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Set Apart— Daily—for the Divine Cause

“This is the will of God, even your sanctification.”
—*I Thessalonians 4:3*

EACH YEAR MILLIONS IN the professed Christian world commemorate the season called Lent. It is calculated to begin each year in February or early March and ends on Easter Sunday. This year it will include the period from February 14 to April 1. One of the characteristics of this season is the attempt on the part of many to live in an especially holy fashion, more than they might possibly do during the rest of the year. We commend all such endeavors to live in a holy manner, even if these efforts only encompass a certain annual season. True holiness, however, requires daily, full-time effort, and even then it can only be fully achieved with the assistance and guidance of our Heavenly Father and his son, Christ Jesus.

Consider this sampling of Scriptures which speak concerning the “daily” aspect of our walk with God.

From the Old Testament, we read: “So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows.” “Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates.” (Ps. 61:8; Prov. 8:34) In the New Testament, we find this all-important instruction from Jesus, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” Paul, speaking of his life of sacrifice and service for the Lord’s cause, said, “I die daily.” He also encouraged the followers of Christ, saying, “Exhort one another daily, ... lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”— Luke 9:23; I Cor. 15:31; Heb. 3:13

SANCTIFICATION

In our opening text, the word “sanctification” is used. Sanctification is another word for holiness, and also denotes purity and consecration. In addition, it includes the thought of being set apart for God’s service. Hence, sanctification signifies holiness as a vocation in life. In our text, Paul says it is the “will of God” that we engage in this lifelong work of sanctification. The thought is well expressed by the inscription on the plate of gold worn on the forehead of the high priests of Israel, which read: “HOLINESS TO THE LORD.” The “Holy” and “Most Holy” of the Tabernacle were so called because they were dedicated, or set apart for the exclusive service of God. Moses, at the burning bush, was told that the place where he stood was “holy ground,” because for the time being God occupied it and was using it.—Exod. 28:36; 26:33; 3:5

The condition of sanctification, while truly being that of holiness, purity and consecration, is such

because it is a state of separation, or of being set apart from all else except the things of God. Referring again to our theme text, to be sanctified involves the process of being set apart for the purpose and work of doing God's will. God's will for the Christian is that he suffer and die with Christ, that he may live and reign with him. (Rom. 8:16,17; II Tim. 2:11,12) The purpose of the reign of Christ is the blessing of mankind with life and happiness. (Rev. 21:3-5) Viewed thus, sanctification means a dedication of our lives to full participation in God's great plan of reconciliation and rehabilitation. In addition, it necessitates a determination on our part to live daily in harmony with the precepts set forth in the Bible.

THE DIVINE PURPOSE

The origin of all human suffering became manifest when selfish ambition germinated in the mind of Lucifer. When the opportunity presented itself, he injected the poison of sin into the minds of our first parents, and they chose to disobey the divine law. (Gen. 3:1-6) Self-interest was the motive which led them into transgression. It is this same quality that has ruled to some degree in the hearts of all their offspring during the ages which have followed. Today, the degraded condition of humanity in general is a stark witness to the accumulated results of selfishness and self-interest.

However, the far-reaching and horrible results of unbridled selfishness were foreseen by God. As soon as its poison began to enter into the hearts and lives of his human creatures, he set in motion a program destined ultimately to defeat sin, undo its results, and provide recompense for the suffering

it has caused. That program is spoken of by Paul as “a plan of the ages.” (Eph. 3:11, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*) That is to say, it is a plan embracing many ages for its accomplishment. Nevertheless, when complete, it shall find God’s will again enthroned supreme in the hearts of all mankind, and accomplish a full “restitution” for all those who hear “that prophet” and obey from the heart when they are given the opportunity to do so.—Acts 3:20-25

This divine program is God’s way of assuring the future and everlasting happiness of mankind. Throughout the various ages during which it has been moving forward to completion, he has invited members of the fallen human race to take part and cooperate with him in its execution. All the ancient heroes of faith had a part in that plan, and in the future, are to have a still greater part. We need only to read the apostle’s account of the faithfulness and suffering of some of these ancient worthies to realize what it cost them to be wholly devoted to God’s cause.—Heb. 11:1-40

They refused to accept any compromise arrangement with the enemies of God and of righteousness because they had faith that God’s long-range plan would be victorious. By appeasing their flesh through falling into line with the ways of those with whom they were surrounded and more or less associated, those ancient faithful ones could have had a measure of temporary peace and earthly prosperity. However, like Moses, who preferred the “reproach of Christ” rather than enjoying the “pleasures of sin for a season,” their hearts centered on the great divine objective. (Heb. 11:24-27) Hence their devotion to God’s will and cause was unshaken.

THE MESSIANIC CAUSE

God's great program centers in Christ, as the Redeemer and Messiah. All the promises of the Old Testament pertaining to it are predicated on God's purpose to send a Messiah who would free the world from sin and death. It is to this Messiah that God alludes in his early reference to the "seed" of the woman that would bruise the serpent's head. (Gen. 3:15) God's promise to Abraham of a "seed" through whom all the families of the earth would be blessed is likewise a reference to the coming and work of the Messiah. (Gal. 3:8,16,27-29) The Messiah is referred to in the prophecies in many ways, and by different names. He is "Shiloh," "a Prophet," "The Prince of Peace," a "king," "Michael," and "the messenger of the covenant," to give but a few examples.—Gen. 49:10; Deut. 18:15; Isa. 9:6; Ps. 2:6; Dan. 12:1; Mal. 3:1

The Messianic program promised in the Old Testament, the cause of which inspired the ancient worthies, is still operative. After the coming of the Messiah nearly twenty centuries ago, when he willingly gave his life as a ransom for all, that program moved forward into a new phase, in which representatives of the human race are invited to participate. Previous to this time those whom God specially dealt with were given the privilege of co-laboring with him in his plan to a limited degree. However, since the First Advent of the Messiah, those whom God is calling are given the added opportunity of becoming a part of the Messiah. We here note that "Christ" is the Greek word equivalent to Messiah. Thus, Paul speaks of the called ones of the present Gospel Age as being part of the Christ—the Messiah—that is, his body members.—I Cor. 12:12-14,27

This is a very high honor indeed, but accompanied by very exacting conditions of discipleship. Jesus set forth conditions upon which any during this age may enlist in the divine cause for man's ultimate blessing and recovery. Paraphrasing, he stated that these must drink of his cup, be baptized with his baptism, take up their cross and follow him, and lose their life for his sake and that of the Gospel. (Matt. 20:22,23; Luke 9:23; Mark 8:35) Paul also used various expressions in describing this same blessed privilege of becoming part of the Christ class: "planted together in the likeness of his death"; suffering "with him"; presenting ourselves a "living sacrifice"; being "killed all the day long."—Rom. 6:5; 8:17,36; 12:1

Apostle Peter said, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you." (I Pet. 4:12) In his vision on the Isle of Patmos, the Apostle John saw those "that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God." (Rev. 20:4) However, the angel further said these "lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Indeed, this is the great objective of it all—to live and to reign with the Messiah, Christ Jesus, for the purpose of consummating God's plan to bless all nations and peoples. Our dying with Christ would truly be in vain, but for that. If this future work on behalf of mankind is not to be consummated, even to the raising of the dead, surely, as Paul said, "We are of all men most miserable."—I Cor. 15:19

DEVOTION TO GOD'S PLAN

The divine, Messianic cause has much to do with the Christian's daily work of sanctification and

holiness. It means daily devotion to God's plan for the redemption and salvation of the human race. Down through the ages, many among mankind have demonstrated their willingness to suffer and to die in order that future generations might have a better world in which to live. How much more should God's cause be a matter of particular satisfaction and delight to the truth-enlightened Christian. To each one there is set before him a blessed opportunity to lay down his life for a purpose that is planned and sponsored by the Almighty, and which will bring not temporary, but everlasting peace and happiness to all mankind.

The divine cause cannot fail. We may fail, through unfaithfulness, to have a victorious part in God's plan, but the plan itself will not fail. The unlimited power and resources of the Creator will insure its success. There has been no defeat nor delay of that program down to this moment, and there will be none in the future. The enemies of God and of righteousness probably thought they had scored a victory when they were about to crucify Jesus, but the Master explained that if he wished to ask for it, the Father would give him "twelve legions of angels" for his protection. (Matt. 26:53) Jesus did not do this, for it was a part of the plan that he should die as man's Redeemer.

The angels that Jesus could have called upon, and many more divine resources of heaven and earth continue to work for God and his plan. Even the wrath of men and of devils can be used by God towards his plan's accomplishment. (Ps. 76:10) All of the divine resources are working for each individual who is devoting himself to that plan. No human being

has ever occupied such a strategic position of security, nor been given such clear assurance of success, as is given to the sanctified Christian.—Rom. 8:28; I Cor. 10:13; II Cor. 4:17

FULL DEDICATION

The true Christian's lot is a favored one, but to maintain that position we must be wholeheartedly dedicated to the Lord and his cause. The Scriptures declare that the Lord will "shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." (II Chron. 16:9) This is one of the unique features of God's plan. Half-hearted devotion to it is unacceptable to our Heavenly Father. God does not force us to serve him, but once we have volunteered, if there is any drawing back, the Lord will "have no pleasure" in us.—Heb. 10:38,39

Full dedication to God's cause calls for an energetic effort on our part to gain a knowledge of the divine will. God calls us to be coworkers with him, and he gives us the necessary knowledge of his plan to enable us to cooperate intelligently. It has only been because various church systems are unable to harmonize their conflicting creeds, and thus unable to properly extend their limited knowledge to others, that the idea has developed that knowledge is unimportant in God's dealing with us. Hence, the unscriptural conclusion has been reached that it really does not make any difference what one believes, so long as he lives right.

From the divine standpoint, however, a true Christian cannot live right unless he knows how God wants him to live. Righteous living is more than merely adhering to a certain moral code, although

that is certainly one of its very important elements. The Christian lives for God totally and in every aspect of his daily activities. If that life is to be devoted fully and acceptably to God, it must be “according to knowledge.” (Rom. 10:2) That knowledge is centered in an understanding of God’s plan, and his own part in that plan. Attaining to a high moral standard alone is not sanctification, but merely one of the necessary prerequisites to the sanctified life.

BELIEF OF THE TRUTH

Paul says that we are “chosen ... to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” (II Thess. 2:13) Sanctification of the Spirit is accomplished through “belief of the truth.” The Word of truth is a product of the Holy Spirit, and is where our minds meet the mind of God, and we are instructed by him. That is why the Holy Spirit, God’s invisible power and influence, in its guiding role in our lives, is described by Jesus as the “Spirit of truth.”—John 14:17

The poet has aptly said: “But ’tis one thing, friend, to read the Bible through; but another thing to read to learn and do.” Hence the importance of a genuine belief of the truth. We are admonished to “study” that we may show ourselves “approved unto God,” but we cannot hope to secure this approval unless we accept and believe the Word of truth without reservation. (II Tim. 2:15) Thus, only through our understanding of God’s Word will the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit effectively operate in our lives to set us wholly apart for his service.

The Apostle Peter emphasizes this thought, saying of the footstep followers of Jesus that they are

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience.” (I Pet. 1:2) “Unto obedience”—that is one of the secrets of a truly sanctified life. The apostle reminds us of the sort or quality of obedience required when he explains that our selection to this high station is in conformity with the “foreknowledge of God the Father.” The Apostle Paul also tells us how God’s foreknowledge affects our sanctification. He says that it was a predetermined requirement that we should be “conformed to the image of his Son.”—Rom. 8:29

This means, then, that our election according to the “foreknowledge of God” is based upon our being like Christ. Our obedience is to be like his obedience, and though we cannot render it perfectly as he could, his example of obedience, and nothing less, is the standard set before us. The night before his death, Jesus prayed for the sanctification of his followers, and explained that this sanctification was to be patterned after his own. “I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” (John 17:17-19) Jesus was sanctified by “the truth” because he obeyed “every word” that came from God. (Matt. 4:4) We cannot strive to do less and be fully sanctified.

JESUS’ EXAMPLE

In Jesus’ life and ministry we are furnished a perfect example of daily holiness and sanctification, founded on devotion to God and his plan. If we are ever in doubt as to the meaning of any instruction given to us as followers of the Master, we need only to ascertain what he did under similar circumstances,

and we have the answer as to the course we should take. Notable among the examples of his life is the manner in which he turned down the three temptations that were presented to him by Satan. One was an appeal to his flesh, to satisfy his hunger by illegitimate means. Another was that he make good his claim of being the Son of God by putting himself in a position that would call for a miracle to save his life. The third was an offer to give him all the kingdoms of this world in return for a transfer of his devotion from God to Satan.—Matt. 4:1-11

The principles involved in all three of these temptations, and the manner in which the Master resisted them, serve as important guides to us. The offer of the kingdoms of this world was subtle indeed, and offered an opportunity for Jesus to be a benefactor of the human race. He had come into the world for this very purpose. He could have looked upon it as a favorable opportunity to carry out that purpose. However, there was a catch! “Fall down and worship me,” was the condition attached to the offer by Satan. Jesus knew full well that the success of the Messianic purpose to bless the world in due time with everlasting peace and happiness was dependent upon obedience to God. He also knew it was disobedience to God, instigated by Satan, which brought all the trouble in the first place. An act of disobedience on Jesus’ part could not rectify that trouble.

Jesus delighted to do God’s will, and although here was an opportunity to do good to his fellowman, he could not accept it because it was not God’s method of doing it, nor was it the proper time. One of the divine commands affecting our sanctification

is that we “do good unto all men,” but it is to be only “as we have ... opportunity.” (Gal. 6:10) We are not to transfer our allegiance from God with the thought of devoting our lives to moral uplift, or other good works, simply in order that we might “do good.” We should not lose sight of the grand objective of our calling, namely, that by it we have been enlisted to serve in the greatest humanitarian cause of all time. It is a cause which, when complete, will see the whole earth made a paradise, and the entire human race living everlastingly upon it in peace and happiness.

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

Our full and continued devotion to God and to his program will cost us our lives. This is the condition upon which God accepts us to be coworkers with him. Paul says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, ... that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” (Rom. 12:1,2) Here the apostle entreats us to present ourselves in full sacrifice to God, and states that such a response on our part is a “reasonable,” or logical, service.

God’s will for us involves a complete separation from the world and its spirit. It means a separation from its projects and delusive hopes. We will be glad to do good to “all men” whenever we have the opportunity, but we will not partake of the world’s general spirit of selfishness in order to do it. We will not be “conformed” to this world, nor labor with

its institutions to bring about their conception of a better world. Rather, we will be “transformed” by the renewing of our minds, filling them more and more with the instructions of God’s Word, with the objective of having those instructions become a complete guide in our lives.

By this transformation process we will ascertain what is the “good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God,” which is our sanctification, as stated in our theme text. Thus, as we are separated from the world and its aims, and, turning our backs also upon the will of the flesh, “all things ... become new.” (II Cor. 5:17) These new things are not new merely in the sense that they are different. They are new because they are the things of God. Having heard and accepted the call to enter his service, he entrusts us with the carrying out of a part of his project for the world’s eventual blessing. He commits unto us the “ministry of reconciliation.”—vs. 18

Surely, there is no better cause we can engage in, nor any greater purpose for which we can lay down our lives. Even now, before the victory of God’s cause is seen by the world, we can say to the perplexed, discouraged and mourning ones that a better day is soon coming. There will be a righteous government under which man will live. There will be lasting peace. There will be freedom from fear. Indeed, there will be freedom also from sickness and death. This is a real program—God’s program—and what a privilege to participate in it!

ACCEPTABLE THROUGH THE BLOOD

We may inquire as to how God can accept the services of such imperfect creatures, and beyond

this, how we can pass the test. Paul explains that “we have redemption through [Christ’s] blood.” He further states that Christ “gave himself” for the church, “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” (Eph. 1:7; 5:25,26) Only by the blood of Christ Jesus are we made worthy. Through his blood our bodies are made acceptable for sacrifice. In addition, however, there must be the continual “washing of water by the word.” This cleansing brings about the alignment of our wills with the will of God.

Consecration is the act of presenting ourselves to God, and entering into a covenant with him to do his will. Sanctification is the lifelong, studied and prayerful effort to carry out more and more fully the terms of our consecration. Our consecration is acceptable through Christ’s blood, and our being clothed with his “robe of righteousness.” (Isa. 61:10) Nevertheless, the fact that there is this covering does not release us from the responsibility of steadfastly and resolutely continuing in the way of sacrifice, with an ever-increasing desire to be like our Master.

Therefore, let us “gird up the loins” of our minds and fix our hearts to know and to do the Lord’s will. (I Pet. 1:13) In a cause so worthy, and certain of ultimate success, no sacrifice is too great and no task too difficult to perform. The followers of the Master who are thus successful in laying down their lives will be crowned with “glory and honour and immortality.” (Rom. 2:7) With their Head, Christ Jesus, they will share in the inestimable privilege of bestowing upon the world of mankind blessings of peace, joy and life forevermore—the great divine cause! ■

Faith Without Works Is Dead

Key Verse: “*Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.*”
—James 2:17

Selected Scripture:
James 2:14-26

TODAY’S LESSON BRINGS

to our minds the realization that it is not only important to have a strong faith, but also that the application of that faith in our daily lives, by means of works, is essential. Earlier in his epistle, James admonishes, “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only.” (James 1:22) Blessed are we, if, having seen and understood the Lord’s grace and goodness manifested towards us, we obediently follow in daily living the spirit of James’ instructions. A fundamental aspect of our calling by God is that of bearing fruitage. Jesus said, “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.” (John 15:8) The development of the fruits and graces of the Spirit, as we walk in the narrow way of self-denial and sacrifice, is a key aspect of the “works” which should emanate from our foundation of faith.

For all who seek to follow in Jesus’ footsteps, the basis of faith and its resulting works is the divine Word—its doctrines and principles. Each must build his faith structure upon that true foundation which only is revealed through the Scriptures. Through the prophet, God said, “He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully.” (Jer. 23:28) The Apostle Peter later states: “Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances

of God.” (I Pet. 4:11, *New American Standard Bible*) To have God’s approval requires more than just calling ourselves Christians. It necessitates that we know something of his plans and purposes, and based on that, speak the “utterances of God” by developing character fruitage in conformity with his will.

Faith is defined as a conviction respecting things not proven to the physical senses, but received on the basis of “substance” and “evidence.” (Heb. 11:1) Thus, those desiring to obtain true faith will inquire and seek for solid authority as the basis for their convictions. Faith is not credulity, and does not jump to conclusions with no investigation. Rather, it examines, considers and studies to ensure that it has a solid foundation for its existence. Paul said, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”—II Tim. 2:15

It is our faith, the Apostle John says, which will ultimately bring us victory. (I John 5:4) However, this will be gained only by those who shall, to the best of their ability, “work out” their salvation. (Phil. 2:12) Along the way, God will test us by our works as to the strength of our faith. Hence, our success necessitates faith and works operating together. “Wilt thou know, . . . that faith apart from works is barren?”—James 2:20, *American Standard Version*

It is through Christ Jesus, and our relationship with him, that we have the opportunity of developing faith and works. “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” (Phil. 4:13) We also have the promises of God found in his Word that reassure us as to the ultimate results of faith which manifests itself through works. Indeed, all our services to the Lord are valuable chiefly as working proofs of our faith. “This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.” (I John 2:25) Let us be found worthy to claim this promise, knowing that God has called us to show our faith by our works, and by our cooperation with him in all ways. ■

A Disciplined Tongue

Key Verse: *“But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.”*
—James 3:8

Selected Scripture:
James 3:1-12

wisely wrote, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue.” (Prov. 18:21) In our lesson, James says that though the tongue is a “little member,” it often “boasteth great things.” Like a small rudder on a large ship, the tongue can steer us in whatever direction, good or evil, towards which it is directed. (James 3:4,5) Experience has taught us that it is easier to control most any other part of our fallen flesh than the tongue.

The ambitions and passions of the fallen nature will often manifest themselves through the tongue, as a willing servant. If such be the case, James tells us that the tongue is “a world of iniquity,” and “defileth the whole body.” (vs. 6) It, therefore, requires constant vigilance, wisdom, and care on the part of the follower of Christ to govern this powerful member of his body, and bring it into subjection. Taming the tongue must begin inwardly, in our hearts and minds. This work begins with our desire to be “transformed by the renewing” of our mind. (Rom. 12:2) The new mind is, in reality, the “mind of Christ.” (I Cor. 2:16) Thus, the apostle admonishes us:

THE TONGUE IS ONE OF the most powerful and influential members of the human body. When used properly, it can be one of the most wonderful tools that God has given us. Improper use of the tongue, however, can result in every form of evil imaginable. Solomon

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 2:5

Jesus stated, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” (Matt. 12:34) Since the tongue is the agent which speaks according to the sentiments of the heart, it is vital that we examine closely our inward motives which manifest themselves in words. The importance of having a proper heart condition is shown to us in many Scriptures. “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” “Create in me a new heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” “A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things.” “The end of the commandment is charity [love] out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience.”—Prov. 4:23; Ps. 51:10; Ps. 139:23,24; Matt. 12:35; I Tim. 1:5

Our Key Verse states that the tongue can be tamed by “no man,” that is, not by human efforts. In our fallen human frame, James continues, we may speak “blessing and cursing” out of the same mouth. “These things ought not so to be.” (James 3:9,10) It is only by the diligent examination, and correction when necessary, of our hearts and thoughts, that we can, with God’s help, learn to speak only that which is helpful and uplifting. Even in this, however, we can only obtain partial victory on this side of the veil, due to the weakness of our flesh.

Let it be our daily vow to follow these words: “I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.” “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.”—Ps. 39:1; 19:14

■

A Woman of Good Works

Key Verse: “Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.”
—Acts 9:40

Selected Scripture:
Acts 9:36-43

THIS SCRIPTURAL PASSAGE

centers on the experience of one of the faithful disciples of Jesus. This disciple, who lived in Joppa, is referred to by two names. Her Syriac name, used by the Jews, was Tabitha, and her Greek name was Dorcas. “This woman,” the account states, “was full of good works.” (Acts 9:36) The names Tabitha and Dorcas both signify “gazelle,” and it was a common practice at that time to give the name of beautiful animals to

young women. The beauty of Tabitha was exemplified by her character. She went about doing good to others, and was especially faithful in helping the poor.

The account then states: “It came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.” (vs. 37) Meanwhile, the Apostle Peter had recently performed a miracle in Lydda, healing Aeneas, who was sick with the palsy. (Acts 9:32-35) When the disciples in Joppa heard that Peter was in Lydda, which was only a short distance away, they sent for him. Peter was asked to come without delay to Joppa, in the hope that he could provide consolation to

those who mourned over the death of Tabitha. Peter complied and, after arriving at the home, went to the “upper chamber” where Tabitha lie. Those gathered in the room were weeping over the loss of their beloved friend, and showed Peter the many coats and garments Tabitha had made for them—examples of her many “good works.” Peter then sent the people out of the room. Our Key Verse says he “kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise.” She immediately opened her eyes, and upon seeing Peter, she sat up.—vss. 38-40

It is important to note that there is no indication in this account of Tabitha immediately going to heaven when she died. When awakened to life by Peter, she did not relate any wonderful visions experienced during the time she was dead. She simply opened her eyes, waking up as if from sleep. She recognized Peter, and accepting his helping hand, sat up, and was restored to her friends with great joy coming upon all. The same is true in other cases of those who were awakened from death. We refer to the accounts of the raising of Lazarus, the widow of Nain’s son, and Jairus’ daughter, in which Jesus’ stated his intent to awaken them from the “sleep” of death. (John 11:1-44; Luke 7:11-15; Mark 5:22-24,35-42) The Scriptures clearly state: “The dead know not any thing.” “There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”—Eccles. 9:5,10

With these statements in mind, we can then understand the prominence given in the Scriptures to the doctrine of the resurrection. Paul states that if there is no resurrection, then Christ is not risen, and if this be so, our preaching and faith is in vain, we are still in our sins, and our lot is “of all men most miserable.” (I Cor. 15:13-19) However, Paul continues, Christ is risen, after sleeping in death for three days, and also has “become the firstfruits of them that slept.” (vs. 20) Let us rejoice in the resurrection promise to “all that are in the graves.”—John 5:28,29 ■

The Good Fight of Faith

Key Verse: *“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.”*
—*I Timothy 6:12*

Selected Scripture:
I Timothy 6:11-21

maintain it, we must have a measure of knowledge.

The only true source of knowledge concerning God’s plan is his Word. Throughout the Bible, we find the many promises and assurances concerning God’s loving plan. These enable us to have conviction concerning that which cannot be seen with the human eye. (Heb. 11:1) To engage in the fight of faith, however, requires the application of this knowledge in daily living and conduct. In our Key Verse, as well as other places, Paul speaks of this aspect of faith’s development as our “profession.” “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.” (Heb. 10:23; 4:14) Indeed, it is the daily profession of our faith that will bring the forces of evil to do battle against us.

THE “FIGHT OF FAITH”

identified in our Key Verse can be thought of as the effort and struggle the child of God must daily engage in to prove the depth of his faith respecting the Heavenly Father and his promises. The Apostle Paul explains the only basis by which we can begin engagement in this fight. He states: “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Rom. 10:17) Thus, before we can have faith, and fight to

This is by God's design, in order that our faith may be fully developed and proven.

As we grow in the school of Christ, we will learn valuable lessons from all life's experiences—its joys and its sorrows. These, and the battles associated with them, will make us “strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” (Eph. 6:10) Our weapons, Paul further states, “are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.” (II Cor. 10:4) These elements are all of vital importance to successfully engage in this “fight of faith.”

The Apostle Peter admonished, “Be sober, and vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith.” (I Pet. 5:8,9) As we fight the good fight of faith, we understand that the adversary will make every attempt to stumble us and thwart our progress. Yet, we also know that since “God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31) We learn to appreciate that the trials which come to us are actually manifestations of divine favor, and if we are rightly exercised by them, we are assured of victory.

Success in our fight of faith also requires that we hold onto God's Word of truth—in letter, in spirit, and in the love of it. It means, too, that we will remain humble and teachable, persevering daily toward the goal. This was the Apostle Paul's attitude, as he expressed concerning himself, “Brethren, I count myself not to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 3:13,14

Let us realize the need to focus our energy fully upon the things that will help us win the good fight of faith. This centers in the motivation of our hearts and in the thoughts of our minds. “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, ... honest, ... just, ... pure, ... lovely, ... of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”—Phil. 4:8 ■

Instant in Prayer

*“Rejoicing in hope;
patient in
tribulation;
continuing instant
in prayer.”*
—*Romans 12:12*

TWO HUNDRED YEARS ago, in 1818, British poet and hymn writer James Montgomery penned these familiar words: “Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire, uttered

or unexpressed.” Historians have noted that Montgomery believed proper prayer must come from the heart, and should be expressed with sincerity, fervor and simplicity. We can surely concur with the poet’s definition and sentiments regarding prayer. All our prayers should come from a heart that is overflowing with gratitude and with a great yearning to be in harmony with the Heavenly Father in all things.

The Apostle Peter indicates the condition of heart that is pleasing to God and that is possessed by those whom he accepts as sons. He states: “When once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God).” —I Pet. 3:20,21

Here the apostle tells us that the deliverance of Noah and his family in the ark was an illustration

of Christian baptism. He also makes certain that we understand which baptism he is speaking about. It is not John's baptism, which was for the repentance of sins, and the putting away of the filth of the flesh. Rather, it pictured the baptism that symbolizes a sacrificial death motivated by a "good conscience toward God." This implies an ever-growing sense of gratitude and appreciation so strong that it leads us to present our bodies a "living sacrifice," considering this to be our "reasonable," or rational, service.—Rom. 12:1

It is this same heart motivation which is to guide our prayers and petitions to the Heavenly Father. Jesus said, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." (John 15:7) This text gives us three basic requirements in order for our prayers to be of the greatest benefit. First, we must abide in Christ. This means, of course, that we have accepted him as our Redeemer and are striving daily to follow in his footsteps. The next requirement is that Christ's words abide in us. The thought of "abide" is that his words have become a part of our being, and have not found merely a temporary lodging place. Also implied is the fact that Jesus' words and the spirit of the words dominate our minds and lives. Then, if these things are true, we will ask only those things that are in harmony with God's plans and purposes for us, and these petitions and prayers will be answered in God's own way and time.

"INSTANT"

The phrase "continuing instant" in our theme text has the meaning of being earnest, to persevere,

and to be constantly diligent in prayer. We might ask why this is necessary. God knows our needs. If we ask once, this should be enough, we may suppose. However, to teach that “men ought always to pray, and not to faint,” Jesus related the parable of the importunate widow, who, because of her repeated petitions, had her request granted.—Luke 18:1-5

The lesson the Lord would have us learn is that God does not answer whimsical requests. Rather, they must reflect the desire of the heart, and by repetition we prove that our request is one of sincere, earnest motivation. There are other benefits also, as far as our spiritual walk is concerned. For example, persistence in prayer should make the ultimate fulfillment of our requests more greatly appreciated, as it will better enable us to view the outcome as being a reflection of God’s will for us. Another related lesson is that of humility. Perseverance in coming to the heavenly throne of grace in prayer should emphasize to our minds the Heavenly Father’s greatness. It will be a constant reminder to us of our own inadequacy, and of the great need we have for his overruling providences in our lives, as directed by his boundless wisdom, love, and power.

PRAYING “AMISS”

The Apostle James stated, “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” (James 4:3) This text emphasizes the fact that the focus of our prayer life should be the New Creature. The word “lusts” means desires, and in this verse refers particularly to those which please the flesh. Jesus stated: “Do not be anxious, saying, What shall we eat? Or What shall we drink?

Or What shall we wear? ... Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”—Matt. 6:31-33, *English Standard Version*

This does not mean that it is improper to pray concerning those material things that would benefit the New Creature. However, in this we must be very honest and careful in our appraisal of these needs to be certain we are not rationalizing to satisfy the desires of the flesh. In doing so, we must also take care, as Jesus states, to avoid being “anxious” with regard to our fleshly needs. God knows these better than we ourselves, and will oversee the provision of our temporal needs, the Master promises.

PRAY FOR STRENGTH TO OVERCOME

There are many things we can properly pray for. We should ask for strength to overcome the propensities of the flesh. In this regard, the Apostle Paul tells us where our Christian warfare is centered: “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” (II Cor. 10:3-5) Paul further identifies our real foe, who uses our flesh to war against the New Creature. “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”—Eph. 6:12

In these texts, the apostle tells us that the real enemy that would obstruct the development of our New Creature is Satan and his messengers. However, we can effectually oppose him through divine power. This is made available to us through prayer and close communion with the Heavenly Father. We are “mighty through God” in the casting down of Satan’s devices, even to the point of bringing our very thoughts into “the obedience of Christ.”

WISDOM ALSO

We should pray for wisdom, particularly as it has to do with knowing how to deal with ourselves. This is a most necessary ability to possess if we are to be overcoming Christians. Our minds, in spite of our best intentions, will at times try to devise a means or excuse to avoid sacrifice and self-denial in the Lord’s service. There is an incident recorded by Paul that illustrates this point: “It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.”—Gal. 6:12,13, *ESV*

In this incident the apostle is telling us that some of the Jewish converts who had previously been circumcised now knew that through the liberty that is in Christ circumcision was not necessary. Yet when certain Judaizers insisted that believing Gentiles be circumcised, the converted Jews joined with the Judaizers in order that they might be received with favor. The apostle suggests, however, that the real reason the converts joined with the Judaizers was

“that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.”

This kind of circumstance is not foreign to any of us. How easy it is, for example, to make excuses to avoid an opportunity given us to witness to the Truth. Are these excuses valid, or are we perhaps trying to avoid an unpleasant sacrifice or uncomfortable circumstance? Having the wisdom to know how to deal with ourselves in these and similar situations is an important weapon in our warfare against the flesh. We can receive much help and guidance in this regard through prayer.

CHARACTER STRENGTH

We can pray for strength of character, that the ideals and principles that have been developed and set in our minds during our Christian walk will be firm under trial and temptation. There is a beautiful prophecy about Jesus that speaks of his example in this regard. “The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.”—Isa. 50:5-7

With the Heavenly Father’s help we likewise can set and establish our characters through experiences that are permitted by him. Our prayers along this line will bring such experiences to us. Through them, if faithful, our strength along these lines will be developed, and after a time, we too will be able to set our “face like a flint,” in full confidence.

DEVELOPMENT OF FRUITAGE

We should daily pray for God's assistance in our development of the fruits and graces of his Holy Spirit. Our prayers along this line should be that he will provide experiences having the necessary lessons in them. Most importantly, however, we should pray that we will be rightly exercised and therefore learn the lesson of each experience. The Apostle Paul states: "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."—Heb. 12:11

The peaceable fruits of righteousness are the fruits and graces of the Spirit. One of the definitions of the word "peaceable" is that which has a beneficial, constructive, and prosperous effect. The thought is, for the child of God, that such fruitage brings spiritual benefits and prosperity to the New Creature, though the experiences we may go through in this development may not seem "joyous, but grievous," at the present time.

SPIRITUAL FOOD

We should pray for spiritual food, recognizing the Lord's arrangements in providing it for our nourishment. First, it comes from our own personal study, with all the helps the Lord has so graciously provided for us. (John 5:39; II Tim. 2:15) It comes also from assembling together with our brethren in ecclesia meetings, at conventions, and in personal fellowship, "so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."—Heb. 10:25

Our spiritual nourishment also comes from the Lord's servants. "He gave some, apostles; and some,

prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” (Eph. 4:11,12) All these servants of God are sources of spiritual sustenance, and are provided for our growth. The burden of our prayers should be that we will be receptive to God’s Word. Indeed, let us daily hunger and thirst for it, that it may come into a good and honest heart and bring forth fruit to the honor and glory of our Heavenly Father.

MANY OTHER THINGS

There are many other things for which it is proper to pray. For example, we should pray for wisdom to keep from becoming entangled in the things of the world and for help in putting on “the whole armor of God.” (II Tim. 2:4; Eph. 6:11) We should ask for help in understanding the Word of God and for greater appreciation of his marvelous benefits. (Ps. 103:2) Certainly we should pray for help in our endeavor to manifest the spirit of the truth in all our actions. (John 4:23,24) We should pray for God’s coming kingdom and all of the interests associated with its establishment.—Matt. 6:10

In addition to praying for only those things that are proper, we should maintain proper decorum in word and conduct when we approach the heavenly throne of grace. For example, we do not believe it is proper to tell God all about his plan and of our wishes as to how he should govern the universe. It would seem more proper to listen to what he has to say to us. This we do by watching and waiting for the answers to our prayers, not by instructing God about

what we feel is best, nor by running ahead of him.
—Eph. 6:18; I Pet. 4:7

MODEL PRAYER

In Matthew 6:9-13, Jesus gave the disciples, and us, a model prayer. Let us examine some of its salient features. Following the opening of the prayer, in which God's name is hallowed in deep reverence, the first petition is: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." (vs. 10) We know that this is in harmony with the Father's will because it is a prominent part of his plan and its accomplishment. In the minds and lives of God's people the promise of the kingdom is the golden thread woven throughout the Bible. It is not that by our request we are intending to motivate God, or tell him when it should be established, but that we look forward to the time of its establishment because we yearn for an end to earth's dark night of sin and death.

When praying thus, we are asking for God's blessing on all his arrangements for the establishment of his kingdom. This includes the special work of the Gospel Age of calling and training a "little flock" to be associated with Jesus in that great kingdom work. (Luke 12:32) We should feel a personal interest in that work, since it is our desire to live and reign with him in that kingdom.—Rev. 20:4,6

DAILY BREAD

The second request of the model prayer is, "Give us this day our daily bread." (Matt. 6:11) We believe that the primary meaning of this request is for spiritual food. Jesus said in another place that he is the "bread of life," of which we must partake in order

to live. (John 6:48,51) He then explained what eating the bread of life really signifies: “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” (vs. 63) Thus, in praying for our daily bread we are asking for a better understanding of his Word through the Holy Spirit.

It is through the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit that the Truth is discernible to us. Jesus said, concerning our request for the Holy Spirit: “I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (Luke 11:9-13) It is as we partake of the nourishment from this bread of life that our New Creature grows and develops. This is wholly in harmony with God’s will for us, and a most vital element of prayer.

FORGIVENESS AND DELIVERANCE

In the Lord’s model prayer we are told to ask forgiveness. “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” (Matt. 6:12) We know that this request is in harmony with God’s will, for he has made every necessary provision for the forgiveness of our sins. He sent his only begotten Son, who died on Calvary’s

cross and subsequently appeared in the presence of God for us. (John 3:16; Heb. 9:24; I Pet. 3:18) However, the Heavenly Father has attached a provision to this arrangement. He requires that we demonstrate the same mercy and forgiveness toward others—especially to our brethren—that he has demonstrated toward us, for “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom. 5:8) Forgiving others is one of the ways that we can demonstrate the realization of our own undone condition and our great appreciation for God’s mercy toward us.—Matt. 6:14,15

The final petition of the model prayer is, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” (Matt. 6:13) We are fully aware of Satan’s power and how helpless we would be if we were left alone to combat his vastly superior abilities. *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott* translates the above verse as follows: “Abandon us not to trial, but preserve us from evil.” The word “trial” is translated from a Greek word which comes from a root that means “to pierce through.” “Evil” carries the thought of “evil one,” or Satan. Jesus has instructed us to pray for deliverance from the evil one and not to permit him by trial or temptation to overwhelm us and cause us to fall. The Apostle Paul assures us of the Heavenly Father’s purpose in this respect: “No trial has assailed you except what belongs to man; and God is faithful, who will not permit you to be tried beyond your ability; but with the trial, will also direct the issue, that you may be able to bear it.”—I Cor. 10:13, *Diaglott*

We note here that the rest of the words in Matthew 6:13, “For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever,” are not found in the older manuscripts of the New Testament. They also do not

appear in Jesus' answer to his disciples when they requested, "Lord, teach us to pray."—Luke 11:1-4

The model and example of an acceptable prayer that Jesus gave us is in perfect harmony with the will and purpose of God. It encompasses most of the legitimate petitions of the consecrated footstep followers of the Master. Indeed, it is a guide we can use daily in our communion with the Heavenly Father.

COOPERATION NECESSARY

Turning again to the sentiments of our opening text, the Apostle Paul has instructed us that we are to be instant—earnest, persevering and diligent—in prayer. However, we have seen also that for these prayers to be effective they must be in harmony with God's will and purpose. Finally, we must strive to cooperate continually with God in harmony with our prayers. We must be willing to accept the experiences that he permits us to have in order that we might have our prayers answered favorably with regard to the New Creature's growth and development. For example, if we pray for patience, we will probably have experiences designed to develop that quality of character. These could be in the form of trials, perhaps difficult and prolonged.

The Apostle Peter states, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." (I Pet. 4:12,13) If this be our attitude, we will be glad to approach the Heavenly Father habitually, "continuing instant in prayer." ■

The Gospel of Mark

“Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.”
—Isaiah 42:1

EACH OF THE FOUR GOS-pel writers described Jesus from quite different perspectives. Matthew wrote for Jewish readers, presenting Jesus as their long-awaited Messiah and king. Luke presented Jesus as a perfect man, one who loved even the despised classes of humanity. John described Jesus as the

Son of God, the Heavenly Father’s personal representative on earth.

The Prophet Isaiah in our opening text provides an appropriate setting for Mark’s presentation of Jesus—“Behold my servant.” This is quite a different viewpoint than that taken by the other three writers. Mark’s Gospel is often considered the best for young people because it is the shortest of the four, and because it is a book of action. Many more miracles are here described than in the other Gospels. Mark recorded few of Jesus’ discourses, and only four of

his parables. Rather, he laid emphasis on the fact that Jesus was an active servant of God. In the Old Testament prophecies there are various scriptures which use the word “Branch” to describe Jesus in different ways. Zechariah provides the one that characterizes Mark’s emphasis on Jesus as a servant. The prophet records, “Behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH.”—Zech. 3:8

How many views of a building would we want to see before describing it? Certainly more than one. We would prefer to see all its sides. The four Gospels are like four views of Jesus’ life. They have similarities, but they also have differences. Their composite accounts result in a word-picture of Jesus that is lifelike and multi-dimensional.

WHO WAS MARK?

Mark was not one of the twelve Apostles. From the eight scriptural references to Mark, or Marcus, we learn several things about him, which we will consider as we continue. We believe that both names, Mark and Marcus, refer to the same person—that being the one who wrote the Gospel of Mark. Both names come from a single Greek word in the New Testament, which is translated five times as “Mark” and three times as “Marcus.”

In addition to the Roman name, Mark, he also was called John, which is a Jewish name. (Acts 12:25) This was not unusual at that time, since Israel was under the control of the Romans. We notice the same thing in the Apostle Paul’s case. Paul is a Roman name, while Saul was his Jewish name.—Acts 13:9

After Peter was thrown into prison in Jerusalem by Herod, he was miraculously released by an angel.

He went immediately to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where a prayer meeting was taking place. (Acts 12:12) This was probably Mark's first encounter with any of the Apostles, and he may have learned much from Peter. Later, when writing his first epistle, Peter showed his great love for Mark, calling him his "son." (I Pet. 5:13) Peter did not imply that he was Mark's father by blood, but that he may have been instrumental in bringing him to the Lord through his personal ministry.

Some Bible commentators claim that Mark received the information described in his Gospel from Peter. He would have had a great influence on Mark's mind, because he could speak from first-hand knowledge of Jesus. Mark, no doubt, also had contact with many others who attended meetings in his mother's home, and who had been with Jesus and learned directly from him. They could also have given firsthand accounts of Jesus' life, ministry, and death, and all the many events concerning which Mark later wrote in his Gospel.

In addition to his relationship with Peter, Mark, along with Barnabas, accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey. However, before the trip was over, he left them and returned to Jerusalem. (Acts 13:13) Mark's abrupt departure before the end of their journey caused a sharp disagreement between Paul and Barnabas about taking him with them a second time. Paul was upset because Mark had not continued with them, no doubt resulting in a more difficult journey. Because they could not agree over this issue, Paul and Barnabas parted company. Barnabas took Mark and went to minister in Cyprus,

while Paul journeyed to Asia Minor, taking Silas.—Acts 15:36-41

Barnabas was related to Mark, who was either his cousin or nephew. Colossians 4:10 says Mark was “sister’s son to Barnabas,” which would signify nephew. However, numerous other translations say he was Barnabas’ cousin. Because they were kinsmen, Barnabas may have taken a more charitable view of Mark’s actions, thus creating the contention with Paul. Nevertheless, the Apostle Paul later changed his mind about Mark, stating that he was a great help to him.—II Tim. 4:11.

MARK’S GOSPEL

It seems that Mark wrote primarily for Gentile readership. Several characteristics of his Gospel lend support to this thought. Mark included no genealogies in his account. These would have been of no particular interest to Gentiles. In addition, Old Testament references which Mark cited are less than half those recorded by Matthew, and are generally limited to those that Jesus himself quoted, or that others quoted when speaking to him. Mark may have also assumed that most of his readers spoke Greek, and did not know Aramaic, the language spoken at that time by the Jews. On several occasions he defined the Aramaic words which Jesus used. Two examples are: “He ... said unto her, Talitha cumi: which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise,” and “If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift.” (Mark 5:41; 7:11) The words “Talitha cumi” and “Corban” in these passages are transliterations of the Aramaic spoken by Jesus, which Mark thought

it necessary to define in Greek for the benefit of his readers.

As aforementioned, Mark shows Jesus as an active, humble servant. Jesus was, in fact, the perfect servant, and is the model all his footstep followers must copy. There are no preliminaries in Mark's Gospel. Jesus, as God's servant, went about his ministry quickly and effectively. Some of the words which Mark uses frequently denote this idea of swift action. In one such passage, Mark says concerning Jesus, "Straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened. ... And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness."—Mark 1:10,12

Here Mark used Greek words translated "straightway" and "immediately." He repeated these words over forty additional times in his Gospel, using them more than the three other Gospel writers combined. Because Mark described a man of action, his account is the most complete concerning the miracles of Jesus. Of all the miracles performed by Jesus described in the four Gospels, two-thirds of them can be found recorded in the Book of Mark. Six of them are found only in his Gospel.

There is one important word which the other Gospel writers use over 240 times, but which appears in Mark's Gospel account only twenty times. It is the Greek word *kurios*, most often translated "Lord." This is one of the titles given to Jesus, so we might inquire as to why Mark chose to mostly avoid this designation. Here again, it is possibly because Mark wanted to emphasize Jesus' special role as God's servant during his earthly ministry, rather than his authority and power, which is accentuated by the word "Lord."

UNIQUE PASSAGES

One of Jesus' miracles which is unique to Mark's Gospel concerns the healing of a man who not only was deaf, but also had a serious speech impediment. Mark records that he was brought to Jesus, who "took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; And looking up into heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened." (Mark 7:32-35) In addition to this being a miracle that is only found in Mark's Gospel, it is another instance where he records an Aramaic word which Jesus spoke, "Ephphatha," and then explains its meaning for the reader.

Of the four parables included in Mark, one is found only in his Gospel account. "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."—Mark 4:26-29

In the parable of the sower recorded in Matthew 13:3-9, the Gospel "seed" is received into different kinds of soil. This represents the heart condition into which the message enters, and which determines the end result of the original sowing of the seed. However, in Mark's unique account, the power of the seed itself is emphasized. In this parable, Jesus showed that the Gospel message contains the capacity to provide nourishment by which growth and fruitage can occur, and that eventually results

in an abundant harvest. The lessons of both parables—the importance of the heart condition, and the power of the Gospel message—are vitally significant.

The last twelve verses of the Book of Mark are also quite unique. (Mark 16:9-20) This is because, as many Bible scholars have concluded, they are likely spurious. Indeed, none of these verses is found in several of the oldest New Testament manuscripts. It is thought that perhaps the original ending of Mark's Gospel was either lost or incomplete, and that later copyists took it upon themselves to add the verses which we now have in the *King James Version*. Although numerous Bible translations include these verses, they are often in brackets, indicating that they were added later, and not part of the original text.

SON OF MAN

There are a number of answers provided in the Book of Mark to the question, "Whose son was Jesus?" In Mark 6:3, when Jesus preached to his neighbors in the synagogue, they were astonished and said, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" In Mark 10:47, a blind beggar, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." In the very first verse of his Gospel, Mark said, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Indeed, the man Jesus was all these—the son of Mary by birth, the son of David by lineage, and the son of God by conception.

The designation Mark gave most often, however, was "Son of Man." His first use of this title is provided in Jesus' own words concerning himself, "That

ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins.” (Mark 2:10) Whereas the phrase, “Son of God,” appears only three times in Mark, “Son of Man” occurs fifteen times. Matthew and Luke likewise use both of these expressions in about the same proportion, and John uses each about the same number of times.

IMPORTANCE OF VARIOUS TITLES

In total, the title “Son of God” occurs twenty-eight times in the four Gospels. By contrast, “Son of man” is used eighty-five times, more than three times as often. Sometimes Jesus almost insisted on the use of this title. When asked by the Jews’ High Priest if he were the “Son of God,” both Matthew and Mark record Jesus’ response in which he referred to himself as “the Son of man.” (Matt. 26:63,64; Mark 14:61,62) Why did Jesus emphasize the use of this title, and how should we understand the import of his role as being both the Son of man, as well as the Son of God?

To understand the importance of these designations, let us first look at the title, “Son of David.” Matthew’s Gospel begins, “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.” (Matt. 1:1) Matthew used the title, Son of David, nine times, laying emphasis upon it by his use of it in the words cited above. Matthew did this because he wanted his readers, many of whom were Jews, to see Jesus as the heir of David, and as the fulfillment of the prophecy God gave to David through Nathan. This prophecy reads, in part, “When thy [David’s] days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee,

which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. ... And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.”—II Sam. 7:12,16

Matthew’s Gospel showed Jesus as the rightful descendent of David’s royal house. Therefore, by saying, Son of David, Matthew was essentially pointing out that Jesus was the “seed” referred to in Nathan’s prophecy—hence, the inheritor of what was David’s. David had a dominion, over which he was king. At the time of Jesus’ First Advent, the Jews were living under Roman occupation and certainly knew that David’s kingdom, Israel, had been lost. However, they looked for his heir who would reestablish that dominion.

MAN’S DOMINION

When God created the first man, Adam, he gave him dominion over the earth, as indicated by the following passages. “God said, ... have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” (Gen. 1:28) “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.”—Ps. 8:4-6

Because of disobedience, Adam and his progeny lost their right to earth’s dominion. Who could rightfully claim it? Who would be Adam’s rightful inheritor? The “Son of man,” who was also a son of

Adam through his mother Mary, could rightfully claim this title. In corroboration of this, the Apostle Paul later quotes the above verses from Psalm 8, but adds that “now we see not yet all things” under man’s dominion. “But we see Jesus,” Paul continues, “who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”—Heb. 2:8,9

Jesus, as the Son of God, was the “heir of all things.” (Heb. 1:2) As the Son of man, he was the heir to the dominion of earth originally entrusted to the first man, but forfeited by him. Jesus was the great kinsman of mankind who possessed the ransoming power to redeem them from sin and death. His miracles manifested his divine origins. Yet Jesus stressed his kinship with humanity. By his life of faithfulness, he fulfilled the prophetic words of Daniel: “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, ... And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom.”—Dan. 7:13,14

By his faithfulness, even unto death, as the Son of man, Jesus has obtained the right to earth’s dominion. By means of his coming kingdom of righteousness, and as the kingly Son of David, he will restore all the willing and obedient, not just of Israel, but of all mankind, to human perfection. Then he will return to man the dominion over earth which was lost so long ago because of sin. Recalling again Paul’s words, “we see not yet all things” under man’s dominion, but it is God’s intention, and that of his Son, to give back to man dominion over the earth.—Matt. 25:34; Heb. 2:8; Rev. 21:3-7

JESUS MADE FLESH

The Apostle John stressed the importance of acknowledging that, while on earth, Jesus was truly human. He said, “Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.” (I John 4:2,3) Jesus came “in the flesh” to provide a ransom, which denotes a corresponding price, for Father Adam. A key element of that correspondence was that Jesus must be a human being, just as Adam was. Paul refers to Jesus in this way, calling him “the last Adam.” (I Cor. 15:45) Thus, Jesus’ words, recorded by both Matthew and Mark, were fulfilled: “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”—Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45

In John’s Gospel we read, “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” (John 1:14) The “Word” [Greek: *Logos*] refers to Jesus in his prehuman existence as a spirit being. When he came to earth, he did not retain his spirit nature and merely materialize in a human body, as angels had done before him. He was actually “made flesh.” This was accomplished by his having a human mother, Mary, and by God miraculously planting a life-giving human “seed” in her womb through the power of the Holy Spirit. (Matt. 1:20-23) Thus, we see that Jesus was born as a perfect human being because God was his Father. By maintaining that perfection, it was possible for Jesus to inherit Adam’s dominion, without inheriting the condemnation that passed upon Adam’s posterity.

Despite such clear statements by the Gospel writers, many Christians continue to believe that, while

on earth, Jesus was really divine—part God and part man. As we have seen, the Scriptures state otherwise. Jesus was not divine at his First Advent, but was “made flesh,” truly the “Son of man.” Since his resurrection, he is the divine, glorified Lord. Yet, he still retains his designation as Son of man, and the rightful dominion to which he is entitled. We note Stephen’s words concerning the resurrected Lord: “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.”—Acts 7:56

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The Gospel of Mark is one of four views of Jesus and his ministry. In Mark’s presentation we see Jesus as the perfect servant of God. We should especially consider this aspect of his life as a model for our own. Let us, as he did, do all our tasks quickly, without hesitation, and with a great desire to serve others.

The title, Son of man, refers to Jesus as the progeny of Adam, one who is worthy to inherit the dominion lost by the first man. In like manner he is the Son of David, and inherits the throne and dominion of his father David. This will be for the purpose of blessing all mankind through his righteous reign, and restoring man’s dominion over the earth.

To us, Jesus’ footstep followers, he is the Son of God. If faithful in following his footsteps, we will be with him in heaven as members of his body and “joint-heirs” in all things that have become his. (Rom. 8:16,17) May the example given to us in Mark’s Gospel energize us to greater faithfulness and zeal in the service of our Heavenly Father. ■

Humility and Its Blessed Results

*“Humble
yourselves
therefore under the
mighty hand of
God, that he may
exalt you in
due time.”*
—I Peter 5:6

THIS IS THE SEASON OF

the year when God’s consecrated people throughout the world turn their special attention to the upcoming Memorial celebration. The date of this year’s solemn and blessed occasion, according to

Jewish reckoning, will be Thursday evening, March 29th. At that time we will once again call to remembrance Jesus’ death as the Passover “Lamb of God,” who was “sacrificed for us,” and who “taketh away the sin of the world.”—John 1:29; I Cor. 5:7

It is of vital importance that, as we approach the Memorial, we especially focus our spiritual minds on the great privilege of knowing something of the eternal benefits to all mankind which will accrue as the result of Jesus’ ransom sacrifice. (Mark 10:45; I Tim. 2:5,6) As consecrated children of God, we will also do well to renew our efforts to develop a more complete character likeness to Christ. In an earlier article in this issue of *The Dawn*, we considered the work of

daily sanctification and holiness. This is one critical aspect of our Christian walk which we should give special attention to at this season. Another important feature of our character development that deserves particular scrutiny as we prepare our hearts for the upcoming Memorial is the quality of humility. We venture to say that no other trait of Christian character can be successfully developed without first having humility as a foundation principle in our hearts and minds.

Peter, in our opening text, calls to mind a measure of the import of humility. However, he does not stop there. In the ensuing verses, he outlines the blessed results of a character founded on this all-important quality. Quoting the entire context, we read: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."—I Pet. 5:6-10

MEANING OF HUMILITY

Humility has various facets of meaning, but from the standpoint of the Bible, and particularly in our text, its meaning is to make self low. This relates to the expression of our self-will. When we consecrated our lives to the Heavenly Father, the thought of our own wills being dead was a paramount requirement

in order for us to be accepted by him. It follows, then, that our humility is a continual measure of how we are living up to our consecration vows and what the prospect of our reward will be.

The thought of being “under the mighty hand of God” implies a full submission and yielding of mind and body to the providences of his will for us. It is his “mighty hand” which is guiding and directing our lives. Paul says we are God’s “workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” (Eph. 2:10) His design, or will, for us is that by service, sacrifice and suffering, all of which he supervises, we, if rightly exercised by the experiences, are enabled to develop the fruits and graces of the Spirit. This is necessary and must precede our spiritual birth. This thought is expressed beautifully by the apostle: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”—Rom. 12:1

When we made a consecration, we offered our humanity to God, including earthly hopes and aspirations, in exchange for the prospect of life as a spirit being, if “faithful unto death.” (Rev. 2:10) Our bodies of flesh, then, are to be expended—yielded to God in daily sacrifice. We engage in this work of sacrifice by spending our strength, energies, abilities, and influence, in the service of the Truth and the brethren. The result of this activity will be a transformation of character, Paul says, from that which conforms to the world, to that which comes to know, and do, the perfect will of God. (Rom. 12:2) Thus we see clearly that humility is a first and continual requisite to success in the fulfillment of our consecration vows.

CASTING OUR CARE UPON GOD

In verse 7 of our lesson from the words of the Apostle Peter, he seems to want us to recognize that a life of humble submission, which leads to a life of sacrifice, may cause us at times to be fearful. This is because our general walk in life, our deportment, words and actions will be different from most in the world around us. We will also have testing experiences, allowed by the Heavenly Father, for the purpose of further developing our characters in the likeness of our dear Master.

When these circumstances come into our lives, the apostle invites us to cast all our care upon the Heavenly Father, in full faith, knowing that “he careth” for us. The word “care” in this verse has the thought of anxiety, to the point of distraction, which seems to describe the condition better. As in other aspects of our Christian walk, however, if we have truly accepted the Heavenly Father’s will for our own, we will realize that his mighty hand is over us in everything that we do or that we experience. Whatever trials are permitted to come to us, we will have confidence in his overruling providences on our behalf. We have not been given the “spirit of fear.”—II Tim. 1:7

OPPOSITION RECOGNIZED

We can never be successful in our Christian walk if we do not know from whom our opposition stems. Peter tells us in verse 8 of our lesson that the source of our trials and difficulties is “your adversary the devil”—Satan. In the Old Testament, we read a very interesting statement concerning Satan: “He shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel

of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee.”—Zech. 3:1,2

The point of this text is to bring to our minds graphically the fact that Satan is a real personality and that he is dedicated to opposing God and his righteous arrangements. If he can cause some aspect of God’s plan to fail, he can perhaps postpone his own demise. He may even have hope of winning the struggle between darkness and light. The Apostle Paul admonishes us to “put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”—Eph. 6:11,12

The expression “principalities and powers” seems to denote different orders of spiritual beings, perhaps both good and evil. In these verses the Apostle Paul is referring to those powerful spirit beings who are under Satan’s control. We are obviously no match for them when they oppose us, and the only effective defense that we have is the armor of God. The apostle proceeds to enumerate the various parts of this armor, which are the Truth, righteousness, the Gospel of peace, faith, the promise of salvation, and the word of God. (vss. 14-17) All of these are provided to us by the Heavenly Father. Our skill in using them is dependent upon the depth of our consecration and the extent to which we have learned to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God.

These words of Paul also indicate that Satan and his subordinates have enlisted earthly governments, institutions, and even religious systems as part of the forces of darkness. We believe, however, that most of these are aligned with the powers of darkness through ignorance. Nevertheless, they constitute a powerful force in opposition to the children of light.

In view of all these powers which are against us, the Apostle Peter, in verse 8 of our lesson, warns that we should be sober and vigilant because Satan, represented in all these forces of darkness, is stalking the children of light. Like a roaring lion, he is seeking whom he may devour. The term lion is used by Peter because of its fierceness, cruelty, and cunning. It is said that its roar can be so terrifying to its intended victim that it freezes with terror, becoming easy prey to the attacker. So it can be with us if we leave ourselves exposed, trusting in our own strength for a defense. We become an easy prey to a much more powerful and cunning foe. On the other hand, if we are vigilant and alert, we will be watchful for his snares and will rely on the Lord's superior power for guidance and deliverance.

The Apostle Paul, in telling of his experience with Alexander the coppersmith, who was a violent opposer to the Truth, said that when he first countered the opposition all his friends left him. Continuing, though, he stated, "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." (II Tim. 4:14-17) The Lord will deliver us also.

RESIST—IN FAITH

In verse 9 of our lesson, the apostle states that we are to resist Satan and his emissaries of darkness, standing firm in the faith. It is only because God has, through his Holy Spirit, enlightened our minds and revealed the Truth to us that we are able to discern fully between good and evil. This has not been true of any others of the human race since Adam, except Jesus at his First Advent. Because we have this ability, we can be victorious in this present trial time of the Gospel Age, knowing that “the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God.”—I Pet. 4:17

To the true child of God, who has been given the privilege of discerning the beauty of his character revealed through the Scriptures, these divine principles satisfy the innermost desires of the heart. The words of the psalmist express the thought nicely: “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. ... How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.”—Ps. 119:97,103,104

The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the brethren at Ephesus, says, “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reprovèd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.” (Eph. 5:11-13) It is the light generated through the power and influence of the Holy Spirit that makes the works of darkness manifest to the child of God. Thus, being fully aware, he is able to cast them off with soberness and vigilance.

AFFLICTION AND SUFFERING

Continuing in I Peter 5:9, the apostle speaks of “afflictions,” or suffering, which will come upon us and all our “brethren that are in the world.” This brings to our attention that suffering on the part of the church is universal. Sometimes, when we as individuals are undergoing severe experiences, it may seem that we are the only ones who are suffering. We may even feel that we have been singled out for especially severe trials. This, of course, is not true. The Apostle Paul states, “It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him,” and “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” (II Tim. 2:11,12; 3:12) Then we have his wonderful statement: “If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”—Rom. 8:17

To suffer, according to Bible usage, means to endure or experience something, usually of a difficult nature. The thought of suffering with Christ is that the child of God is to be submissive to all the experiences that the Heavenly Father permits him to have, just as Jesus endured all the difficult trials permitted to come upon him. These can be experiences of being misunderstood, of derision, mocking, and even of physical pain and death, if the Lord requires it.

However, all these experiences must be the result of Christian activity. The Apostle Peter expresses the matter thus: “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: ... But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as

a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."—I Pet. 4:14-16

In another place, Peter similarly writes, "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. ... For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." (I Pet. 2:19-23) This is suffering and being submissive in the experiences brought about through our efforts to serve the Lord, the Truth, and the brethren.

PAUL'S EXAMPLE

The Apostle Paul, speaking of himself, provides an example for all the footstep followers of Jesus down through the Gospel Age, saying, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." (Col. 1:24) The apostle does not mean that Christ's sacrifice was not efficacious and that it required additional sacrifices and suffering. What he is saying, rather, is that the Christ, head and body, must suffer. (I Cor. 12:12) Since the head, Christ Jesus, has already suffered, the suffering that is left "behind" is that of the church. Suffering must be experienced by each member for his testing and development.

Paul's suffering on behalf of the brethren is well documented. We think especially of the account in II Corinthians 11:24-30. Here he tells of being beaten

with rods, of being stoned, of suffering shipwreck, “In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, ... In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. ... If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.”

All these experiences were brought about only because of Paul’s activity in preaching the good news of the kingdom and endeavoring to serve the brethren. They came as the result of his doing “good unto all men” as opportunity presented itself. (Gal. 6:10) Those who opposed Paul often boasted of difficulties they had overcome based on their own strength. Paul said, however, that if boasting is necessary, he would glory in those things that demonstrated his complete submission to the Lord. His lack of reliance on his own strength or judgment, and the knowledge that it was the Lord who always won the victory, were things Paul could joyously acclaim. While we will likely never be required to endure and suffer as he did, the same principles that he exemplified in this regard apply to us.

OTHER EXAMPLES

In Hebrews 12:1, the Apostle Paul says that we are “compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.” In this statement he is referring to all the wonderful examples of faith he had just enumerated in the previous chapter. These wonderful heroes of faith were witnesses for God in the sense that they spoke of

the things that God requested they speak of, even though the message was most often unpopular.

The witness that they gave in some instances meant torture and even death. In these trials, however, they demonstrated their faith in God, not relying on their own strength, but “out of weakness were made strong.” (Heb. 11:34) Their attitude was best expressed by the three young Hebrews, who said, “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”—Dan. 3:17,18

Because of their faithfulness under testing and trials brought about as a result of their witnessing for God, and telling forth the message that was for that time or season, they looked forward to a “better resurrection.” They were called friends of God, and their faith was accounted to them for righteousness.—Heb. 11:35; James 2:23; Rom. 4:3

The apostle tells us that these faithful men of God are examples to us, for we too are witnesses for God. It is our mission to tell forth the message for this time and season, which is the good news of the kingdom. To the established forces of darkness, this is an unpopular message and will bring upon us testings, trials and persecution. However, in these trials we are to look to Jesus, our forerunner and example, who was “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” (Heb. 4:15) “Consider him that endured such contradiction [opposition] of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”—Heb. 12:3

UNTO DEATH

The apostle indicates that our afflictions and suffering are not temporary things, but will continue until our course is ended in death. “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” (Heb. 12:4) Paul then adds that this should be no surprise to us, because the prophet foretold of these things, saying, “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.” (vss. 5,6) The thought of “chastening” in these verses is more correctly understood as that of tutoring or training. God permits certain trials to come upon us as he sees we have need. These experiences are for the purpose of training and assisting us in the development of the fruits and graces of the spirit. In fact, the apostle continues, if we are not having these experiences, we are not legitimate sons.—vs. 8

In verse 11 of the same chapter, the apostle states, “No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” These training experiences are the trials and sufferings that come to each member of the body of Christ, designed to yield in our characters the peaceable fruits of righteousness. This fruitage results from our being properly “exercised” by these difficult experiences. By them we are made more mature, complete, and spiritually healthy—that is, more Christ-like.

AFTER YE HAVE SUFFERED

Returning to the opening verses of our lesson, the Apostle Peter summarizes his thoughts: “The God

of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” (I Pet. 5:10) The apostle’s conclusion is that such experiences, if we are exercised by them, will have a beneficial effect on our Christian character. By proving faithful under trials and testings, we will be more firmly established, and at the same time our faith will be strengthened and settled.

This process, the apostle says, starts with a foundation of humility and submission to God’s mighty hand. It requires that we cast all our anxious cares upon him, as our great burden-bearer. It further means that we will be ever watchful and vigilant in our fight against Satan and his forces of evil, knowing that if we resist these, no harm can come to us as New Creatures. We likewise understand that, like Jesus and all other consecrated believers, we must be tested and proven through the training experiences of trials, difficulties, and suffering. By all these things, the “God of all grace” will complete his work in us, and “exalt” us “in due time.” Let us, therefore, as this year’s Memorial celebration nears, rekindle our efforts to be faithful to our consecration vows, that we might reap the eternal blessings resulting from daily, humble submission to the will of God. ■

*I have seen You in Your sanctuary and gazed
upon Your power and glory.*

*Your unfailing love is better than life itself;
how I praise You!*

—Psalm 63:2,3

New Living Translation

2018 MEMORIAL SUPPER DATE

The proper time for the annual observance of the Memorial Supper will be after sunset on Thursday, March 29, 2018.

A complete Memorial Service is available for any who wish to have it. CD or DVD versions can be purchased for \$6.00. Please send your request to:

Dawn Recorded Lecture Service
199 Railroad Avenue
East Rutherford, NJ 07073

Please place your order by March 21, if possible.

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

FEBRUARY 1—“Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.”—Isaiah 30:21 (Z. '95-6 Hymn 312A)

FEBRUARY 8—“O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?”—Matthew 14:31 (Z. '00-170 Hymn 361)

FEBRUARY 15—“Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected.”—I John 2:5 (Z. '97-312 Hymn 238)

FEBRUARY 22—“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have.”—Hebrews 13:5 (Z. '02-250 Hymn 121)

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

The speakers listed below are invited by individual classes, or their services have been arranged by their home classes:

N. Austin	Mettupalayam	9
Sacramento, CA	Coimbatore	10,11
February 16-18	Erode	12
G. Balko	Salem	13
Sacramento, CA	Trichy	14,15
February 16-18	Nagapattinam	16
O. B. Elbert	Chennai	17,18
Sacramento, CA	Bangalore	19
February 16-18	H. Montague	
M. Ensley	Sacramento, CA	
Sacramento, CA	February 16-18	
February 16-18	R. Niemczyk	
S. Jeuck	Sacramento, CA	
Jacksonville, FL	February 16-18	
February 11	D. Rice	
B. Keith	Sacramento, CA	
Sacramento, CA	February 16-18	
February 16-18	R. Sconyers	
E. Kuenzli	Jacksonville, FL	February 11
INDIA:	B. Siwak	
Bangalore	Sacramento, CA	
February 1-4	February 16-18	
Mysore		
5		
Nilgiri Hills		
6-8		

OBITUARIES

The following brethren have recently finished their Christian course. We wish to express our sincere sympathy to their family and friends in the loss of these dear ones.

Brother John Dutro, Kenosha, WI—October 4. Age, 99

Sister Marian Bellinger, Wheatfield, IN—December 26. Age, 71

Sister Judy Kalson, San Antonio, TX—January 1. Age, 75

CONVENTIONS

These conventions are listed by request of classes who sponsor them. So your convention can be placed in these columns in time, make your request in writing three months before the date of the convention to Dawn Magazine, 199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, NJ 07073.

SACRAMENTO CONVENTION, February 16-18—Holiday Inn Express, 2224 Auburn Blvd., Sacramento, CA 98521. Contact K. Freer. Phone: (916) 879-4657 or Email: winnerwear@aol.com

FLORIDA CONVENTION, March 3-5—Holiday Inn Orlando International, 5750 T. G. Lee Blvd., Orlando, FL 32822. For room reservations, contact Holiday Inn: Phone: (407) 851-6400. Deadline for special rate of \$109 per room, per night is February 23. Other information, contact: R. Goodman. Phone: (407) 695-6815 or Email: goodmanrw@gmail.com

NEW ORLEANS CONVENTION, March 10,11—Holiday Inn Gulfport/Airport, 9515 Highway 49, Gulfport, MS, 39503. Contact M. Costelli. Phone: (228) 861-2822 or Email: michael@simpkins-costelli.com

DETROIT CONVENTION, March 24,25—Quality Inn Troy, 2537 Rochester Court, Troy, MI 48083. Contact P. Nemesh. Phone: (248) 649-6588 or Email: nemeshfp@aol.com

ALBUQUERQUE CONVENTION, March 30-April 1—Sheraton Albuquerque Airport Hotel, 2910 Yale Blvd. SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106. Contact S. Thomassen. Phone: (505) 268-8170 or Email: srbt@juno.com

NTAK OBIO AKPA, NIGERIA CONVENTION, March 30-April 1—Ntak Obio Akpa, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Convention Theme: II Timothy 2:21

HIGHLAND PARK CONVENTION, April 7—DoubleTree by Hilton, 789 Connecticut Avenue, Norwalk, CT 06854. Contact S. Koterba. Phone: (917) 554-2348 or Email: sandykoterba@gmail.com

HARTFORD CONVENTION, May 6—West Hartford Senior Center, 15 Starkel Road, West Hartford, CT. Contact J. Slivinsky. Phone: (860) 289-0116 or Email: djslivinsky@sbcglobal.net

WEST NEWTON CONVENTION, May 6—Sewickley Grange Hall, West Newton, PA. Contact L. Mlinek. Email: lmlinek@verizon.net

LOS ANGELES CONVENTION, May 26,27—Burbank Auditorium. For room reservations (subsidized rate of \$70/night), contact N. Nekora. Phone: (310) 454-5248 or Email: npekoraa@aol.com. Other information, contact T. Parkinson. Phone: (818) 247-9800 or Email: ti77park@gmail.com. Please place LABible in subject line of the email.

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 3—Sheraton Bucks County Hotel, 400 Oxford Valley Road, Langhorne, PA. Contact R. Griehs. Phone: (267) 456-8889 or Email: rgriehs@gmail.com

VANCOUVER CONVENTION, June 9,10—Aldergrove Kinsmen Community Centre, 26770 29th Avenue, Aldergrove, BC, Canada. Contact B. Smith. Email: bas@telus.net

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 14-19—University of Pittsburgh, 450 Schoolhouse Road, Johnstown, PA. Contact E. Kuenzli. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or Email: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, August 8-12—Szczyrk, Poland. ul. Wrzosowa 28 A, 43-370 Szczyrk. Website for complete information: www.biblestudents-conventions.com

*Let all who take refuge in you be glad;
let them ever sing for joy.
Spread your protection over them,
that those who love your name may rejoice in you.
—Psalm 5:11
New International Version*