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## “VISION”

The eye is so important to us in every day life that we take it so much for granted. Close your eyes for a moment and darkness will surround you, you have no focus point and you have no definition of colour. You can hear but you cannot see the people, the trees, the birds or the surroundings. Now open your eyes. You can see the light, the people, the colours and your surroundings. How blessed are we that we can see.

No one can reach a higher level than the ideal or vision set before one's mind. No life can attain to greater things than the objective around which a man's life centres. He who is of the earth earthly will mind earthly things, and conclude that “*a man's life consists in the abundance of things he possesses.*” Luke 12:15. But the one whose eyes have been opened by the “*heavenly vision*”, discovers that life on earth is really just a training ground for us.

### “The Heavenly Vision”

One who lays up treasures on earth where moth and rust can eat away and destroy, will be left poor indeed. The other, with a vision of the short life here on earth, and with a future heavenly outlook, will devote his effort to laying up treasures in heaven – Math 6:19,20. He finds the words of our Lord Jesus “*where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*”, (Matt 6:21). There is a daily drawing of the whole character in the direction of the heavenly treasure house. The Wise Man said “*As a man thinketh in his heart so is he*” (Prov 23:7) - so he will become through his power of thought, his habit of thought being determined by the aim and the pursuits of his life.

The apostle Paul was able to testify that his whole life and outlook were changed by the vision that was granted to him. He wanted it clearly understood that it was a vision of Jesus Christ that revolutionised his whole life. It was the heavenly vision by which the persecuting Saul was halted and humbled. He was transformed into a servant of the church, with a heart of compassion for the Master whose servant he became. It was that vision that henceforth made him see that what he had previously counted as gain, was now but refuse, loss and dross.(Phil 3:8). It was because of that vision that his ministry became ever so stable, ever so Christ centred and focused on a heavenly walk.

Christ crucified and Christ developed within the hearts of believers became the supreme objective of his life and of his unsurpassed devotion to Christ and his church. He himself

tells us, “*I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision*”, Acts 26:19. Nor did persecution or trials deter him - *But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus Christ, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.* Acts 20:24. In ordaining him for service the Lord had said, “*I have appeared unto thee, to make thee a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen Me, and of the things wherein I will yet appear unto thee.*” Acts 26:16.

Thus it was that Paul was qualified and so energetically fitted for the ministry committed to him. He had seen the Lord, he had felt his power, and what he had seen energised him to make the mystery known to all. Paul was a man of vision, a man with experiences, “*whether in the body or out of the body*” (2 Cor 12:2,3), he could not tell. These experiences gave him such a long view of the purposes of God that are so wide and so deep, so grand and so wonderful. He rebukes all lukewarmness in service then and now. He rebukes all narrowness in concept, all unloving selfishness within the circle of the family of God.

Paul's personal vision of the Lord was so important to him in his appointed sphere of service. It continues to be the divine rule for each servant, “*according to the measure of the spirit given to every man*” (1 Cor 12: 7), to each commissioned by the Lord to be a “*witness of the things wherein thou hast seen Me*”. We are all called also to be ambassadors for Christ. (2 Cor 5:20)

### “Where There Is No Vision....”

In Prov 29:18 we find an inspired emphasis on the vital importance of having a true vision of the will of God. There we are told, ‘*Where there is no vision, the people perish.*’ The original meaning of this word “*perish*”, has the significance of becoming “naked”, or to be uncovered, or to be exposed, or still another meaning is to “cast off a restraint”. A paraphrase of this text would then be, “*Where there is no vision at which the eyes gaze intently, the people cast off all restraint, they are made naked and exposed.*” A good illustration of this is found in the words of our Lord Jesus addressed to the church at Laodicea, and to all “Laodiceans” ever since. (Rev 3:17,18.) Let it be noted that Jesus has but one remedy to offer for this sad state of affairs in Laodicea, “*Anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see*”.

Can there be any more unfortunate state of the mind in the

professing Christian than self deception? Laodicean lukewarmness was caused by the effect of boasting of being rich and increased with goods, and needing nothing.”. That church’s vision was limited now to *‘the abundance of the things’* it possessed. It looked at self, was well satisfied, and grew lukewarm. Paul looked at our Lord Jesus and saw that which swept him off his feet and moved him to lay hold on all that for which the Lord Jesus laid hold on him. So Paul became more energised, more focused, and full of zeal. He wanted to have the mind of Christ. Is this then our goal for we also are to be conformed to His image?

The solemn lesson is that the Laodicean boasting and self-deception may be reproduced in us also. It can be reproduced unless our eyes are kept widely opened to our own worthlessness by the eye-salve the Lord applies. We need our eyes to be fixed intently on our Lord’s work for us, and opened to the riches of His grace – *‘In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.’* (Eph 1:7 -9)

Paul’s vision was one that focused on the fact that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom he considered himself chief, and in fact that the simple Gospel of Christ was *‘the power of God unto salvation’* “*‘For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.’*” (Rom 1:16) Paul visualised a *‘high calling of God in Christ Jesus’* (Phil 3:14) open to as many as the Lord shall call from Jew and Gentile, whose hearts have been touched as his own had been. So that there is a willingness to *‘count all things but loss and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus.’* (Phil 3:8)

He saw a church purchased by the blood of Jesus, a precious treasure to Him who loved her and bought her, for whom He died, for whom He stands in the presence of God, and for whom he comes again in the end of the age to receive her unto Himself, *“a glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.”* (Eph 5:27) He visualised a church enthroned in power with Christ, fully qualified by present life experiences to judge the world in righteousness, in patience, in long-suffering, in tender mercy and in love, when present days of probationary training are over, and the world comes forth from the prison-house of death. This was Paul’s vision, this was the impelling force behind his years of suffering and devotion. This is the vision that made him a man of determination, of warm heart, of mature discernment, and an apostle of Christ *‘in word, in conversation, in charity, in*

*spirit, in faith, in purity. (1 Tim 4:12)*

Would we be so moulded in our own Christian life? Would we be able to leave behind a similar record to Paul’s? Then surely we may look constantly to him and grow like him. While we may be followers of him even as he also was of Christ, yet we too must have our eyes fixed on the same focus point that filled Paul’s vision. We must have our eyes fixed on Jesus. Heb 12:2 shows where our focus should be *‘looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith’*. Out of this vision will come a growth in grace and knowledge, in outlook and character, in service and fruitage, such as will glorify God, bless his people and enable us to finish our course with joy.

#### **“True Consecration Depends on a Vision”**

It is a precious blessing to have the eyes of our understanding opened to see the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Is it possible to have but a partial vision of this grace? We do not have a full vision until we have seen ourselves as Paul did, he declared himself as the chief of sinners. Not until we have seen that all our own righteousness is as merely filthy rags, and all our own works as unprofitable service, will we reach the place where all boasting is excluded. Not until the well known words of the hymn *‘nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling’*, become a fixed conviction in our hearts, can we enter into the realities of true consecration. Love must be the power that draws us to Christ, *‘who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,’* (1 Cor 1:30) – made everything so ‘that no flesh should glory in His presence.’

Nothing short of this vision showing our own real poverty will keep us always humble in heart. No other viewpoint will save us from thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, thereby falling into that sad state of spiritual blindness where one’s own standing in divine favour is judged by comparison with the sayings and doings of others. We remember Paul tells us of *“some that commend themselves; but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves are not wise .(2 Cor 10:12)*. Such a course clearly shows a rather clouded and distorted vision and tells only too plainly that the eye has been taken off the Lord Jesus. Before the apostles’ examples of self sacrifice, devotion, obedience, love, and sympathy, our own is seen to fall so very far short of perfection, and we are made to see that *‘by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.’* (Eph 2:8.)

True consecration must spring from and continue to have roots in a real heart’s desire and affection for the Lord Jesus, and we should carefully consider the Lord’s message to the church at Ephesus in Rev 2:1-6. In as much as our deep affection has its start in the sacrificial love of Jesus for us, it follows that the vision of Christ crucified must never be dimmed before our eyes. It must be with us as with Paul, always a ‘heavenly vision’, constantly leading us to say, “All for Jesus, all for Jesus, all my being’s ransomed powers.” They were surely “consecrated”, and in the “truth,” in that assembly at Ephesus, and had much to their credit. In Rev 2:2 their “works” proved that they had not grown weary in well-doing. They had ‘patience’, a virtue of outstanding merit. They were commended for having a “*Hatred of them*

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*that are evil*". They were well versed in true doctrine, so much so that they were alert to detect the false position of any "*who say they are apostles and are not*". It could be said that they had suffered much for Christ's sake, which we know is a very important feature of true consecration.

But despite all these, which to most of us are the real basics of Christian life, these Ephesian brethren were plainly told that they had lost the very thing that alone makes dedication to the Lord of any merit whatsoever - *'Because thou hast lost thy first love.'* (Rev 2:4) Evidently it was not a loss of love for the truth they had received, or any loss of zeal for its defence and promulgation, but they had let slip a personal devotion to Christ himself. This loss in the eyes of Jesus was far too vital a matter to simply overlook. In this connection it is well that we now remember that this Ephesus message is directed to us as well, for thus it is written, "*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches.*" (Rev 2:7)

#### **"Open Thou Mine Eyes"**

Thus we see that the true centre of the dedicated life is Christ himself. It becomes the centre of those two all-important features of Christian life, namely, the unity of the spirit as pertaining to our fellowship, and the service of the Lord and His people. This is the reason why each one of us must have a personal vision of Christ. If Paul had not been able to say, '*last of all he was seen of me*' (1 Cor 15:8), not only would the proof of his apostleship have been greatly affected, but how absent would have been the impelling power which greatly influenced his daily life and ministry.

It was out of that vision and its never-to-be-forgotten revelation of the love of Jesus that opened his eyes to the fact that in his mistaken zeal he was proving himself disloyal both to the Lord and the saints. And so the beloved 'brother Paul' became an outstanding example of brotherly love, and of Christian living. It was the secret of his Spirit directed ministry, and his burning desire to see Christ formed in the heart of every believer. It was because he had this personal vision so deeply etched in his mind and heart that he left the church that gem of love's supreme importance, beauty and operation- the so well known chapter 13 of 1st Corinthians.

It was because of that permanently etched vision in his mind, that above all other things he longed to see the church cleansed and purified, a 'chaste virgin' for Christ, '*without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.*' (Eph 5:27). O that we too may see as clearly as he saw. May we too have our eyes fixed on the eternal realities, those vital facts of faith and practice. Like Paul, let us endeavour to obediently follow the heavenly vision, and inspire in others the same determined purpose, that we and they might understand and come to '*know him and the power of his resurrection. and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.*' (Phil 3:10)

#### **"What Seest Thou?"**

The epistles of Paul are full of illustrations of varying degrees of sight possessed by brethren in his day, and thus reveal the possible degrees of spiritual vision. How few there were who seemed to get beyond that first stage of sight! How few saw things in true proportions, in true colour and in full clarity! We recall the experience of the blind man,

who received the healing touch of our Saviour's hand, and then on being asked '*What seest thou?*' said he saw '*men as trees walking*'. (Mark 8:24) He had sight but things were all out of proportion - rather blurry - out of focus - rather like one who has become badly short or long sighted. But with a second touch from the Lord Jesus he was able to see '*every man clearly*', as if the proper glasses were now on to enable him to see clearly.

This incident teaches us that we initially may see a lot, maybe a lot more than we had seen before, but maybe we see only very partially - we see "*men like trees walking*". It is quite reasonable to suppose that if there had been no second touch given to this man's eyes, he would have gone his way thinking himself seeing just like other men. It required that second touch to convince him that previously his sight had been but partial - out of focus. So it is with us. It is only when mature sight is really possessed in spiritual things that a former partial sight is fully realised.

This explains why Paul felt so grieved over the immature sight of so many of the brethren of his day. Paul had so clearly seen the lengths and breadths and depths, the many dimensions of the love of Christ. He had so visualised the power of the gospel to elevate men and women into maturity of mind and transformation of character. It constituted his most trying experience to see the Corinthian church at best still babes in Christ, for all the length of time they had professed to be following Christ. They should have been not only ready but eager for the strong meat in due season of the word. Up to that time their sight was like that of a partly blind man, only partial, but doubtless to themselves it seemed a full vision.

The church at Corinth evidently had seen so much. It is rather interesting how Paul opens up his first letter to them. He thanks God on their behalf because of the grace they had received, he compliments them on being "*enriched by him, in all utterance, and all knowledge,*" (1 Cor 1:5) and he is encouraged by their coming '*behind in no gift.*' (2 Cor 9:11). Yet this epistle reveals that in this church there were contentions over a number of things, including the relative value of the ministry of Paul, Apollos and Peter. They disputed over ordinances of one kind or another, no doubt contending vigorously for personal rights and opinions, inevitably reaching the sure result of such contentions - being puffed up one against another". Further, an outrage against common decency was going on unchecked and unjudged in their assembly. They were sticklers for opinions, but how sadly lacking in that deeper sight which sees that righteousness, purity, godliness is the prime requirement of the saints.

#### **"Blessed are the Pure in Heart"**

This then is another reason why we need to have the 'heavenly vision' set before us. 'If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy, for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are, (1 Cor 3:17). A deep underlying principle is emphasised in our Lord's words, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' ( Matt 5:8.)

Only the pure in heart see God, therefore from our Lord's words only the pure in heart have spiritual vision. How could the Lord impart any heavenly vision, or impress his

revelations on a heart not thoroughly cleansed from the worldly contaminations? It is also too easy to sit under God's deep truths, yes, and rehearse them over and over, and not really see this law of God which requires first of all a clear eye, then clean hands and a pure heart. *'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of His salvation.'* (Psa 24:3 -5)

With how much greater care we need to see that no "root of bitterness" (Heb 12:15) obscures our vision of God and His Spirit. How necessary it is to remember *'Greater than the fault you condemn and criticise is the sin of criticism and condemnation.'* What, then, do we see today? Are our eyes fixed on "heavenly things", 'beholding a land that is very far off' - far off from all earthly standpoints, a land that is our ultimate desire and destination and our real home?. Do we deeply desire to be with the Lord and our brethren in assisting and uplifting mankind in the future? Can we say with Job (Ch 42:5) that we have heard much by the hearing of the ear, but now, due to the providences of God, and His Spirit's leading, "*my eye seeth thee*". Can we say that 'I am today in love with the truth'?

Have we been led to that high vantage ground where men no more seem as large trees, where things of little eternal importance no longer cloud up the vision of his face? Do we see that the most important thing today is to so walk with the Lord as to receive the imprint of his character on our own?

## " HEALING THE LAME MAN "

The subject of healing from sickness always was and still is very popular with man. Every day people talk about unhappiness. Even today, all human creation under present imperfect conditions are looking for a new way of life, which would give them a chance for a better and longer life. Everybody needs some kind of healing. Let us all try to refresh our memories, memories about the healing performed by the Apostles in the time immediately after Pentecost.

In the book of Acts, Chapter 2, vs 42-47, we are told about the activities and fellowship of believers in the early church: ' Everybody was filled with awe, and many wonders and ~~in~~ raculous signs were done by the Apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as they had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the Temple courts, they broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their numbers daily those who were being saved.' Many wonders and miracles were performed by the Apostles to gather those in the proper heart condition into the church.

The Scriptures do not always specify what these miracles were but we can surmise that they were similar to what our Lord performed during His first presence on earth. The persecution and prejudice against the early church made it necessary for them to cease their efforts. All believers sold their

Has the metamorphosis process taken place as described in Romans 12:1,2? (Do we see that above all other things this is a day in which; "*to be purified is to have sin burned out, to be made white is to have the glory of Christ burned in - the one as cleansing, the other as illumination and glorification.*?" ) When difficult situations arise do we ask the question of ourselves 'How would Jesus have reacted'. These are questions for us each to answer, as also Peter's words - *'Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?* (2 Peter 3:11).

In no better way can we be prepared for the change we so fervently desire than to do as Paul did and to commit ourselves wholly to Christ. Let him have full dominion in our hearts and lives. Then his influence will be a power to control our thoughts, actions and hearts, "*bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*" (2 Cor 10:5). We so much need to strive for that mind of Christ. (1 Cor 2:16) *'For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that He may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.'* His example will then become the directing force in our daily walk, and his character likeness the ultimate goal of all our aspirations, as it is the objective in God's predestined purpose for his church.

Let us not be disobedient to the heavenly vision of His love and grace, but faithful to that vision, until the good work He has begun in us has, by his own love and power, been completed and we see Him face to face. (AK)

possessions, giving to anybody as they had need. They understood the counsel of divine love for one another and demonstrated love in very tangible ways. We are told in the Bible that the brethren remained united in heart and mind and shared a oneness in the understanding of spiritual things. They met daily in the Temple, preaching the word of truth there, and in their homes by night. They were active not only in the witnessing and proclaiming the truth but also in meeting together to edify each other spiritually.

Eventually, the Heavenly Father permitted the brethren to be scattered so that the gospel message could be spread to all nations, but the zeal and spirit of these brethren from the early church are such a great example for us to follow today. Apostles Peter and John went up to the Temple at the hour of prayer, full of zeal for service. They were hoping and expecting to find some opportunity for testifying to the truth, Our responsibility to preach the gospel at every opportunity is brought to our attention by Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 4:2: ' Preach the word: be prepared in season and out of season' In our everyday contact with people, there are conversations, which we can turn into witnessing opportunities. These opportunities often occur out of season for us, at a time when we are trying to get something else accomplished. We might even say, ' This is not really a good time' , but if the Lord chooses that particular time, let us do our very best to take advantage of it. The Lord arranges these particular opportunities to see how much we love to

tell the truth and if we are ready to drop our own plans and serve only Him.

As Apostles Peter and John were about to enter the Temple they met a man who had been crippled from birth. This man was carried to the Temple gates every day, where he would sit and beg from those going into the Temple courts. This Scripture does not tell us if the beggar had heard of the Pentecostal wonders. We also do not know if he knew that Apostles Peter and John were associated with them. However, when they first met the crippled man he was not expecting to be healed. He looked to Peter and John for a few coins or some money to sustain his poor existence. Instead, what he received was so much more.

Who does this crippled man picture? He pictures the human family who are crippled and unable to walk in God's path because of inherited sin and death. Apostle Paul expresses this in the following words in Romans 3:10-12: 'There is none righteous, not even one: There is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away; they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.' The crippled man was hoping for an improvement in life, and so does the whole world. For us, Apostle Paul writes in Romans 8:19-22: ' ' The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.' Yes, indeed! The whole creation, the entire world of mankind, is waiting for liberation from the effects of sin and death.

People are blind and crippled because they do not have any lasting hope. They are without God; they are unhappy, dissatisfied, searching for happiness and peace but unable to find it. They want it, but they don't find it. It is not the time for it yet. We can see around us people who are dissatisfied with their churches, with their political movements, and with their social organisations - and the longer things go on, the more unhappy and dissatisfied people are becoming. Our Lord Jesus Christ prophetically described our days and this growing unhappiness and fear in the gospel of Luke 21:25, 26 saying: ' On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity, as the running and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror apprehensive of what is coming on the world. For the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'

When the crippled man asked Apostles Peter and John for money, they responded to his request in a very different way, different to his expectation. 'Look at us.... silver and gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, walk' (Acts 3:6). Taking him by his right hand, the Apostles helped the beggar stand up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk, then he went with them into the Temple courts, walking and jumping and praising God. This is recorded in the book of Acts 3:4-8. What a beautiful record! Once on his feet, the crippled man followed the Apostles to the Temple, walking, jumping and praising the Lord. This experience points to the healing that will take place in Christ's Kingdom, in the Millennial Age.

The entire human family is crippled, waiting near the courts of Jehovah for the manifestation of the sons of God. The one hundred and forty four thousand members of the body

of Christ as represented by Peter and John shall appear not with material wealth, not with gold and silver, but with the power of God, secured by the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. This removal of the curse and the opening of the path for mankind back into harmony with God is described by the prophet Isaiah. We all remember the prophetic verses from Isaiah 35:5-10, which are good to read again privately. Isaiah's prophecy tells us of both the physical and the spiritual healing of the human family that will take place in Christ's Kingdom. All physical disabilities and infirmities of the flesh will be cured just as Peter healed the crippled man and as our Lord Jesus healed the man born blind. This is recorded in the gospel of John, chapter 9, verse 7. These physical afflictions are all part of the curse. When the blood of atonement will be applied on behalf of the human family and the curse will be lifted, these vestiges of the curse will also be lifted, demonstrating Jehovah's power, wisdom and love. It will be this demonstration that will soften man's stony hearts so that God's law can be written in their hearts.

Mankind is also spiritually blind and deaf to the words of Jehovah. They are unable to speak of Jehovah's truth to one another. Their shame and sin prevents them following Jehovah's instruction and walking in His path. Isaiah's prophesy tells us about the future kingdom arrangements and about the new condition of life that shall be initiated under Christ's Millennial reign with the church. In Isaiah 65:21-23 we read that the oppression of the weak will come to an end in Christ's kingdom. No one will be ashamed any more. Israel will no longer be trodden down by her enemies, no man will build and another inhabit, no man will plant and another eat. Selfishness will come to an end. There is a spiritual fulfillment to this statement: those who harvest the word of the Lord will partake of it and praise the Lord.

In the kingdom, human beings who will be partakers of the truth, who will be obedient to the instructions received from the church class who represent Zion, and the Ancient Worthies who represent Jerusalem, will be blessed and come closer to the courts, the courts of Jehovah, Jehovah's Sanctuary. They will pass through the gates into the Holy City, into the New Jerusalem and into harmony with God. The responsibility of the church class will be to prepare the way for the people, for the whole human race. This way will lead them out of the prison house of death and sin and out of the degradation and darkness of the present world back into the truth and to the perfection of human life and sonship with Jehovah. The stumbling stones will be removed. The mountains will be levelled; the valleys shall be filled up. Many Scriptures in the Old Testament describe the healing process of the Kingdom and the relationship between the church class and the world of mankind. The church, as part of the Christ, will be used to mediate the future New Covenant. Under the New Covenant, the completed body of Christ, that is, the one hundred and forty four thousand faithful overcomers of this royal priesthood, the church class, will be provided with food and water for the human family. Not literal food but spiritual food, as well as the water of Jehovah's truth that will quench the thirst for understanding of God's divine truth.

Let us read about this future event in Isaiah 11:9 - ' The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters

cover the great deep.' At the moment, it is not time yet. They are not living under the New Covenant yet. The New Covenant will be in the future. In our picture of the crippled man we are given an indication of how positively and how joyfully the people will respond to their healing in Christ's Kingdom, as written by Isaiah in chapter 25, vs 9: ' Surely this is our God,- we trusted in Him and He saved us.- this is the Lord: we trust in Him,- let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation.' When the people' ~~sinfulness~~ will be removed and they see Jehovah' s goodness, it will stimulate their hearts to love Him and become obedient to His laws. People' s hearts will be changed by writing in them God' s law.

When the people in the Temple saw the crippled man walking, they were surprised and amazed. They asked what had happened to him. Nobody believed why the crippled man held onto Apostles Peter and John. The people ran up to them at the people' s place called Solomon' s Porch and gave Peter the witnessing opportunity he was waiting for. It is recorded in Acts 3:12-16. Strengthened by the Holy Spirit, Apostle Peter stood up before the men of Israel. He gave the glory to God, he praised God our Lord and His Son, Jesus Christ, for the miracle that had happened and then spoke about the resurrection. Apostle Peter reminded the Jews of their forefathers and the promises of God they had inherited through their forefathers. He reminded them of their rejection of their Messiah, which they did, and his crucifixion. He told them how Jehovah by His almighty power raised Jesus from the dead and exalted Him above every name that is named. (This we can read about it in the book of Ephesians 1:20-22.) Apostle Peter pointed out that only by faith in Jesus, in His sacrifice, and His resurrection and by the power of the Holy Spirit the crippled man had been cured.

Speaking about the time of restitution, Apostle Peter ex-

plained that the death of Christ fulfilled what God had foretold through the prophets, namely, that Christ would be rejected, suffer and die~ but through His death we may all gain life. Peter offered them the invitation to sonship on the condition of obedience to God' s laws, so God gave them opportunity with conditions. He invited them to repent and turn towards Jehovah. The same invitation has been extended to us, to all human beings actually. We have repented, we have turned towards Jehovah, and we now walk in Jesus' footsteps. If we will be faithful until death. We will receive the crown of life? In a large sense, seasons of refreshment refer to the blessings that will be poured upon the human family in Christ' s Kingdom.

The Greek word translated ' refreshment means ' the recovery of breath' or ' life' . Mankind, if obedient, will recover their breath, the breath of life. Apostle Peter pointed down the stream of time to when our Lord would return to set up His Kingdom and restore all things, which had been promised through the mouth of God' s holy prophets. Our Lord has returned. He has begun the tearing down process and He will accomplish the restoration process in due time together with the church class. His objective is to wipe out all sin and death and return the human race to its original perfection, domination, sonship and everlasting life. What a great privilege will be ours if faithful to participate in this healing work!

Dearly beloved brethren and friends may this wonderful promise of restitution and the opportunity to help in its fulfillment, stimulate our zeal and faithfulness in serving the Lord and His people, that we may make our calling and election sure. May Jehovah keep us all, faithful till our race for heavenly bliss is won. God bless you all. Amen. (TZ)

## DAVID – A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

(Acts 13:22)

The Apostle Paul and his company on their travels attended the Synagogue at Antioch on the Sabbath day and were invited by the one in charge to address the congregation. Paul stood up and gave a brief history of the nation of Israel from the time that God brought them out of the land of Egypt. He spoke of their wilderness journey followed by possession of the Promised Land, then they were given Judges for 450 years: *'And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul, the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years. And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will. Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus.'* (Acts 13:21-23)

Our Heavenly Father can read the very thoughts and intents of the heart and mind. He would have known exactly David's heart condition. We read in 2 Sam. 11 and 12 of David's great sin in his adultery with Bathsheba after having her husband, Uriah, killed by assigning him the most dangerous position in the army front line and we might think that his heart was far from that of the Lord. But with each of us, our Heavenly Father knows our frame. He knows all our

weaknesses and failings. He takes this into consideration when making His judgments. As with David, He is gracious to forgive us the sins we commit through weakness of the flesh if we show a repentant heart, as the Scripture says in Isaiah 1:18: *'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'*

When biographies are written about great men, sometimes the darker side of their lives is kept hidden, but with God it is different. He tells it as it is. This episode with David shows the mercy and loving kindness of our Heavenly Father, as 2 Sam.12:13 says: *'And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.'* While David was forgiven, he was still punished for his sin. He could receive forgiveness because his basic heart condition was right. When rebuked by Nathan, it brought him to a full realisation of his actions, which he seems not to have been able to appreciate before. There was complete and unqualified repentance on his part, as we see by his prayer to the Lord in the 51<sup>st</sup> Psalm. The heading to the Psalm reads, 'A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto

him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba'. Verses 1-3 read: '*Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.*'

We see by this Psalm how complete David's repentance and remorse was. This is something the Lord always requires before there can be forgiveness. The realization of his sin would have had a humbling effect and taken away any pride or arrogance that he might have been developing. David was rightly exercised by this episode. No doubt we do not always appreciate our transgressions at the time. We often find that in some way the Lord will rebuke us and bring them to our attention. If we are rightly exercised by the Lord's chaste ning, it will have a beneficial effect upon us also. Some have made the comment, 'When I read the account of David I realised that there was a chance for me also'. That was perhaps one of the purposes why the full account is given, to show that we have a God of love, and no matter how bad the sins, there is forgiveness on His part if our heart condition is right and there is true repentance.

#### ***David a Type of Christ***

In the theme text God said that David was a man that would fulfil all His Will. David was a type of Christ, who we are told '*delighted to do God's Will*'. With each of us, we have a strong desire to be pleasing to our Heavenly Father and to carry out His Will to the best of our ability. We find the true character of David confirmed in God's words to the evil King Jeroboam who sat on David's throne. We find the account in 1 Kings 14:7,8: '*Go tell Jeroboam, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Forasmuch as I exalted thee from among the people, and made thee prince over my people Israel, And rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it thee: and (yet) thou hast not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in mine eyes.*'

Then again we have a description of David's character in 1 Kings:15 speaking of King Abijam, reading part of verse 3 and then verse 5 "*and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father...Because David did (that which was) right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any (thing) that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.*" David was a fitting type of Christ in that they both delighted to do the Heavenly Father's Will. In this regard the name David is also significant; it means '*Beloved*'. We think of the Heavenly Father's statement in Matt.3:17: '*And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*'. The Diaglott gives an even better rendering: '*And, behold! A Voice from the heavens, saying: This is my Son, the Beloved, in whom I delight*'. It is interesting that David is mentioned more times in the Scriptures than any of the other faithful ones of the pre-Christian period.

Let us look at some of the great privileges and honours that the Heavenly Father bestowed upon David, some of which are unique to him. Surely it was a great privilege that he was to typify the Messiah and also that the Messiah was to come of his line. There were, of course, of necessity many

others along the line who were ancestors of our Master, but Jesus is not referred to as a son of any of these but He is specifically referred to as 'Son of David'. That honour is shared with Abraham. Jesus, as we know, is referred to as 'the Seed of Abraham'. Jesus is to sit upon the Throne of David. This is an honour that is unique to David, as Acts 2:29-30 reads: '*Men (and) brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne.*'

#### ***The Throne of David***

David's kingdom was a typical kingdom ruling over the nation of Israel, picturing Christ's Kingdom ruling over the whole world. David was divinely appointed; therefore his throne is referred to as God's throne, as we see in 1 Chron. 29:23:- "Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him." This is confirmed again in 2 Chron.9:8: That Jesus is God's divinely appointed King and sits on His Throne is shown in the second Psalm, verses 6 and 7: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will, declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou (art) my Son; this day have I begotten thee." The Scriptures make a distinction between God's Great Throne over the whole Universe and Christ's Millennial Age Throne, as Jesus said in Rev.3:21: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

Nevertheless, Christ's Throne is still God's Throne. The coming Kingdom is referred to many times in the Scriptures as the Kingdom of God. All the kings that followed after David were said to sit on his throne. The last king to sit on David's typical throne was King Zedekiah whom God removed. We find the account in Ezekiel 21:25-27: "And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, Thus said the Lord God; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him." This throne was to be no more until He comes whose right it is. Since that time there has never been a king reigning over Israel. Their next king will be God's appointed King, He whose right it is, the Lord Jesus.

The second Psalm quoted earlier shows that Jesus received this position of authority upon His resurrection. The phrase: 'this day have I begotten thee' would be better rendered as: 'this day have I brought thee forth', as it applies to our Lord's resurrection. Acts 13:33 shows this was the time when He received the appointment as He said in Matt.28:18: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." From that time on Jesus was God's appointed King, David's anti-type, sitting in prospect as it were on Mount Zion awaiting God's due time before He could exercise the great power and authority that the Heavenly Father had given Him.

We find some very beautiful passages in Ezekiel regarding the future blessings to flow to natural Israel in the Mil-

nium. Firstly Ezekiel 34:22-26: - ‘Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle. And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing: and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.’

Again in Ezekiel 37:21-28 we read - ‘And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children’s children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever.’

David mentioned in these passages is generally taken as referring to David’s great anti-type, the Lord Jesus. In the next age He will be the Chief Shepherd and King over Israel and all the earth; but the literal David will also receive a special position of favour. Along with the other Ancient Worthies he will be one of the princes in all the earth. In the days of old he was Israel’s king, thus it seems quite possible that he will be their leader once again in the New Age. These passages in Ezekiel could possibly have a dual fulfillment. They do seem to also convey the thought of David himself. All these lovely blessings that our Heavenly Father has promised to the re-gathered nation of Israel are merely the start of the great Restitution work of the next age. They will flow on to all the nations of the earth during the thousand year Reign.

### The Sure Mercies of David

The statement that the Heavenly Father is to give His Son the sure mercies of David is found in Isaiah 55:3: ‘Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David’. It is quoted in Acts 13:34: ‘An d as concerning that he raised him (Jesus) up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.’ What exactly does it mean that our Saviour is to be given ‘the sure mercies of David’? It is put this way in the Bible Students’ Manual: ‘The dominion power and glory of the Kingdom of God on earth promised to David’s heir, the Messiah’. Another says:

‘The word here refers to the promise made to David, the mercy or favour shown to him by promising to him a successor, who should not fail to sit on his throne’. That gives us the basic meaning. The marginal rendering says: ‘holy or just things’. Young’s Concordance gives the meaning as ‘kindness or judgments’. This is just what will happen under the millennial reign of the Greater David; there will be judgment. (See Acts 17:31 and Isaiah 26:9)

In 2 Samuel 7:16 we have the words of the Lord to David: ‘And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever’. And 2 Samuel 7:11 reads in part: ‘...also the Lord telleth thee that He will make thee an house’. Again the reference to David’s house and kingdom is speaking of the Millennial Kingdom ruled over by Christ and His glorified Bride. In this chapter David was suggesting that he build a house for the Lord, but the Lord says in verse 11 that He will build a house for David. This would be the same House mentioned in verse 16 and Christ will be the ruler of David’s House. The promise that God will build a House for David is repeated in 1 Chron.17:9-10: ‘Also I will ordain a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, and they shall dwell in their place, and shall be moved no more; neither shall the children of wickedness waste them any more, as at the beginning, And since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel. Moreover I will subdue all thine enemies. Furthermore I tell thee that the Lord will build thee an house.’

### The Tabernacle of David

Acts 15:12-18 refers to the tabernacle of David - ‘Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: ‘Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, ‘After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. ‘Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.’

This is an interesting and important passage, and there is some difference of thought on certain aspects of it. ‘What exactly is the tabernacle of David and what exactly was the original tabernacle that fell down? The Bible Students’ Manual commenting on the tabernacle of David says that: ‘It is the house, royalty, dominion of David’s posterity, Christ’. In other words, the tabernacle that fell down was the tabernacle of the literal David. The Tabernacle that was to be built again is the Tabernacle of the anti-typical David, Jesus Christ. So what is the Tabernacle? Our thought is that it is the Church, if the Tabernacle is Christ’s House as has been suggested. We have clear scriptural evidence that it is the Church, for example, in Hebrews 3:6: ‘But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.’ So the original tabernacle that fell down was the kingdom and dominion of David, the ruling house of David. It finally

fell down when the last king of Israel, Zedekiah, was taken off the throne, as quoted before in Ezekiel 21:25-27.

As with any study it is very important with the passage in Acts that we keep in mind the context. Someone had been troubling the Churches by insisting that the newly converted Gentiles should be observing the Jewish Law. In verse 14, James is quoting Simon Peter who had previously explained the change in God's method of selecting the Church, The calling out of a people for His Name had now for the first time been extended to the Gentiles, no longer reserved exclusively for the nation of Israel. James wished to show that the work of selecting a people for His Name out of the Gentiles was, in fact, supported from the Scriptures. It was not an afterthought on God's part; it had always been His intention.

So James quotes the passage in Amos as evidence from the inspired Scriptures on this point; hence the building of the Tabernacle of David again would be a reference to the Gospel Age work of selecting a people for His Name, firstly exclusively out of the nation of Israel, then extending to the Gentiles. It would have to be so, otherwise James could not have said in verse 15: 'to this agree the words of the Prophets, as it is written' then in verse 16 he proceeds to quote what was written. The Phillips Modern English Translation puts it: "This is in full agreement with what the prophets wrote, as in this scripture", then the Amos passage is quoted. We find the expression 'as it is written' quite frequently in the Scriptures, and as a general rule what follows is the quotation, the text written. We are suggesting that it is the same in this case, realising that this passage has not generally been understood this way.

### **The Millennial Kingdom**

When anything is being built the work of building is not an end in itself; the structure is built for a purpose. Not until the building is complete can it become operational, and serve its purpose. Just so with the Tabernacle of David, it is basically the Millennial Age Kingdom that will bring to fulfillment all of our Heavenly Father's beautiful promises of Restitution for this planet, bringing it up to the perfection that once existed in Eden, bringing all its people up to perfection to His own character-likeness as possessed by Adam before he sinned. Isaiah 16:5 seems to show the completed Tabernacle of David in operation, reading verses 4 and 5: 'Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler: for the extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceaseth, the oppressors are consumed out of the land. And in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness.' Verse 4 shows that the setting must be in the next age, for the extortioner is at an end, the spoiler has ceased, the oppressors are consumed; these things will not be achieved until the Kingdom is in operation.

Throughout the Gospel Age God has been selecting the people for His Name to be Kings and Priests to reign with Christ Jesus for a thousand years. These make up the Tabernacle or House of the anti-typical David, which is now almost complete and ready to go into operation. As we saw the Throne of David is the Throne of God, just so the Tabernacle of David is really the Tabernacle of God. Is this not the same

Tabernacle mentioned in Rev.21:2-3, which reads: "And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them (and be) their God." In verse 2, John sees in symbol a Bride, the newly married Wife of the Lamb, which is the Church coming down to earth. Verse 3 says: "the Tabernacle of God is with men", a reference back to verse 2, the Church coming down to earth, in other words, their reign commencing over the earth. God is said to be with men. He is with them through His representatives, Christ and the glorified Church.

Verse 17 tells us the purpose in building the Tabernacle of David: "That the residue of men might seek after the Lord and all the Gentiles upon whom My Name is called." The word 'residue' perhaps tends to give the thought of just a small amount, but it just means 'those that are left'. Other translations render it 'the rest of mankind'. The expression 'the rest of mankind' simply means the Gentiles, those that were not Jews. So this verse shows the Lord God's great purpose that in the age to come all the rest of mankind will be given an opportunity to seek the Lord, those that have not been called during the Gospel Age to be part of the Church. Those called ones will reign with Christ in bringing the blessing to all the remainder of Adam's posterity. They will be part of David's anti-typical Kingdom, therefore part of the Tabernacle of David to share in the rulership under their Head, Jesus Christ.

How aptly, David the "man after God's own heart" prefigures our Lord, the Greater David, who delighted to do the Father's will and whose household we are, if we hold fast the confidence of our faith to the end. May our Gracious Heavenly Father continue to walk with us all along the narrow way during our pilgrim journey to assist us to become worthy of a small part in the great Restitution work of helping the rest of mankind along the Highway of Holiness in the coming age. (GT)

**Hosannah to King David' s Son,  
Who reigns on a superior throne  
We bless the Prince of heavenly birth,  
Who brings salvation down to earth.  
Let every nation, every age,  
In this delightful work engage;  
Old men and babes in Zion sing  
The growing glories of her King.**

**'Glory to God in the highest, and on  
earth peace, good-will towards men'**

# “WE CEASE NOT TO PRAY FOR YOU”

(Col. 1:9-14)

The loving care of the apostle Paul for all the churches which he or his co-workers had planted is well known, not least through his epistles or letters to them. In these he usually includes a prayer on behalf of the particular congregation concerned, expressing his desire and prayer to God for the very best in Christian understanding and grace for them. These prayers are indeed some of the richest of his writings so let us consider his earnest prayer for the brothers and sisters at Colosse, as recorded in Colossians 1:9-14.

*For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.”*

At the time of writing, the apostle had evidently not been to Colosse himself, but had received news through Epaphras of the welfare and progress of the brethren there. There were apparently some troublesome elements in their midst, as there were in some other churches, including the destructive influence of the Gnostics and the legalistic contentions of the Juidaisers. Nevertheless, Paul was still able to commend those in Colosse for their faith in Christ Jesus, their love for the saints and their love in the Spirit. It was on this account that his keen desire and prayer was that they might grow and be strengthened in their faith and in their daily lives.

The issues which affect the Christian today may well outwardly appear different but the apostle's petitions for the Colossian brethren are really just as appropriate for us today. We live in a day of materialism, an outlook quite at variance with the concept of the true riches set before the Christian. The world is still full of philosophies but, without the love and power of God, these have no life-giving or life-sustaining value. The Christian life calls for growth and development in the knowledge and understanding of God's will but it is still intensely practical. We are not called to shut ourselves away, but to let our lights shine. There are still legalists about also, but we are counselled to stand fast in the liberty wherein Christ has made us free.

One commentator says of this prayer of the apostle that ‘there is something very precious and exceedingly instructive in being thus permitted to share the thoughts of, and notice the petitions offered up by the apostle Paul for the Lord's people in various circumstances. His deep concern for their growth in grace, their development in divine things, their apprehension of the purposes of God, and the manifestation of spiritual power in the life.....all these come out very strikingly as he bows his knees before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.....It is questionable if any merely human writer has ever been able to give as helpful suggestions for our own prayer life as will come to us in our meditation upon these various petitions.”(Ironside)

From the portion quoted above, we note that verses 9 to 11, and possibly the opening clause of verse 12 concerning thankfulness, list the apostle's petitions for the brethren; the remaining portion to the end of verse 14 list blessings and privileges which were already theirs, and on which the apostle desired that they build. The giving of thanks in verse 12 may refer to Paul's doing so for their present standing in the Lord, but in other prayers and exhortations the importance of the grateful heart and the open expression of thankfulness is strongly commended. It is part indeed of his cure for anxiety - ‘in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”(Phil 4:6)

## ***Knowledge of His Will***

Let us then look briefly at the features of Paul's prayer and how they come down to us today. They are probably five in number and all have extensive implications. The **first** petition is that the Colossians (and we also) may be *filled* with the knowledge of God's will. There are a number of things which the apostle wished his hearers in the various churches to be filled with - in Rom 15:14 ‘all knowledge”, in Eph 3:18 ‘the fulness of God”, in Eph 5:18 ‘the Spirit”, in Phil 1:11 ‘the fruits of righteousness”. These are closely related and probably encompassed in his prayer for their filling with the knowledge of His will.

There are two words commonly used in the New Testament for ‘knowledge” and it is interesting that the stronger of the two is here used. The more general word GNOSIS is used frequently and favourably in the New Testament, but it was evidently the boast word of the Gnostics. Something better is what the apostle here sought for the Colossian brethren and the word EPIGNOSIS is used. This is defined as “exact or full knowledge, discernment, recognition..... expressing a fuller or full knowledge, a greater participation in the object ‘known”, thus more powerfully influencing (those concerned)” This is an element in Paul's prayers for the Philippians, Ephesians and for Philemon also.

In another of his epistles, Paul had to take some to task for still relying on the milk of the word, when they should have progressed to the strong meat stage. So with each Christian, the simple basic elements of the faith do not change but the vision of our Heavenly Father's ways and will should be expanding and growing more radiant as “still new beauties may we see and still increasing light”. Such discernment is not the product of human wisdom , but of the influence of God's Holy Spirit on each believer's heart. As it is written - ‘Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.”(1 Cor 2:9)

The apostle's hope and expectation for the Colossians and for us is for a broadening and deepening perception of the Divine character and greater comprehension of His love as outlined in His Word, including the blessing of all mankind after the call and preparation of those who are to share with their Lord in that grand program of blessing. Elsewhere, the apostle prays that the Lord's people “may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height and to know the love of Christ, which passeth (human) knowledge.” This is not like earthly knowledge, which puffs up, but, blessed

by wisdom and spiritual understanding, leads on to Christian maturity. How important it is that our Bible classes be geared towards this end, that our minds and hearts be open to beauties that we may not have noted before and that we listen to what others have appreciated!

Wisdom is the key to the proper application of knowledge. Furthermore, in 1 Cor 13 Paul goes so far as to say that all knowledge, and even all faith, without love are vain. But here the Christian is blessed by the inner working of the Spirit of God to provide the ‘spiritual understanding’ for which Paul prays. In his corresponding prayer for the Ephesians, Paul seeks for them *‘that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened.’* (Eph 1:17) Understanding enables us to see what the will of God is for us, in our own lives and in our relations with others, to recognise their needs and their virtues and so to act appropriately.

#### **Walking Worthy of the Lord**

The subsequent features of Paul’s prayer follow on from the infilling with a clear knowledge of the Divine will. The **second** petition is ‘that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing’. The daily practicality of faith is here again brought to our attention. Surely it is the desire of each heart to please God. The profession of our faith is good but it needs daily expression if we are to please Him. ‘Without faith, it is impossible to please God’ - we read this in Heb 11:6, but the examples of faith whom the writer goes on to tell us about all showed their faith by lives and acts of faith and obedience. The worthy walk is the daily expression of our thankfulness and of our love for Him who has called out of darkness into His marvellous light.

#### **Fruitfulness and Increase**

The **third** petition of the apostle’s prayer is for ‘fruitfulness in every good work’. The primary fruitage desired in every Christian is the development of the fruits of the Spirit. These in turn will lead to lives of fruitfulness in service to the Lord, to His people and in witness to those around us. In parallel with this petition, the apostle seeks for his hearers a **fourth** blessing - increase in the knowledge of God. The daily walk and work will surely lead to closer communion with our Father and our Saviour, who promised to come and abide with each child of God. This takes our thoughts back to the opening petition but here the emphasis may be more on a personal knowledge built on experience of the love and mercy of our Heavenly Father in all His dealings with us.

Paul’s own testimony near the end of the way, based on his experience, was - ‘I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.’ This is the knowledge that has been learnt and tempered in the fire of experience and this can sustain us. ‘This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.’ (John 17:3) ‘That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.’ (Phil 3:10)

#### **Strength to Overcome**

A **fifth** petition is for the strength to carry on the good fight of faith in reliance on His glorious power. As Christians, we are not currently subject to physical threat in this land, but the Christian faith in which we rejoice is being more and more reviled. Often now, we hear reference to ‘Bible myths’ and the alleged refutation of the Bible by science, the concept of freedom for each one to choose his or her own way to God, in whatever guise they envisage Him. We can appreciate earnest seekers after truth, however misguided, but our stand can only be that there is no other name, no other way, no other Lamb than our dear Lord and Saviour, and we may well especially need the Divine strength to be true to our Lord.

We must never forget however that our Father’s power is not a meagre power like ours, but a glorious power. Paul was assured, as we may be, that His grace is sufficient in every situation. This Divine power, exercised in the resurrection of our Lord, is now, through Him, effective for His followers. So strengthened, the Christian will be enabled to endure patiently, to suffer long and in all things to rejoice. Such staying power comes only through faith in Him whose power is infinite. It is said of the faith heroes of old that they ‘out of weakness were made strong’, by faith. So, Paul’s desire and prayer for the brethren at Colosse and for all God’s people was for their growth in discernment of God’s plans and purposes, a closer walk of faith, fruitfulness in character and every good work, increase in personal acquaintance with God and finally Divine strength to endure steadfast to the end.

Over it all, we have our Saviour’s own assurance given not long before He was to leave the disciples - ‘Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age.’ Right down the age, He has been caring for His church and in these last days of impending transition we can be sure that His promise is still sure. May the prayer of Paul for the Colossians and our Lord’s promise of His abiding presence be fulfilled in each of our lives as we press on in the narrow way. Amen

## **Lamb of the Father’s Love**

**What is the gift, so rare, so pure laid in a manger there?  
God’s only Son, begotten one, given for us to share.  
Given so we might live in peace, soon on the earth we’ll see,  
An end to strife for this one’s life offers eternity.  
Child of our Father came to bear good tidings unto all.  
His life was shed to death was led, yearly we sweet recall.  
How can we comprehend this gift from God’s own arms above?  
He sent him here, our sins to bear, Lamb of the Father’s love.  
Lamb of the Father’s love.**

**(In the Dawning No 52)**

# THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT-PEACE

War and conflict have plagued mankind ever since Cain slew Abel. In latter times, world regimes have utilised every strategy imaginable in their efforts to establish peace. There have been conferences, summits, organisations (including the United Nations), international agreements and even ‘peace-keeping forces’ (even though the concept of a ‘peace keeping force’ is paradoxical; the concept of force being contrary to the concept of peace).

Despite all of their efforts, war and conflict still prevail. Nevertheless the prophecies of the Old Testament declare that peace will be established in the world; ‘nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more’; and ‘of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end’ (Isa. 2:4; 9:7)

In spite of the conflicts between the nations of the world, Jesus promised His disciples that they would have peace in their present life: ‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you’ (John 14:27). As with all promises of the Gospel, that promise was not confined to His immediate disciples; all Christians can claim it for themselves. ‘That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ (that is, the apostles). In whom ye also, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise’ (Eph 1:12-13) Just as we can claim our sealing with the holy Spirit, so we can claim the promise that we can have peace in our present life.

A Christian’s peace surmounts not only the conflicts between nations, but also the personal tribulations that come upon them because of their faith. ‘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. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.’ (1 Peter 4:12-14) Truly did Jesus say ‘in the world ye shall have tribulation.’ (John 16:33)

To be at peace in such circumstances is incomprehensible to natural man, just as the Scriptures assert – ‘the peace of God, which **passeth all understanding** shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.’ (Phil. 4:7)

The peace that is enjoyed by the Christian now, the peace that surpasses all human understanding, is referred to by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 5:22 as a ‘fruit of the spirit.’

Fruit grows on trees. The tree provides the nutrients that are essential for the fruit to develop. Likewise the development of the fruits of the spirit is dependent on the nutrients provided by a parent source. Chaps. 13 – 16 of John’s Gospel record Jesus teaching his disciples at the feast of the passover. He concludes with the statement ‘These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace.’ (John 16:33) The truths He had explained to them were to provide them with the nutriments necessary for them to develop the fruit of peace. Those truths included the distinction between Himself and ‘Him that sent me’ (John 13:20); that He was the only way to His father (John 14:6); that ‘it is expedient

for you that I go away’ (John 16:7); that He was going to His father ‘to prepare a place for them’ and that He would ‘come again and receive them unto Himself’ (John 14:2-3). Meanwhile He would pray to His father that His father would give them a Comforter, the Spirit of truth, ‘whom the world cannot receive’ (John 14:17). Jesus told His disciples that an understanding of these truths was necessary for them to have the peace that is a fruit of the spirit.

His sermon to them centred on the metaphor of a vine and its branches, His father being the ‘husbandman’. ‘As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.’ (John 15:4) In order to develop the fruit of peace that comes from the spirit, each one of us must abide in Him. Such an attitude should continually remind us to ‘let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves’. That was the mind that was in Him (Phil. 2:3-5). The Apostle Paul exhorted the Ephesian brethren to ‘walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.’ (Eph 4:1-3) Lowliness of mind and meekness of spirit are essential for us to keep the unity of the spirit, and the unity of the spirit is essential for us to live in peace with our brethren. ‘Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and the things wherewith one may edify another.’ (Rom. 14:19)

The effects of our spiritual fruit of peace should extend beyond our brethren to our dealings with the world – ‘recompense to no man evil for evil, ... as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. ... Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.’ (Rom 12:17-19) Such a disposition is only possible if the spirit has produced the fruitage of peace within ourselves, ‘But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.’ (Jas. 3:14-18) If there is envying and strife in our hearts, that is, jealousy or contentions about what others are doing, it is not possible for us to have peace in our heart. On the other hand, if the fruit of peace permeates our heart, we will be sowing the seeds of peace and righteousness in others also.

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