrowed." Let us never forget that the power to which we have already referred, and which has been placed at our disposal, is *borrowed*—it has been entrusted to us—and sooner or later we must give an account as to the way in which we have utilised it. We will, however, leave the narrative at this juncture and come back to it later.

(2) *Samson, the strong man.*—As Solomon stands out as the man of wisdom in the Old Testament, so Samson is conspicuous as the man of strength. Both were weak in character, though manifestly great in the particular gifts with which God had endowed them. It is quite thrilling to picture Samson's extraordinary feats of strength. His first recorded act was performed on his way to Timnah with his father and mother. A young lion roared against him, and he simply took hold of the beast, and rent him as though he rent a kid; we distinctly read: "He had nothing in his hand." Shortly after this, he slew thirty men of Askelon with his own hand, and divided the spoils among the men who, through his wife's breach of confidence, had dishonestly answered his riddle. He then caught three hundred foxes, ingeniously tied them tail to tail, with a lighted firebrand between every two tails, and sent them helter-skelter into the Philistines' cornfields and vineyards. Not long after this he found a new jawbone of an ass, and with this insignificant weapon smote a thousand of his enemies. The next event took place at Gaza; the inhabitants laid wait for him all night intending to kill him at daybreak, but at midnight Samson arose, and took the doors of the gate, the two posts, and

Power for Life and Service.

carried them, "bar and all," on his gigantic shoulders to the top of an adjacent hill. He was afterwards bound with seven green withs which had never been dried, and these he snapped as a thread of tow is snapped when it touches the fire. The next experiment was to bind him fast with new ropes which had never been occupied, but these were broken like flax from his arms which were, indeed, "strong as iron bands."

So far Samson had been proof against every effort to bind him. He was far too strong for his enemies, few or many; but there came an occasion when, in a moment of weakness, he succumbed to the treachery of Delilah, and divulged the true secret of his strength. This wicked woman, who was in league with the Philistines, succeeded in obtaining from him the information that if only the seven locks of his head were shorn he would be as weak as any other man. Poor, miserable Samson. He had broken the contract into which he had entered with God, and how dearly he paid for his folly. His eyes were put out; he was bound with fetters of brass; he was compelled to grind in the prison-house; and, finally, he was made an object of sport for the Philistines. One of the most pathetic scenes in Scripture is Samson, blind and helpless, panting and spent, being led by the hand of a little boy to the centre pillars of the house of Dagon, the god of the Philistines, that he might lean upon them.

We will, however, leave the story at this stage, and return to it by and by.

(3) *Peter, the impetuous disciple.*—Peter stands out in the New Testament as a really great man, notwithstanding his impetuosity, and his many failings. There were occasions when he altogether outshone his fellow-disciples in

Power for Life and Service.

his clear-cut testimony, as when he made the magnificent confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Toward the close of our Lord's earthly ministry—in fact, on the very day He was betrayed by Judas and brought before Caiaphas—He said to His disciples: "All ye shall be offended because of Me this night," quoting Zechariah, chapter 13, verse 7, in confirmation. Before any of the others could say a word, Peter exclaimed (and it is necessary to collate the complete records of the Evangelists to appreciate the force of his reply): "*Although all shall be offended, yet will not I*"; and again: "*If I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee in any wise*"; and yet again: "*Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both into prison and to death*"; and yet once more: "*I will lay down my life for Thy sake.*" Now, in such a crescendo of vehemence, Peter meant every word he said, but, unhappily, he overlooked the truth that, although the spirit was willing, the flesh was weak—far weaker than he ever imagined.

Realising our own liability to falter, shall we, with becoming hesitancy, trace Peter's downward course which began almost immediately after these solemn protestations of his loyalty to Christ. At the entrance of the Garden of Gethsemane, he with James and John were enjoined by the Master to watch while He went a short distance away to pray. On His return He found them sleeping instead of watching, and He said to Peter: "What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?" The reason the Lord addressed these words particularly to Peter must be obvious to us all. Shortly after this, when Judas and his wicked coadjutors laid hands on Jesus, one of the "twelve" impetuously drew his sword (either to defend the Lord, or because his blood boiled with indignation at the way in which his Master was being handled—or both), and severed the right ear of

Power for Life and Service.

Malchus, the high priest's servant, an ungainly action which brought a sharp and spontaneous rebuke from the Saviour's lips. The Fourth Evangelist informs us that the name of this disciple was Simon Peter. "In the same hour" an event took place, the contemplation of which is always so sadly depressing: "Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled." As we watch the meek and lowly One being led away to the high priest's house, we see Peter also wending his way thither, but he follows "afar off," and instead of the distance between him and his Master narrowing, it, unfortunately, widens, until we perceive him sitting without in the palace court, warming himself by a fire of coals, for it was *cold* (and Peter by this time was *very cold*) when—once, twice, thrice, even with oaths and curses, he denies the One whom he had previously confessed to be the Christ, the Son of the living God. What could all this mean but that *the power for testimony had gone*. We will, however, leave Peter for the present and return to him anon.

I wonder if the foregoing illustrations answer to the experience of the friend who is, perchance, reading these lines! Time was, perhaps, when you had an earnest desire to please the Lord; a craving to be useful in His service; a hunger and thirst for the deep things of God. But now, maybe, that desire has abated; that craving has been stifled; that hunger and thirst have subsided. Yes, it is possible that the contact has been temporarily broken; the communication-cord of faith somehow damaged. But do not despair. The contact may be recovered; the communication-cord may be adjusted — THE POWER MAY BE RESTORED.

Now let us hastily repair to our three illustrations. Thank God, *the axe-head was restored*. When our friend told Elisha what had happened, the prophet raised the question,

Power for Life and Service.

“Where fell it?” The young man pointed to the place, and God’s servant thereupon cut down a stick, cast it into the water, and made the iron to swim, so that the man had only to put out his hand, take hold of the implement, and continue his work.

“*Where fell it?*” If we have lost touch with the Lord, shall we endeavour to trace the cause, and (whether we can trace the cause or not) confess our pitiful relapse, our carelessness, our worldliness, and thus ensure the full restoration of the joy of God’s salvation in our heart’s experience, and this will be accompanied by the power to live for Him and to serve Him acceptably.

The power was restored in the experience of Samson. In Judges, chapter 16, verse 22, are these encouraging words, “Howbeit the hair began to grow again, after that he was shaven.” (One often thinks of this verse when shaving.) And as the hair began to grow, the power was restored to so great an extent that as Samson bowed himself with all his might upon those two pillars, the house crashed upon the Philistines, so that he slew more in his death than he had slain in his life.

Once more the power was restored in the experience of Peter. We left him cold and powerless, but we find him soon afterwards at Pentecost when he gave that magnificently bold utterance for Christ, as a result of which about three thousand turned to the Lord.

Paul the Apostle:

A Model Servant of Christ.

IT cannot but prove edifying to examine the life and character of Paul, if only to ascertain how he came to be so successful in the service of God. We proceed to enumerate outstanding qualifications of the man, in the hope that they may give strength to a desire to imitate him in his devotion to Christ.

1. Paul was a PREPARED servant. If ever a man was prepared for his life's work it was the great Apostle of the Gentiles. The Lord's words to Ananias concerning him were:—"Go thy way; for he is a *CHOSEN VESSEL* unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." Thus we see that he was a chosen vessel at the very outset of his ministry. When he wrote and exhorted Timothy to be "*a vessel unto honour, sanctified, meet for the Master's use, and PREPARED unto every good work,*" Paul was really exhorting his son in the faith to be what he was himself; and what was true of God's honoured servant ought to be true of all His servants at home or abroad. Some of us are beginning to realise that we are only poor earthen vessels, frail and helpless at the best; and yet, after all, this is only what Paul was. How applicable are his words in 2 Corinthians, chapter 4, verse 7: "*But we have this treasure in EARTHEN VESSELS,*

Paul the Apostle.

that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." God can use the weakest earthen vessel, on the two-fold condition that it is clean and placed entirely at His disposal.

In the early part of Jeremiah, chapter 18, we are informed that the prophet paid an educational visit to the potter's house, and witnessed a work on the wheels; but the vessel that was made "was marred in the hands of the potter." This description reminds us of Saul of Tarsus, a marred vessel. It was not the divine potter's fault that the vessel was marred. A foreign substance called SIN had found its way into the material, and had spoiled the original design. Then the potter took the marred vessel and made of it another vessel, more beautiful than the first, "as seemed good to the potter to make it." Here we see a picture of Paul the Apostle, re-cast, re-made, created anew in Christ, a prepared vessel according to the mind of God.

Moses was a chosen servant of Jehovah, as is clearly seen in Psalm 106, verse 23: "*Therefore He said He would destroy them, had not Moses HIS CHOSEN stood before Him in the breach.*" Joseph was also a chosen vessel, as the words in Psalm 105, verse 17, imply: "*He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant.*" Similarly, Jeremiah was a prepared prophet of God, and in Jeremiah, chapter 1, verse 5, we are told that God had ordained him a prophet unto the nations before his birth. John the Baptist was likewise a chosen instrument, sent on before to prepare the way of the Lord. And so, as we see, Paul entered the royal line of chosen vessels which God used for the accomplishment of His eternal purposes, and for the glory of His great name.

2. Paul was a PRAYERFUL servant. This qualification

Paul the Apostle.

is so closely linked with the preceding one that it is somewhat difficult to separate them. Paul had learned to value two privileges—the Word of God and communion with the Most High. In his unconverted days he had acquired a wonderful knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures, and when at length it pleased God to reveal His Son in him, we see him at once a man of prayer. Referring again to Ananias, it is recorded in Acts, chapter 9, verse 11: “*And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus; for, behold, he prayeth.*” This was indeed one of the grandest sights Ananias had ever witnessed, and was also one of the greatest surprises of his life. If it is true that—

Satan trembles when he sees

The weakest saint upon his knees,

he must have trembled when he saw the great persecutor of God's saints in this attitude of devotion.

As a matter of fact, we see Saul of Tarsus in a prayerful attitude before this incident. Some of the first words he uttered after his conversion formed an earnest petition: “*Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*” just as one of his last-recorded statements was in the same strain: “*I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge*” (2 Tim. 4, 16). In his later years he could relate many a notable prayer-meeting at which it had been his privilege to be present, some of which are recorded for our encouragement and edification. He could recall that memorable time of prayer and fasting mentioned in Acts, chapter 13, when the Holy Spirit said: “*Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them*”; and as a result these two men of God were sent away by the Church, and sent forth

Paul the Apostle.

by the Holy Ghost, to preach the Gospel where Christ had never been named. He could also tell of that extraordinary season of prayer and praise in the Philippian prison when the dark and dingy cell was converted into a Bethel, and when, by one of the grandest earthquakes on record, the foundations of the prison were shaken, all the doors were opened, and all the prisoners' bonds were loosed.

Paul could likewise tell of the pathetic experience described in Acts, chapter 20, when he bade farewell to the Ephesian Elders, and he kneeled down and prayed with them all, after which they wept sore and fell upon his neck and kissed him.

Paul was a man of prayer because he believed in prayer and knew its power. He was persuaded of the truth of Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 6, "*He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.*" He was a man subject to like passions as ourselves, and he prayed earnestly, not only for himself, but also for his fellow-saints, and God heard and answered him again and again. It almost seems that his entire spiritual life was one long prayer and praise meeting.

But there was one episode in Paul's career which should be remembered particularly, namely, his Arabian experience referred to in Galatians, chapter 1, verse 17. Immediately after his conversion, he says that he conferred not with flesh and blood, but went into Arabia. Why Arabia, of all places, with its endless sands, blinding siroccos and infrequent oases? Surely Paul must have had little opportunity for public testimony in such a comparatively isolated area. How did he **occupy his days** there? There can be but one answer to all this: He spent his time in the presence of the Lord. It will never be known this side of Eternity how

Paul the Apostle.

much either the Church or the world at large owes to Paul's Arabian experience. Equally, if we are to live lives worth living, and to know the joy of successful service—if we are to be altogether and only what God would have us be—we must know something of this experience for ourselves: we must frequently be alone with God.

3. Paul was a PRACTICAL servant. This qualification is one of the greatest importance, and it was true of the Apostle in every sense of the word. It is delightful to contemplate the devoted life he lived, the extraordinary influence he exercised, the beautiful example he set. More than once he exhorted his fellow-believers to follow him as he followed Christ. He not only preached, but he practised, **AND HE PRACTISED WHAT HE PREACHED.** If he impressed upon the saints the need of humility, he could refer to himself as being the least of the Apostles, and less than the least of all saints. If he enjoined them to love one another as brethren, he could tell them that his own heart was so large that he could not help loving them, though it sometimes meant that the more he loved the less he was loved. If he besought them to be always praying, he set the example by remembering them unceasingly before the throne of grace. If he emphasised the importance of the saints being kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, there was never a kinder, more tender-hearted, more forgiving nature than his. If he exhorted them, as he did with all the power of which he was capable, to rejoice in the Lord, and to rejoice always, he could tell them how his own soul was overflowing with inexpressible joy, incarcerated though he was in a Roman prison.

Another way in which this practical side of the Apostle's life was manifested is seen in his urgent request to Timothy

Paul the Apostle.

to come to him before winter, and to bring with him Paul's cloak, books, and parchments. He needed the cloak for the warmth of his body in view of the approaching winter; he desired the books for the cultivation of his mind; and he especially requested the parchments for the development of his spiritual life, seeing they contained the indispensable Word of God. If the question is raised why Paul did not trust God for the winter months without needing his cloak, the answer is that he was too wise and practical a man to ask God to do for him what he was able to do for himself.

There is yet another way in which Paul's practical attitude manifested itself, namely, his daily occupation of tent-making. There are at least five passages in which we have his own words relative to this matter, which more than justify a microscopic examination. There is the pathetic statement in Acts, chapter 20, verses 33-34, where, addressing the Ephesian Elders, he says: "*I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.*"

There were many things Paul had done for them. He had warned every one of them night and day with tears; he had declared unto them the whole counsel of God; he had warned them that after his departure grievous wolves would enter from without, and false teachers would arise from within; he had commended them to God and to the word of His grace. He had done all this, but he had *never* desired their silver, or gold, or apparel. He was able to rise above these things. On the contrary, his own hands had toiled for himself and his fellow-labourers.

Another passage relative to the Apostle's attitude is found in 1 Thessalonians, chapter 2, verse 9: "*For ye*

Paul the Apostle.

remember, brethren, our labour and travail, for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable to any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God." Much as he loved to preach the Word; much as he revelled in the Lord's work; much as he might have desired to give himself entirely to the ministry, yet he would sooner toil night and day (possibly implying late nights and early mornings) than be a burden to the saints.

A companion passage to this is found in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, chapter 3, verses 8-9. After reminding them of his blameless behaviour in their midst, he continues: "*Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought, but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you. Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an example unto you to follow us.*" Observe the force of the latter part of this statement. He had power to do so—if any man could have exercised this power it was he—but he was willing to forego that privilege that he might be an example to the flock.

Yet another searching statement is recorded in 1 Corinthians, chapter 4, verses 11-13: "*Even unto this very hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place, and labour, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we intreat. We are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.*" This is one of those portions of Scripture which thrill the soul and stir the heart. In the first part Paul tells us *what* he suffered; in the latter part *how* he suffered; and in the centre we have a most extraordinary connecting link, "*and labour, working with our own hands.*" What marvellous endurance, what astounding

Paul the Apostle.

grace, what magnificent devotion these words unfold !

But perhaps the most wonderful and overwhelmingly convincing passage on this subject occurs in 1 Corinthians, chapter 9. Notice a few of the outstanding statements. "*Who goeth a warfare at any time at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Or who feedeth a flock and eateth not of the milk of the flock?*" (v. 7). "*Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn*" (verse 9). "*If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we reap your carnal things?*" (verse 11). "*If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather?*" (verse 12). "*Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers of the altar? Even so, hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel*" (verses 13 and 14). And so question upon question is raised; argument upon argument is mooted; nature, the law, and moral responsibility are all brought to bear upon this great fact that if any man was justified in living by the Gospel, that man was Paul the Apostle. But what is his answer to all these questions and arguments? In verse 12 he exclaims: "*Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the Gospel of Christ,*" whilst we have a still more vehement outburst in verse 15: "*But I have used none of these things; neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.*"

Immediately afterward, he speaks of his reward for preaching the Gospel—one of the most striking rewards mentioned in Scripture—namely, that when he preached the

Paul the Apostle.

Gospel, he might make the Gospel of Christ to be without charge. Holy, consistent, humble, devoted, Christ-like character that he was, HE WANTED HIS PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL TO BE AS FREE AS THE GOSPEL HE PREACHED. Notice three possibilities which the Apostle feared : (a) He dreaded the possibility of hindering the Gospel of Christ; (b) he feared lest his glorying should be nullified; (c) he dared not contemplate the possibility of abusing his power in the Gospel.

In emphasising this side of Paul's character, we are not casting any reflection on those who are giving their whole time to the work of the ministry; if God has clearly and definitely called them to that work, then they are where they should be. But what an intensely practical servant of God was the Apostle Paul, and how mightily was he enabled to set a grand and noble example to his brethren!

4. Paul was a PERSISTENT servant. Paul was ever on the move. His was one of the busiest lives ever lived. His first words to the Ephesian Elders were : "*Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you AT ALL SEASONS.*" He was always preaching the Word; always ready to give an answer to any who asked concerning the hope that was in him; always abounding in the work of the Lord. He was instant in season out of season, ever casting his bread upon the waters. In the morning he sowed his seed; at evening he withheld not his hand, because he knew not which would prosper, or whether both would be alike good. If he belonged to any "movement" it was the "ant movement," seeing that ants are scarcely ever idle (Prov. 6, 6).

It is interesting to trace, even briefly, some of his mis-

Paul the Apostle.

sionary activities. When he commenced his first journey, he sailed to Cyprus, and, arriving at Salamis, he preached the Word of God in the synagogue of the Jews. He then passed through the island and came to Paphos, where again he proclaimed the glad tidings, smote Elymas with blindness (on account of the latter's deliberate sinfulness in seeking to withstand the spread of the truth), and was instrumental in the conversion of the Proconsul. At Antioch, in Pisidia, he entered the synagogue and delivered the magnificent discourse recorded in Acts, chapter 13, which forms one of the model addresses in the Acts of the Apostles. At Iconium he and Barnabas entered the synagogue, and *so spake* that a great multitude of the Jews, and also of the Greeks, believed, after which he stayed for some time speaking boldly in the Name of the Lord. At Lystra and Derbe he continued his favourite employment of preaching the Gospel. At Philippi he spoke to the women by the riverside, when Lydia was converted, and prayed and sang in the Philippian prison with his true yoke-fellow Silas, when the jailor and his family were brought to the Lord. At Salonica he entered the synagogue and for three Sabbath days reasoned with the Jews, proving from the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ, and at Berea he discoursed on the same glorious theme.

At Athens Paul first reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews, then daily in the market-place with all who met him, and afterward preached his famous address on Mars Hill. We then trace him to Corinth, where he continued for eighteen months teaching the Word of God, and also disputing *daily* in the school of one Tyrannus. At Ephesus he spake boldly for three months, "reasoning and persuading the things concerning the Kingdom of God." He then made for Jerusalem, breaking his journey at various places, among

Paul the Apostle.

which were Troas, where he preached until midnight, and Miletus, where he gave his beautiful and touching exhortation to the Ephesian elders; and at length he arrived in the holy city, where he preached from the stairs of the castle because of the violence of the mob, and emphasised the truth of the Resurrection before the Sanhedrim. He was then escorted by Roman soldiers (footmen, horsemen, and spearmen) to Cæsarea, where he testified before Felix and Festus, and gave one of the grandest utterances for Christ, before Agrippa, that ever fell from human lips. At Malta he healed the father of the chief man of the island, besides many others; and when, finally, he reached Rome, for two whole years he received all who came to him and preached the Kingdom of God, and taught those things which concerned the Lord Jesus Christ—to say nothing of the numerous letters he wrote, and the many tents he manufactured by his own hands. It seems well nigh incredible that so much could have been packed into one short life.

5. Paul was a PATIENT servant. Now, patience is one of the first lessons we should learn in the school of grace, and some of us have not yet learnt it! If we were to sit for a stiff examination in practical patience, very few of us would pass with honours. We live in an age when a great proportion of the community try to live a week in a day—a state of things which is in no wise conducive to the cultivation of patience.

The Apostle James makes some pointed remarks on this subject in his intensely practical Epistle. He urges believers (chapter 1) to allow patience to have her perfect work, and again (chapter 5) he exhorts them to “be patient unto the coming of the Lord.” He speaks of the husbandman who waits for the precious fruits of the earth, and has

Paul the Apostle.

long patience for it. Now, there are two kinds of patience—long and short. The “short” kind is so common that it is not worth entertaining. It is the “long” patience that counts with God, and which is of value in His estimation. How irritable many believers are: what little patience they exercise when tested! How frequently they answer to Solomon’s description of a fool “who uttereth all his mind”; how seldom do they answer to his description of the wise man, “who keepeth it in till afterwards.” To express ourselves without reserve under trying conditions is often disastrous, because we are in danger of saying things which we may have to regret when it is too late. Instead of allowing our tongues to have the mastery over us, it is always safer to “keep it in,” that is—shut the door, and see that it is barred and bolted, and then seek grace from on high to obtain the victory. So much for James.

But what has Paul to say about this subject? Notice his fourfold advice to Timothy: (1) “*The servant of the Lord must not strive*, (2) *but be gentle*, (3) *apt to teach*, (4) *patient*.” What a delightful picture is presented here of the Master Himself. (1) “*He shall not strive nor cry*.” (2) “*I am meek, and lowly of heart*.” (3) “*Rabbi, we know Thou art a teacher come from God*.” (4) “*The Lord direct your hearts into the patience of Christ*.” The picture was also true of the great Apostle himself, and it shows us what *we* should be as servants of God. In the same Epistle (3, 10) Paul is able by divine grace to contrast his consistent behaviour with the inconsistent conduct of the enemies of the truth, in these words: “*But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life . . .* **PATIENCE.**” When he undertakes to approve himself as a minister of God, he gives a long list of items which

Paul the Apostle.

commended that ministry, and the very first item is "*in much patience*" (2 Cor. 6, 4); and, moreover, when he vindicates his apostleship in the most convincing manner possible, he writes: "*Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you IN ALL PATIENCE; in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds*" (2 Cor. 12, 12). If we lack this grace of patience, we are lacking in one of the most essential qualifications for the service of God.

(6) Paul was a PERSECUTED servant. This, of course, was not a qualification, but a necessary outcome of his devotion to Christ. We can only realise to a limited extent what this dear man suffered for the truth, but *all* that he endured is carefully registered in the divine records, and will be revealed at the judgment seat of Christ. It may not be an exaggeration to say that Paul suffered more for the sake of the Gospel than any servant of God since Pentecost." The words to Ananias in Acts, chapter 9, verse 16, "*For I will show him how great things he must suffer for My Name's sake,*" were literally fulfilled. He who had persecuted the saints right up to the hilt was now to feel the bitterness of persecution from the hands of his enemies.

In later years the Holy Spirit revealed to him the fact that bonds and afflictions were awaiting him in every city, and the truthfulness of that statement was verified throughout his eventful history. It is on record that his life was attempted at least six times. When he preached in Damascus, the Jews pursued him, and they watched the gates day and night to kill him. The governor, under Aretas, the king, actually guarded the city with a garrison, desiring to apprehend him, a desire which was never fulfilled, because the disciples lowered him through the wall

Paul the Apostle.

in a basket—not a very dignified means of escape—but God has chosen the foolish and weak things of this world to confound the wise and the mighty.

At Antioch in Pisidia, the Jews wickedly stirred up the devout and honourable women and chief men of the city, and raised a bitter persecution against him and Barnabas, and expelled them from their coasts. At Iconium, Jews and Gentiles joined hands in making an assault upon them to use them despitefully, and to stone them, whilst at Lystra Paul was actually stoned and left as dead. These were periods of such terrific persecution that they were never erased from his memory. He reminded Timothy of them in 2 Timothy, chapter 3, verse 11, but added with a note of triumph, "*But out of them all the Lord delivered me.*" At Philippi he and Silas were unceremoniously brought before the rulers, then before the magistrates, when they had their clothes rent from their backs, were unmercifully beaten with rods, cast into prison, thrust into the inner cell (one of those "pestilential cells, damp and cold, from which the light was excluded, and where chains rusted on the prisoners"), and had their feet made fast in the stocks.

At Salonica the Jews gathered together the riff-raff of the city, and set the whole place in an uproar. At Corinth the Jews opposed and blasphemed, and subsequently brought Paul before Gallio on a cunningly devised charge. At Ephesus the entire city was filled with confusion, and the extraordinary scene was witnessed in the theatre (an enormous building capable of accommodating 24,500 people), when the ignorant and fanatical mob, with a deafening shout for the space of about two hours, cried "*Great is Diana of the Ephesians.*"

At Jerusalem the situation was absolutely appalling. The whole city was moved; the Jews went about to kill him;

Paul the Apostle.

such was the violence of the unrestrained mob that he was borne by the soldiers to the castle for safety. The ominous words sounded in his ears, "*Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live,*" whilst in the Sanhedrim he was well-nigh pulled to pieces by the religious authorities, and again had to be forcibly taken by the soldiers to the castle for safety. The very next day more than forty Jews bound themselves under an awful curse that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. If these men were true to their oath, they must have died of starvation, inasmuch as they were never able to fulfil their diabolical purpose. At Cæsarea, Paul was brought before Felix on a number of false charges.

Finally, we see him in Rome before Nero, that monster of iniquity, and with restrained emotion we watch the end when he cheerfully seals his testimony with his blood, a faithful martyr of Jesus Christ, having fought the good fight; having finished his course; having guarded the faith; now to await the crown of righteousness which he will receive from the hands of the Righteous Judge in the crowning day that is coming by and by.

As we think of the wonderful life Paul lived, and consider these outstanding characteristics, may we have grace to follow in his steps, as he so closely followed in the steps of his Lord!

Suggestions Concerning Personal Bible Study.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

IN approaching the Word of God, we need to bear in mind (*inter alia*) the following items :—

The Bible is an unique Book, and should therefore be studied differently from any other book—it should be studied *carefully* and *prayerfully*.

The Holy Spirit, whose gracious office it is to reveal the Living Word through the written Word, is the *Great Teacher*, and apart from His illumination, all the study in the world will fail to give us a correct understanding of the sacred Scriptures. At the same time, remember that God has given you a brain, and He expects you to exercise that delicate machine for His glory.

One of the outstanding wonders of the Word of God is that, notwithstanding the fact that it has been studied and expounded by tens of thousands of God's faithful servants throughout the ages, it is as fresh, as delightful, as powerful, and as interesting to-day as ever, and just as there are heights of Christian experience which we have never yet reached, and just as there are beauties and glories in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ which we have never yet appreciated, so there are invaluable gems hidden in the Scriptures which we have never yet discovered.

Bible Study Suggestions.

It is a great privilege to hear the Word of God expounded, but it is an equally great privilege to study it ourselves.

If we are to find out the value of this "Book Wonderful," *we must resolve to devote time to definite and systematic study.* Pearls are not found on the surface of the water, but *underneath.*

The constant study of the Bible, instead of becoming an irksome business, ought to be our highest delight.

We are distinctly encouraged, both by precept and example, to search the Scriptures:—

"*Search the Scriptures*" (John 5, 39).

"*They searched the Scriptures daily*" (Acts 17, 11).

"*The prophets . . . inquired and searched diligently*" (1 Pet. 1, 10).

If you do not know Greek, and have neither time nor inclination to learn it, don't let that deficiency trouble you. If you can read the New Testament in the "original," wholly or in part, so much the better, only remember the maxim that "*a little knowledge is a dangerous thing.*"

If you are an employee, *don't study your Bible in business hours.* Many have weakened their testimony through this and similar indiscretions.

Don't study the Bible when you ought to be doing other things. For instance, it is a mistake for our younger sisters to be studying the Word when they ought to be mending their own stockings and their brothers' socks, just as it is unwise for our younger brethren to study the Bible when they should be cleaning their own and their sisters' shoes.

Don't over-study. Your brain can only bear a limited amount of strain. When you become weary, don't tempt Providence by persisting in your studies.

For profitable Bible study two things are essential—an

Bible Study Suggestions.

Infit and *an Outfit*. The “infir” consists of a God-begotten desire to know more of Christ through His Word. The “outfit” implies four items:—

1. *A Bible*. I would strongly advise my young friends to secure a *good* Bible, with a fairly wide margin for marking purposes.
2. *A Concordance*. Some Christians refuse to make use of this valuable adjunct, but, personally, I use a Concordance freely for the simple reason that I have not committed the whole of the Scriptures to memory.
3. *An Exercise Book*.
4. *A pencil*. These last two may appear insignificant, but they are helpful nevertheless.

There are many believers (old as well as young) who have an intense longing to understand the sacred Scriptures more clearly, but are at a loss to know exactly how to “get to work,” and, appreciating this difficulty, we will proceed to suggest three profitable methods of Bible study, which the writer has found exceedingly helpful in his own experience.

It is scarcely necessary to add that these methods are *only suggestive*, and not by any means exhaustive—just handrails which perchance may help some of my younger brethren to ascend the staircase of divine knowledge.

As to which of the two is the better time for study, morning or evening, no definite rule can be laid down. A great deal depends upon circumstances, though, of course, it is ever important to *start* the day by letting God speak to you through His Word.

1. TELESCOPIC METHOD.

This means taking a wide survey of the teaching of Scrip-

Bible Study Suggestions.

ture or its component parts. It is very necessary to cultivate a well-balanced apprehension of the Truth, as this will enable you to distinguish between false teachings (many of which appear to have the support of certain isolated passages of the Bible without being able to bear the test of the *whole* of Scripture), and sound doctrine which is not only *willing*, but positively *demand*s to be tested by the entire Word of God. For this purpose you will find the "Telescopic" method invaluable.

Example :—Contrasting the Old Testament with the New.

OLD TESTAMENT.

Records various dates.

Records a great number of deaths.

God spake to the people by the prophets.

God spake from Heaven.

Many prophecies concerning the first coming of Christ.

God is occupied with an earthly people.

One prominent sign of God's favour was temporal prosperity.

NEW TESTAMENT.

Records very few dates.

Records very few deaths; practically only those who suffered violent deaths, or those who were subsequently raised. (See 2 Tim. 1, 10.)

God has spoken unto us by His Son.

God *came down* from Heaven.

The prophecies are literally fulfilled.

God is occupied with a heavenly people.

The great evidence of God's favour is spiritual blessing.

Bible Study Suggestions.

The Church is obscure—a divine secret.

The Church is revealed—a glorious reality.

God dwelt in a tabernacle and in a temple.

God's dwelling place is His people.

Further Example :—Contrasting Law and Grace.

LAW.

Says "Do and live."

Brought bondage and death.

Demands.

Says "Pay me that thou owest."

Condemns everybody.

Cuts the ground from under our feet, and shuts the door of Heaven in our face.

At Sinai about 3,000 perished.

Was seen in all its terror at Sinai.

At Sinai we see God's frown.

Thousands of sacrifices were offered which could never take away sins, nor make the comers thereunto perfect.

GRACE.

Says "Live and do."

Brings liberty and life.

Gives.

Says "The debt is paid."

Offers salvation to everybody.

Has flung *wide open* the door of Heaven, and says, "Whosoever will may come."

At Pentecost about 3,000 lived.

Was seen in all its beauty at the Cross.

As a result of the Cross we see God's smile.

One sacrifice was offered by which all who believe are justified from all things, and perfected for ever.

Bible Study Suggestions.

Shewed man his need but Shows the sinner his need,
could not supply the remedy. *and also supplies the remedy.*

Endeavour to add to this very incomplete list. The references to the above truths can easily be ascertained by careful reading, and the use of a concordance. The same remarks apply to the contrasts between the Old and New Testaments.

The study of a particular *book or Epistle* comes under this method. In order to grasp the teaching of a particular portion of Scripture (*e.g.*, an Epistle), it is of little use to read it through only once. It should be read through carefully and thoughtfully *at least twenty times*, and as many more as possible. By this means you will be enabled to see the general character of the Epistle, its peculiar phraseology and teaching. Fresh thoughts will strike your mind at each successive reading, and these should be noted *at the time* in your exercise book for future use.

*Example :—*The Epistle to the Philippians.

By reading through this letter carefully we see that it sets forth the ideal life of the believer; hence the word "sin" does not occur once.

Notice how the teaching of this Epistle differs from that of other Epistles :—

The Church is not explained as in Ephesians and Colossians.

The second coming of the Lord is not particularised as in 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

The High Priesthood of Christ is not emphasised as in Hebrews.

The glories of the future are not unfolded as in Revelation.

Bible Study Suggestions.

Christ is the main theme of the Epistle—He is mentioned nearly forty times, and He is presented in various aspects in each chapter, thus :—

Chapter 1—Purpose	. . . .	Anticipation.
„ 2—Pattern	. . . .	Adoration.
„ 3—Prize .	. . . .	Appreciation.
„ 4—Power and Provision .	. . . .	Application.

The three beautiful threads of *Joy, Fellowship, and Confidence* twine and intertwine themselves through the four chapters. Search for each of these threads carefully, noting the context, and you will have a spiritual feast, the value of which will be incalculable.

Notice the expression in chapter 2, verse 21, “The things which are Jesus Christ’s,” and follow these “things” through the Epistle :—

Bond-servants of Christ (chap. 1, 1).

Day of Christ (chap. 2, 16).

Tender mercies of Christ (chap. 1, 8).

Spirit of Christ (chap. 1, 19).

Gospel of Christ (chap. 1, 27).

Work of Christ (chap. 2, 30).

Knowledge of Christ (chap. 3, 8).

Faith of Christ (chap. 3, 9).

Cross of Christ (chap. 3, 18).

Grace of Christ (chap. 4, 23).

If the Epistle shows how we should live, we might confidently expect to see, *either expressed or implied*, the nine properties comprising the fruit of the Spirit mentioned, and this is exactly what we do see :—Love (chap. 1, 9); Joy (chap. 1, 18); Peace (chap. 4, 7); Longsuffering (chap. 1,

29); Gentleness (chap. 4, 5); Goodness (chap. 4, 18); Faith (chap. 1, 25); Meekness (chap. 2, 15); Self-control (chap. 2, 14).

The study of a particular *chapter* also comes under this "Telescopic" method. The foregoing remarks with reference to Epistle-study apply equally to chapter-study.

This chapter might well be designated "The holy of holies." The Lord Jesus is engaged with His Father on behalf of "His own."

1. The three ways in which the Father is addressed:—
Righteous Father (v. 25) because of His relationship
toward the world.

***Father* (v. 1) the Cross (v. 24) the glory.**

2. The seven-fold mention of the fact that the believer is the Father's gift to the Son. (Trace these occurrences, and note particularly the setting of each).

3. The particular gifts granted by the Lord Jesus to His Saints :—

Eternal life (v. 2).

The Father's Name (v. 6).

The Father's words (v. 8).

The Father's word (v. 14).

(plural)

(singular)

The Father's glory (v. 22).

Bible Study Suggestions.

4. The Lord's particular requests concerning

(a) Himself :—

“Glorify Thy Son” (v. 1). The Cross.

“Glorify Me” (v. 5). The glory.

(b) His own :—

“That they might be kept” (vv. 11 and 15).

“That His joy might be fulfilled in them” (v. 13).

“That they might be sanctified” (v. 17).

“That they all might be one” (v. 21).

“That they might be with Him in glory” (v. 24).

5. The two-fold mention of the fact that as the Father loves the Son, *such* is the Father's love to us (vv. 23 and 26). (Always connect this truth with John 15, 9).

6. The Lord's references to the world. (Trace these through the chapter, and notice in them the Lord's attitude toward the world, and what our attitude should be).

7. The seven-fold reference to the fact that the Lord Jesus was the “Sent One” from God in verses 3; 8 (twice); 18; 21; 23; 25.

These are but a few of the many beautiful truths nestled in this chapter. Endeavour to discover more yourself.

Having read through a chapter several times, thereby becoming acquainted with its main characteristics, try your hand at *analysing* the portion. Your first attempt may prove chaotic, but do not despair; go over it again, and yet again, until you succeed in developing your chaos into an orderly outline.

Bible Study Suggestions.

Let me give you two examples :—

I. BRIEF ANALYSIS OF ROMANS 12.

Main Theme—The Believer's Attitude :—

	Verses.
1 TOWARD GOD.	
(a) An acceptable sacrifice.	1
(b) An intelligent service.	1
2. TOWARD THE WORLD.	
(a) True non-conformity.	2
(b) Spiritual transformation.	2
(c) The perfect will of God.	2
3. TOWARD HIMSELF.	
(a) The grace of humility.	3
(b) The measure of faith.	3
4. TOWARD THE BODY OF CHRIST (<i>i.e.</i>, the Church).	4-8
(a) The divine membership.	4-5
(b) The exercise of gift.	6-8
5. TOWARD HIS BRETHREN.	9; 10; 13; 15; 16
(a) Affection—not affectation.	10
(b) Self-renunciation.	10
(c) Mutual sympathy.	15
6. TOWARD ALL MEN.	17-18
(a) Honesty of purpose.	17
(b) Peaceableness.	18
7. TOWARD HIS ENEMIES.	14; 19; 20; 21
(a) Suffering wrong.	14; 19
(b) Effective retribution.	20-21

Continue along this line of "the Believer's attitude" with

Bible Study Suggestions.

chapter 13, and notice how easily the chapter thus divides itself.

II. BRIEF ANALYSIS OF 2 TIMOTHY 4.

	Verses.
1. THE APOSTLE'S MOMENTOUS CHARGE.	1-5
(a) Its solemnity in view of coming judgment.	1
(b) Its character and necessity of implicit obedience.	2
(c) Its cause—departure from the truth.	3-4
(d) Its call—to endurance and effective service.	5
2. THE APOSTLE'S MAGNIFICENT TESTIMONY.	6-8
(a) His <i>present</i> resignation.	6
(b) His <i>past</i> devotion.	7
1. As a soldier—the good fight.	7
2. As an athlete—the straight course.	7
3. As a steward—the guarded faith.	7
(c) His <i>future</i> reward :—	8
1. Its composition—a crown of righteousness.	8
2. Its Dispenser—the Righteous Judge.	8
3. Its possibility—to all the faithful.	8
3. THE APOSTLE'S URGENT REQUEST.	9-13; 21
The reasons unfolded :—	
(a) The failure of Demas.	10
(b) The departure of Crescens and Titus.	10
(c) The desire for the fellowship of Mark.	11
(d) The removal of Tychicus.	12
(e) The needed cloak, books and parchments.	13
4. THE APOSTLE'S SERIOUS WARNING.	14-15

Bible Study Suggestions.

5. THE APOSTLE'S FIRST DEFENCE.	16-17
(a) Forsaken by all men.	16
(b) Upheld and strengthened by the Lord	17
1. For the preaching of the Gospel.	17
2. For the blessing of the Gentiles.	17
(c) Delivered from the lion's mouth.	17
6. THE APOSTLE'S CALM CONFIDENCE.	18
(a) Concerning deliverance from evil.	18
(b) Concerning final preservation.	18
(c) The accompanying doxology.	18
7. THE APOSTLE'S FINAL GREETINGS AND BENEDICTION.	19-22

2. THE MICROSCOPIC METHOD.

This clearly implies a minute investigation of Scripture. The tracing of a particular *word* through the Bible would come under this category, and this is frequently a most profitable course of study.

For this purpose you will naturally use your concordance. First, write out the entire verses in the order in which they occur in the Word of God, and then you will be able to arrange them in the order which best suits your purpose.

*Example :—*The word NOW as an adverb.

(N.B.) Where the exact words of the text are not given it is for the sake of space.

Rom. 16, 26	The Church mystery is NOW made manifest.
2 Tim. 1, 10.	God's eternal purpose and grace are NOW made manifest.
1 John 3, 2.	" Beloved, NOW are we the sons of God."

Bible Study Suggestions.

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| 1 Peter 1, 8. | "In whom, though NOW ye see Him not," etc. |
| 1 Cor. 13, 12 | { "NOW we see through a glass darkly,
but then face to face."
"NOW I know in part, but then shall I know," etc., |
| Eph. 3, 10. | "That NOW unto the principalities and powers," etc. |
| Heb. 9, 24. | "NOW to appear in the presence of God for us." |
| Gal. 2, 20. | "The life which I NOW live in the flesh," etc. |

By tracing a little word like this through Scripture a veritable gold-mine of truth is revealed.

It is important to remember, when tracing a particular word, to trace also, as far as is expedient, its synonyms, such as fellowship—communion—concord—agreement—joint-heirs, etc.

Following a particular *phrase* through the Bible would also be included in this method.

*Example :—*The statement, "ALL THINGS."

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|---------------|--|
| 2 Cor. 5, 18. | "ALL THINGS are of God." |
| 1 Cor. 3, 21. | "ALL THINGS are yours." |
| Rom. 8, 32. | "How shall He not with Him also freely give us ALL THINGS." |
| 2 Peter 1, 3. | "According as His divine power hath given unto us ALL THINGS." |
| Rom. 8, 28. | "We know that ALL THINGS work together for good." |
| Heb. 1, 2. | "Whom He hath appointed Heir of ALL THINGS." |

Bible Study Suggestions.

- Heb. 2, 17. "In ALL THINGS it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren."
- Heb. 4, 13. "ALL THINGS are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."
- Eph. 1, 11. "Who worketh ALL THINGS after the counsel of His own will."
- 1 Pet. 4, 11. "That God in ALL THINGS may be glorified."
- 1 Cor. 14, 40. "Let ALL THINGS be done decently and in order."
- Phil. 2, 14. "Do ALL THINGS without murmurings and disputings."
- Phil. 4, 13. "I can do ALL THINGS through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Here again we have an almost inexhaustive field of truth unfolded.

We now come to a phase of Bible study which requires great thought and care, namely, the close examination of a particular *verse* in which various shades of truth are presented.

Example :—2 Cor. 3, 18.

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|-------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. "But we all" | Comprehension. |
| 2. "With unveiled face" | Illumination. |
| 3. "Beholding as in a mirror" | Reflection. |
| 4. "The glory of the Lord" | Revelation. |

Bible Study Suggestions.

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| 5. "Are transformed" | Transformation. |
| 6. "Into the same image" | Identification. |
| 7. "From glory to glory." | Progression. |
| 8. "Even as by the Spirit of the Lord" | Application. |

A Further Example :—1 Cor. 15, 58.

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| 1. "Therefore" | A connecting link with the previous part of the chapter. |
| 2. "My beloved brethren" | A title of endearment, notwithstanding their sad history. |
| 3. "Be ye stedfast" | In <i>faith</i> (see Col. 2, 5). |
| 4. "Unmoveable" | In <i>hope</i> (see Col. 1, 23). |
| 5. "Always abounding in the work of the Lord" | In <i>loving</i> service. |
| 6. "Forasmuch as ye <i>know</i> " | Full assurance. |
| 7. That your labour is not in vain in the Lord" | A glorious encouragement. |

Whenever you find the word "therefore" or "wherefore" at the beginning of a verse, always look back and endeavour to trace its antecedent.

Before leaving this interesting method of Bible study we will mention one other aspect of Biblical investigation, namely, comparing one book or one Epistle with another, noticing the slight, yet important, differences.

Bible Study Suggestions.

Example :—Ephesians and Colossians.

<i>Ephesians.</i>	SUBJECT.	<i>Colossians.</i>
Ch. Verse		Ch. Verse.
1 7	Redemption	1 14
1 10 (according to God's eternal purpose)	Reconciliation of all things	1 20 (as a result of the Cross)
2 5	Union with Christ	2 18
3 2—10 (revealed to the apos- tles and prophets).	Revelation of the Church	1 24—29 (revealed to His saints)
4 16	Compactness of the Body (i.e., the Church)	2 19
4 22—25 (present)	Putting off and putting on	3 9 & 10 (past)
4 31	Putting away malice, wrath, etc.	3 8
4 32 (as God has forgiven us)	Kindness and forgive- ness	3 13 (as Christ has for- given us)
5 3—7	Living a clean life	3 5—8
5 15 & 16	Walking in wisdom	4 5
5 19 & 20 (making melody in the heart)	Singing	3 16 & 17 (with grace in the heart)
5, v. 22—ch. 6, v. 9	Connubial and filial relationships	3, v. 18—ch. 4, v. 1
6 18—20	Prayer and thanks- giving	4 2—4
6 21 & 22	The ministry of Tyndal	4 7 & 8

A most interesting and profitable hour could be spent by comparing Psalm 23 with John, chapter 10, verses 1-30, noticing the many subjects which are mentioned in both passages : — shepherd—pastures—guidance—safety—provision—fulness of blessing—eternal joy, etc. Another suggestive comparison would be found between Acts, chapter 12, verses 1-19; and Acts, chapter 16, verses 19-40. In the former narrative Peter is in prison, asleep, quiet, disturbing nobody, but eventually delivered by the angel who smote him on the side, and said, " Rise up quickly." In the latter

Bible Study Suggestions.

narrative Paul and Silas are also in prison, but wide awake, noisy, disturbing everybody, and eventually released by the Authorities, who actually came themselves and “desired them to depart out of the city.” Observe that in both instances God’s servants celebrated their deliverance by going “to their own company,” and then endeavour to find out other interesting items which are mentioned in both passages, or which are in direct contrast, or which are present in one and absent in the other.

3. THE KALEIDOSCOPIC METHOD.

This method implies grouping a number of verses together dealing with the same subject. It is a method which can best be cultivated by experience.

Example :—

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|---------------|---|
| Psa. 119, 32. | “ I will <i>run</i> in the way of Thy com-
mandments.” |
| 1 Pet. 5, 8. | “ Your adversary the devil, as a roar-
ing lion, <i>walketh</i> about, seeking
whom he may devour.” |
| Deut. 28, 2. | “ All these things shall come upon
thee and <i>overtake</i> thee, if thou
shalt hearken to My voice.” |

Observe the sequence in the above passages. If we are *running*, and the adversary is only *walking*, he will never overtake us; though, on the other hand, however fast we may run, *God’s blessings will overtake us* if we are obedient to His Word.

The following example unfolds two of the most important facts which pertain to spiritual life and service, viz. :—human impotence and divine Omnipotence.

Bible Study Suggestions.

- John 15, 5. "Without Me ye can do *nothing*."
Phil. 4, 13. "*I can do all things* through Christ
who *strengtheneth Me*."
2 Cor. 12, 9. "My *strength* is made perfect in
weakness."
2 Cor. 12, 10. "When I am *weak* then am I *strong*."
Heb. 11, 34. "(Who) out of *weakness* were made
strong."

Endeavour to adopt this line of study with reference to other phases of Christian experience, *e.g.*, our ignorance and God's wisdom; our nothingness and His greatness; our failures and His perfections, etc.

It is always advantageous to trace the *ascending stages* of a particular truth, as the familiar passage in Philippians, chapter 2, verses 9-11, unfolding as it does so majestically the resurrection glories of Christ, beautifully illustrates. In many instances, however, it is necessary to link together separate passages for this purpose, thus :—

- Heb. 4, 14. "We have a great high priest that
is *passed into the Heavens*."
Heb. 7, 26. "Made *higher than the Heavens*."
Heb. 8, 1. "Who is set on the right hand of the
throne of the Majesty in the Heavens."

You will find many opportunities for this branch of study both in the Gospels (the fourth Gospel particularly), and also in the Pauline Epistles. Moreover, as you become increasingly acquainted with your Bible you will experience

Bible Study Suggestions.

one of the greatest joys in life, viz.:—*The Holy Spirit will bring to your mind a number of other passages exactly bearing upon, and dovetailing into, the particular subject you have had laid on your mind.*

Another interesting and profitable line of study, which comes under this third method, is to compare the various gospels when the same parable or miracle or discourse is recorded by more than one evangelist.

Example :—The storm on the lake.

<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>
	2. He was in the hinder part of the ship asleep on a pillow	1. He fell asleep
3. A great tempest.	2. A violent storm	1. A storm of wind
1. The ship was covered by the waves	2. The waves beat into the ship	3. They were filled with water, and were in jeopardy
	2. Carest thou not that we perish? (unbelief)	1. Master, Master, we perish (fear)
3. O ye of little faith	2. How is it that ye have no faith? (The numbers suggest degrees of emphasis)	1. Where is your faith?

Then read carefully the three-fold presentation of the parable of the sower by the first three evangelists, and notice the important distinctions between them. By this means you will be enabled to appreciate the full significance of the parable, which otherwise would not be possible—and so continue with the four Gospels along these lines.

I will give you one more illustration of this method of Bible study—an illustration which lends itself to an enlarging which is well nigh indefinite, namely—the comparison of the three instances recorded in the Gospels when the Lord raised the dead to life :—

Bible Study Suggestions.

<p style="text-align: center;">THE MAID <i>Mark 5</i> Had just died</p> <p>The Lord took her by the hand</p> <p>He said, "<i>Maid</i>, I say unto thee, arise."</p> <p>The maid arose and walked</p> <p>The Lord commanded that something should be given her to eat</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THE YOUNG MAN. <i>Luke 7</i> Was on the way to the burying place</p> <p>He touched the coffin</p> <p>He said, "<i>Young man</i>, I say unto thee, arise"</p> <p>The young man sat up and began to speak</p> <p>He delivered him to his mother</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">LAZARUS <i>John 11</i> Had been in the grave four days</p> <p>He commanded that the stone should be rolled away</p> <p>He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth"</p> <p>Lazarus was the one who sat with the Lord</p> <p>He said, "Loose him, and let him go"</p>
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As you accustom yourself to this instructive principle of comparing Scripture with Scripture, the habit will grow upon you so manifestly that you will very soon discover the tremendous value of the "Kaleidoscopic" method of Biblical research.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

You will often find it a great advantage to get alone by yourself and read the Bible *aloud*. This will help you to read distinctly and to "give the sense," so that if ever you are called upon to read the Scriptures publicly you will enable your listeners to "understand the reading." (See Neh. 8, 8.)

The foregoing examples are mainly from the New Testament for the sake of simplicity and convenience, especially seeing that those of us who are in business have only a limited time for study at our disposal.

Further, if the reader has been helped in any way through these elementary suggestions, let him remember that his responsibility has been increased proportionately.

Bible Study Suggestions.

God bless you, my dear friend, in your quest for the highest of all knowledge—THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

STUDY—STUDY—STUDY.

“ *Study* to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, *rightly dividing the word of truth* ” (2 Tim. 2, 15).

Doubts and Difficulties Concerning Salvation.

There are many friends who have very real and serious doubts concerning spiritual matters, and it is with the sincere desire to help such that the following questions and answers have been compiled.

Q.—Why do you make so much of this subject of Salvation?

A.—Because it is a most vitally important matter—a matter which concerns us all. The soul is infinitely more important than the body; just as eternal things are far more important than temporal. Further, we ALL have to meet God some time or other, either “reconciled” through the sacrifice of Christ, or “unreconciled” because of our refusal of divine mercy.

Q.—Seeing we live in a Christian country, and many of us have Christian parents, it seems to me that all this preaching about religion applies more to the heathen than to us?

A.—It is quite true that this is a so-called Christian country, but this is only true by comparison with other countries. For all the religious liberty we enjoy we heartily

Doubts and Difficulties.

thank God, but if this country were REALLY Christian, all its inhabitants would be true followers of Christ, which is, unfortunately, by no means the case. Moreover, as we look around we cannot help noticing that we, as a nation, are becoming LESS "Christian" than otherwise. But, apart from all this, salvation is a PERSONAL matter, and God deals with us as INDIVIDUALS, so that even the fact that we have Christian parents will not avail us, inasmuch as it is a transaction which we must settle each one for himself.

Q.—Why do you preach so much about SIN? You seem to make out that it is a dreadful thing, but it appears to me that if we don't do anything very outrageous, we cannot be so bad after all.

A.—Sin IS a dreadful thing IN THE SIGHT OF GOD. It is that which He hates with a perfect hatred because of His supreme holiness. An inadequate appreciation of what sin is in God's sight lies at the root of the callousness and indifference which characterise so many in these days. Moreover, God is not only supremely holy, He is also ABSOLUTELY RIGHTEOUS, and in the very nature of things it is essential that He should deal with sin by judging it. We do well to remember that sin is so heinous that, just as one leak will sink a huge liner, so one sin will bar a soul from Heaven unless some provision is made whereby God is able to retain His just character, and, at the same time, pardon the sinner.

Q.—I know that the Bible says "the wages of sin is death," but the same book tells us that "God IS LOVE." Now, if God is Love, is it consistent with His character that He should consign any of His creatures to endless perdition?

Doubts and Difficulties.

A.—The Bible is perfectly true when it states that “ God is Love,” but there is one great fact which so many people entirely overlook, namely, that GOD CANNOT EXERCISE ONE ATTRIBUTE AT THE EXPENSE OF ANOTHER. In other words, each divine attribute is PERFECT in its character, and ETERNAL in its duration. This means that God cannot exercise His love at the expense of His righteousness, nor His mercy at the expense of His holiness. He must of necessity, therefore, either punish the evildoer or pardon him.

Q.—*I cannot understand preachers when I hear them say that salvation is entirely of GRACE. Surely if we do our BEST God cannot expect more, and it seems to me only right and proper that He should make up for all our deficiencies on the understanding that we do what we can to please Him. Is this not so?*

A.—Here, my friend, you are entirely on the wrong track. God has set before us a standard, and that standard is PERFECTION. Further, HE WILL NOT AND CANNOT BE SATISFIED WITH ANYTHING SHORT OF THE FULL ATTAINMENT TO THAT STANDARD. The Lord Jesus said that the first commandment was the greatest, namely, “ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with ALL thy heart, and with ALL thy soul, and with ALL thy mind,” and the heart-searching question arises: Have I attained to this? If I HAVE it means that I have never harboured a wrong thought; I have never spoken a wrong or unkind word; I have never committed a wrong act. It means that my whole life, from the time I was capable of thinking for myself until this present moment, has been altogether unimpeachable. It means, in short, that I have lived a life which has been as perfect as that lived by the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who never once committed a sin from Bethlehem to Calvary.

Doubts and Difficulties.

Q.—But it appears to me, notwithstanding all you have said, that I have to do SOMETHING. I do not quite know what that “something” is, but I really cannot endorse the statement that salvation is entirely independent of my own efforts. I have always believed that if I perform my religious exercises SINCERELY, i.e., attend divine service as regularly as possible, repeat my prayers night and morning, and read a portion of the Bible almost every day, I shall be quite ready for the other world when my time comes. Am I not right in my conclusions?

A.—No, dear friend, you are NOT right, and for this simple reason:—The Bible clearly states that “they that are in the flesh CANNOT please God.” He has already designated you a “sinner,” and, therefore, in order to please Him you need a new nature, or what the Bible calls a NEW BIRTH. God says that ALL your righteousnesses are as filthy rags—a statement which may mean a terrible blow to your pride, and one which may upset all your calculations, but a statement which is true nevertheless. Let me put it thus:—At one time certain religious people came to the Lord Jesus with this question—“What must we do that we might work the works of God?” In other words, they desired to know WHAT THEY SHOULD DO TO PLEASE GOD. Now notice carefully the Lord’s answer:—“This is the work of God THAT YE BELIEVE ON HIM WHOM HE HATH SENT.” Where is there any room for religious works in this answer? No, my friend, the only way in which you can please God is by believing FROM YOUR HEART that the Lord Jesus Christ died for you PERSONALLY—that when He uttered the words on the Cross: “IT IS FINISHED” He really meant what He said. This is the principle not of works, but of FAITH, be-

Doubts and Difficulties.

cause "WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE HIM."
(See Heb. 11, 6.)

Q.—Do I understand that a simple faith in Christ will ensure the forgiveness of ALL my sins?

A.—YES, a thousand times YES. The reason for this is because Christ has suffered on your behalf. If we could get to Heaven by our own works, WHAT NEED WAS THERE FOR HIM TO COME AT ALL? His perfect, blameless life signified His fitness to die for others. God needed a PERFECT SACRIFICE, and such a sacrifice was found in His beloved Son. Christ died that we might live eternally; He was "made sin" that we might become righteous; He bore that awful judgment on account of our guilt that we might enjoy complete emancipation; He was forsaken of God that we might never be forsaken. All this is very wonderful. Only God could have designed such a marvellous plan of salvation — A PLAN WHICH IS ALTOGETHER WORTHY OF HIMSELF. All His righteous claims were met when Christ expired on the Cross, and all our need as sinners was met at the same time. Therefore God can and WILL forgive us directly we renounce our own efforts and rely absolutely on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

Q.—This is getting very interesting. I sometimes hear preachers mention the word "justification." Is there any difference between that and forgiveness?

A.—Yes, and the difference is enormous. FORGIVENESS implies that the debt has been cancelled. JUSTIFICATION implies that EVERY TRACE OF THE DEBT HAS BEEN REMOVED. In other words, the justified person stands before God as though he had never incurred a debt

Doubts and Difficulties.

at all. When the prodigal son returned from the far country he was not only forgiven, but he was also clothed with the "BEST ROBE" in his father's house. Just so is it with him who believes in Jesus. Not only are all his sins forgiven, but his entire past is obliterated from God's memory for ever. That is to say that HIS PAST IS AS THOUGH IT HAD NEVER BEEN, and the sinner is clothed with the robe of God's spotless righteousness, ALL BECAUSE THE LORD JESUS DIED AND ROSE AGAIN. Well might we exclaim "Hallelujah, What a Saviour!"

Q.—How can I know that I have the right kind of faith?

A.—It is not a question of "the right kind of faith" at all. Everything depends upon the object in which that faith is placed. IF CHRIST IS THE OBJECT you need not trouble about the quality of your faith.

Q.—But how can I tell that I have a sufficient AMOUNT of faith?

A.—The answer to this question is really a duplication of the previous one if we substitute the word QUANTITY for QUALITY. Let me emphasise the fact that it is THE OBJECT of faith that matters, not the quality, nor the quantity. When you decide to sit upon a chair, you do not raise any question as to whether your faith in that chair is the RIGHT SORT or not, nor do you ask yourself whether your faith is SUFFICIENT or otherwise. No, YOU UNCONSCIOUSLY EXERCISE YOUR CONFIDENCE BY APPROPRIATING THE SEAT. The woman who had suffered for twelve years with a disease, and had spent all her means in order to get well, but grew worse rather than better, "HEARD OF JESUS," and needed only to touch the hem of His garment to be made whole. If our confidence is placed in the right Person—CHRIST—the RESULT IS BOUND TO BE PERMANENT BLESSING

Doubts and Difficulties.

without our troubling whether or not that confidence is the right kind or the correct amount.

Q.—Must I not wait until I FEEL saved before I know that all is well?

A.—No. It is not a question of FEELING but of BELIEVING. You are informed that there is such a place as New Zealand, BUT YOU HAVE NEVER BEEN THERE IN YOUR LIFE. Surely you do not wait to have a strange kind of feeling come over you before you believe the information? Nay, you accept the fact because you hear it on reliable authority. Exactly so is it with the good news of salvation. You hear it on the very best authority—THE WORD OF THE LIVING GOD—and if you only adopt the attitude of the great Apostle Paul when he said: “I BELIEVE GOD,” this is all that is required. Our feelings are constantly changing, BUT THE WORD OF GOD NEVER CHANGES. As a matter of fact the word “feeling” is only mentioned TWICE in the whole of the Bible, AND IN NEITHER INSTANCE HAS IT ANY REFERENCE TO OUR SOUL’S SALVATION. I dare not trust to my feelings for so important a matter as my eternal welfare, but I CAN depend upon what God has said.

Q.—If I were to place my entire confidence in Christ I don’t think I could “stick to it,” beside which I should have to give up so many things which have previously engaged my attention. To put it plainly—I AM AFRAID TO FACE THE FUTURE. How can I meet my companions if I am a saved person? How can I face those in business who have known my previous life?

A.—Remember, in the first place, that the future, strictly speaking, does not belong to you; IT BELONGS TO GOD. “Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth”; much

Doubts and Difficulties.

less a year. In fact, you cannot claim the next five minutes as your own.

In the second place, always bear in mind that God is able to KEEP as well as to SAVE. You will be insufficient of yourself to live the new life, but God will be ALL sufficient. He will place His omnipotent power at your disposal, and by continually looking to Him you will not only be a conqueror, BUT MORE THAN A CONQUEROR through Him who loved you unto death.

In the third place, remember that God has given you the Bible wherewith to regulate your future course, and as you read His Word daily and seek to obey its precepts, your life will be filled to overflowing with two of the grandest gifts God can bestow, namely JOY AND PEACE. I, therefore, lovingly advise you to place your entire confidence in Christ, AND THEN TRUST HIM FOR THE FUTURE.

Q.—Suppose I am conscious of failure; that is to say, suppose I fall into sin, what should be my attitude?

*A.—*CONFESS IT AT ONCE TO GOD. Don't wait a single moment before you do this, and you will then prove the truthfulness of the promise, "If we confess our sins, HE IS FAITHFUL AND JUST to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Of course, the Christian has no right to sin, but, at the same time, so long as we are in this world we shall be subject to failure, and they who live nearest to the Lord most realise how weak and failing they are in themselves.

Q.—Notwithstanding your previous answer, I feel that if I do trust the Saviour, I may, by my own folly and carelessness, fall right away and be lost eventually.

*A.—*No, my dear friend, that is impossible. If you TRULY believe in the Lord Jesus, you are a CHILD OF GOD, and,

Doubts and Difficulties.

that being so, you are inexpressibly valuable to HIM. He will continue to love you "unto the end" and ultimately have you in His own glorious company for ever.

Q.—So far as I can tell I HONESTLY believe that Christ died for me PERSONALLY. I accept unreservedly all that the Bible says about myself as a sinner and Christ as my Saviour, and yet I have not that joy, peace, and satisfaction so many speak of having. Can you account for this?

A.—In answering this question would you permit me now to put a few questions to you? It may be that in one or more of these questions you may find just where the missing link lies.

- 1. Have you ever CONFESSED Christ not only by your lips but, what is infinitely more important, by a consistent life?*
- 2. Do you read your Bible daily, or have you grown careless regarding this necessary exercise? I sometimes hear of believers who never read the Scriptures for days together. How can such Christians expect to make progress in divine things? YOU CANNOT ADVANCE IN YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE AT THE EXPENSE OF GOD'S WORD.*
- 3. Do you choose your companions from among God's people? If you DO, you and they are able to encourage one another in those matters which make for real happiness and progress. If you do NOT, that happiness will be marred and that progress impeded. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" NO, it is IMPOSSIBLE, and we who know the Lord OUGHT TO KEEP TOGETHER, "and so much the more as we see the day approaching."*

Doubts and Difficulties.

4. Do you PRAY frequently? I don't mean merely repeating a formula of words, but rather telling God EARNESTLY, SIMPLY, and IMPORTUNATELY, those things which are laid on your heart. If you pray thus, and blend THANKSGIVING with your supplications, you will experience the joy of growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If any of these answers have proved helpful to the reader, we gladly give the entire glory to the God of all grace. If, on the other hand, the reader has OTHER doubts and difficulties, a line addressed to the writer will ensure an answer at the earliest opportunity.

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