

Quietly Waiting on the Lord

"The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."

***Lamentations
3:24-26***

THESE WORDS WERE

written by the prophet Jeremiah, and mark the character of those who possess a humble disposition of heart, and have learned to put their hope and trust in the ways of our loving Heavenly Father and to quietly wait on him. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee."—Ps. 9:10

The Psalmist David wrote, "Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me. Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause. Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day." (Ps. 25:1-5) "Wait on the LORD:

be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.”—Ps. 27:14

A PARABLE OF JESUS

Many years later by the Sea of Galilee, our Lord Jesus was accompanied by his twelve apostles and spoke a parable to a multitude who had gathered together. He told them, “A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”—Luke 8:5-8

THE PARABLE’S THEME

The Lord explained the theme of this parable to his disciples. “Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.”—vss. 11-15

SEED BY THE WAYSIDE

The sower of the seed—the wonderful message of the Word of God—was our Lord Jesus. He explained that the seed which falls by the wayside portrays those who hear the precious Truth only with their ears. Having thus fallen prey to the many wiles of Satan—the great Adversary of the Truth—they have been rendered incapable of comprehending the beauty, wonder, and power of the divine message.

SEED ON STONY GROUND

Some of the sown seed of the Lord's parable fell upon stony ground which is insufficient to sustain that which springs forth from the seed. The Lord explains that this represents those who are initially joyful at hearing the Word of God and who believe it. However, having no root by which they might grow, their joy and belief falls away in an hour of temptation. Matthew's account of this verse is more informative. He wrote, "He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but [en] dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended." (Matt. 13:20,21) Those who receive the seed are subjected to trials because of the Word. Increasingly chafing under the constraints of tribulation, those who are merely professing disciples are eventually exposed.

SEED AMONG THORNS

Continuing in the parable, we find that some of the seed fell among thorns which sprang up with the seed and choked it. Jesus explains that this is a

portrayal of those who have heard and understood the Word of God to a degree, but gradually allow themselves to become entangled in the riches, pleasures, and cares of this world. In due course, the sense of mission with which these began their Christian journey, gradually becomes choked and dies, falling prey to another of Satan's insidious devices. However, those who hear and embrace the Word of God are not to abandon their various obligations to family, friends, and their fellow man to avoid the choking thorns.

Christ's disciples are cautioned that it would be a mark of infidelity if they would use Truth as an excuse to shirk those responsibilities. Paul told Timothy, "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (I Tim. 5:8) It is manifest that one cannot avoid altogether the cares engendered by this world of imperfection. In his parable, the Lord was not overlooking that reality but was exhorting those who would follow him to avoid the pitfall of allowing earthly concerns to overwhelm their budding spiritual vitality. It is not possible for the Lord's people to attempt to please the world and our Heavenly Father at the same time. Matthew has written, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body."—Matt. 10:28

SEED UPON GOOD GROUND

The Lord concluded his parable with the seed which falls upon good ground (Luke 8:8), and portrays those who have a proper disposition of heart and mind. "That on the good ground are they,

which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.” (Luke 8:15) He emphasized the important trait of ‘patience’ that is the difference between the believers who constitute the good ground of the parable and those of merely professing believers.

The stony-ground believers did not have sufficient depth in which to cultivate patience. They could not endure the tribulation that comes to all who attempt to hold fast the Word of God. Others who were enticed by the pleasures of this world could not abide the perceived thorny privations of a life of sacrifice. The ‘good ground’ believers on the other hand, patiently endure a variety of trials, and proceed to develop the proper fruits of the Spirit. They continue to trust the fulfillment of the Lord’s promise to help them in every time of need. It is thus manifest that the Lord’s parable of the sower was given to strengthen and fortify those who would quietly wait on the Lord.

WAITING FOR THE VISION

Only those who have a ‘hearing ear’ could understand the importance of the Lord’s promises, and it is to these that the Apostle Paul especially addresses. “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.” (Heb. 2:1) Paul referred to the writings of the Prophet Habakkuk who urges all who seek to pursue a life of righteousness in the Lord to exercise patience and wait for the vision. He wrote, “I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am

reproved. And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.”—Hab. 2:1-3

CHRIST THE VISION

Many centuries after Habakkuk’s prophecy, Paul wrote to the Hebrew brethren and referred them to the vision and its connection with our Lord’s promised Second Advent. He said, “Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” (Heb. 10:36,37) It is apparent that when Habakkuk spoke of the ‘appointed time’ and Paul ‘a little while’ they were both referring to the time of our Lord’s Second Advent.

PETER’S WARNING

Satan was always eager to exploit every opportunity to oppose the Lord and his earthly mission. He has taken full advantage of the long period of waiting for the Lord’s return, and it has sorely tested the patience of many. Some who have been unable to patiently endure have been used to wrest the Scriptures and pervert the Truth. The Apostle Peter forewarned his fellow disciples of these impatient ones saying, “They that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.”—II Pet. 3:16,17

PAUL'S WARNING

The Apostle Paul also foresaw the danger of impatience among the disciples of Christ. To alleviate some of that danger, the apostle directed Titus to appoint elders in Crete—stewards of God who would steadfastly uphold the principles of the Truth which Paul had earlier preached there. The apostle identifies some of the characteristics that would mark every child of God that is being prepared for a place in Christ's future kingdom, but especially those who would serve as elder of an ecclesia. "Holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict."—Tit. 1:9, *New American Standard Bible*

THE PROMISE

From Pentecost to our present day, there has been a great falling away from the sanctifying truths of sound doctrine once taught by our Lord Jesus and the apostles. One truth that has greatly sustained the faithful during this present Gospel Age is the Lord's promise that he would one day return to gather them unto himself. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."—John 14:1-3

This is the promise cited by the Apostle Paul when he said, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done

the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” (Heb. 10:35-37) The consecrated who patiently wait will receive the promise of a spiritual inheritance in Christ’s future kingdom.

GATHERING DISCERNED SPIRITUALLY

In his first epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul addresses the spiritually mature. “Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; but just as it is written, Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, And which have not entered the heart of man, All that God has prepared for those who love Him. For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually

appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.” (I Cor. 2:6-16, *NASB*) Those who in our present day have the mind of Christ are able to discern that the Lord’s long-awaited return to earth as a divine spirit being has come to pass. The faithful class are being separated from among the worldly believers.

THE SIGN

At his First Advent, the Lord likened the separating activity that would occur at his Second Advent to that of a harvest; a harvest which would indicate the conclusion of the Gospel Age. To his disciples, he said plainly, “The harvest is the end of the age.” (Matt. 13:39, *NASB*) At a later time, they asked him for a single sign that could be spiritually discerned which would herald both his future invisible presence and the end of the age. Matthew recounts the occasion of that request, “As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”—Matt. 24:3, *NASB*

A DAY OF GATHERING

The day of gathering which those of the good ground patiently await is referred to by the Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Philippians. “Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day

until now; Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”—Phil. 1:2-6

A divine work has been in process within all members of the fellowship in the Gospel since the time of our Lord’s First Advent. That work is the imparting of the mind of Christ—the nurturing and maturing of the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit of God within the hearts of all the consecrated of this present Gospel Age.

In Romans 12:2, Paul refers to that imparting as a process of transformation, implying that it is a process to which the consecrated must consistently and patiently submit. The apostle says, “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.”

In his epistle to the Colossians, the apostle specifies the result of the transforming process, and prays that it may be found in every heart that patiently endures. “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye 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, which 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.”—Col. 1:9-13

TAKE HEED

The Master knew that the great falling away of the impatient ones during the present Gospel Age would foster opposition and terrible crimes against those who would remain patient. Hence, he warned his disciples, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."—Matt. 24:4-13

THE DIVINE WORK COMPLETED

This wonderful work has been wrought throughout the present Gospel Age and within the spirit-begotten little flock to which the promises of our loving Heavenly Father have been given. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32) Thus the divine work of transformation will be completed only when the last faithful, patient member of the fellowship of Christ has been gathered unto the Lord during this special day of his Second Advent on earth. ■