



Volume 82 No.3 MELBOURNE, July/Sept 1999 “TO HIM THAT OVERCOMETH”

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I overcame and am set down with my Father in His throne.” (Rev 3:21)

Our text tells us that the Kingdom is for overcomers. To enable us to be overcomers and to attain the Kingdom we have wonderful provisions. When God stooped down to redeem us from all iniquity, He emptied heaven of its choicest treasure – He gave his well beloved Son! Now, “He who spared not his Son, his only Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?” Yes, “*all* things are yours, for ye are Christ’s.” “*All* things written are for your sakes.” “My God shall supply *all* your needs, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Without doubt, God is for us. We are assured of success, for He who has begun the good work will complete it unto the day of Christ.

The Apostle Paul, writing to Timothy, declared: “I know him whom I have believed, and am *persuaded* that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto his care against that day” (2 Tim. 1: 12). From the time that Paul was apprehended when journeying to Damascus, until the time he was able to write to Timothy that he had finished his course, having fought a good fight and kept the Faith, he had never stopped to look back. He had never entertained failure, but was always an overcomer. How expressive of the Apostle’s mind are these words: “We are not of those that draw back unto perdition, but of those that believe unto the saving of the soul.” No doubt Paul’s success was assured by his full realization of the fact that God was for him, and was more than all that could be against him. Paul’s confidence may be ours in great measure if we patiently follow him, even as he followed Christ.

THE BATTLE IS THE LORD’S

We ourselves are not sufficient to accomplish anything of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God. The Israelites of old made the mistake of thinking that the battle was theirs, and that success lay in themselves. We know their miserable failure. The battle was the Lord’s then, and the battle is the Lord’s now; but we are permitted to be vessels of His mercy in the struggle, and vessels unto His glory. If, by His grace, we finally prove ourselves to be overcomers, we shall gladly ascribe all the praise and glory to Him who called us, supplied all our needs, and *assured* us of success.

We must not imagine that we cannot be overcomers till the end of our course, when all the sum of our Christian experience will be brought to bear, and we would expect to hear the “Well done, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” That is not all that concerns our overcoming. To be overcomers, we must meet the great problem of every present Christian experience. This thought is expressed by Jesus: “Be thou faithful unto death.” Not *at* death, but *unto* death. Again, “He that endureth unto the end shall be saved,” – not *at* the end but *unto* the end.

We must, then, meet the problems of present experience whether they be trials through affliction, or trials through pleasant things. There is an education going on all the time, and the education brings increased responsibility. Even the pleasant experiences we share are to us opportunities to overcome, by bringing forth *fruit* as the result of Spiritual fellowship. We must be overcomers all the time, for if we are not, then we are to some extent at least being overcome. We must make progress, or we will go back. We may liken ourselves to a man in a small boat pulling against the stream. The stream against which we pull is a three-fold one – the flesh, the world, and the Devil. We must pull against these all the time and make progress, for we cannot stand still. If we rest on our oars for a while, our three-fold stream is bound to carry us back.

FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

To overcome is to gain the victory in some great contest. It is to conquer. But we are to be “*more* than conquerors” in all our experiences. How can that be? In this way, each time we overcome in some trial, we gain strength to battle with the next experience. We are thus more than conquerors even from the world’s

point of view, for those of the world *lose* strength through gaining a victory. In the world many victories are gained only when the conqueror is at the point of collapse; and it is well known that indulgence in contests of strength or endurance wear out the vitality. On the contrary, *we*, as New Creatures, gain strength in each contest by overcoming; as the Psalmist declares of us:—"They go from strength to strength, every one of them appeareth in Zion before God" (Psa. 84: 7).

The Apostle Paul gives many illustrations of the Christian's course, each of which is intended to teach, from various view-points, how diligent we must be if we would prove overcomers. He gives the illustration of a foot-race, saying, "They that run in a race, run all, but one obtaineth the prize; —so run that ye may obtain." It is the prize-winner who is our copy. We must strive for the prize with all the energy he displayed. A second illustration the Apostle brings before us is the fighting contest. Paul must have witnessed a contest of this kind and had evidently learned a lesson from it, which he desired to pass on to us. It is the value of hitting aright. Paul says he did not "beat the air." No, he had learned to direct his blows. Thus he writes: "I browbeat my body, and make it subservient; lest possibly having proclaimed to others, I myself should become one unapproved" (I. Cor. 9: 27). To be an overcomer, then, it is necessary that we should learn the science of blows, so that we may not "beat the air," nor our brethren, but, like the great Apostle, beat the right one, keep our *own* body under.

A third illustration is that of a wrestler in a hard encounter. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against rulers of darkness, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto yourselves the whole armour of God" (Eph. 6: 12). In a wrestling contest the secret of success is to get the right grip. Once get the proper grip, and the contest is decided. Now the lesson which the Apostle would teach us seems to be this: Get thoroughly covered with the whole armour of righteousness, and our enemies will be unable to get any hold upon us. "Not having mine own righteousness." Ah no! That would give our enemies a splendid grip; but — "the righteousness" which is of God by Faith."

WHAT IS OUR CONTEST FOR?

In these illustrations the Apostle does not tell us what our contest is for, but gives them rather to aid us to overcome. What is our contest for? Why, some may say, the Kingdom. Yes, but what must *precede* the Kingdom? It is righteousness, personal holiness. It is not alone sufficient that we have the Lord's righteousness as our covering or armour. Uncle(that covering we must fight the good fight of faith, perfecting holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Peter writes: "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy;" and we have the words of Jesus; "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." The Apostle John tells us that "He that doeth righteousness is righteous."

The typical priesthood of Israel furnishes us with a good illustration of this. God separated those priests, that through them he might bless the people. They were his chosen channels for mercy and blessing, doing a mediating work between God and Israel. This was for the object of foreshowing his purpose in calling the Antitypical Priesthood, our Lord Jesus Christ and his Church, that through them he might dispense his mercy or favour to all mankind in the Millennial Age. But in addition to this and in order to accomplish it, God separated his Priesthood, that in them he might exhibit the perfection of his holiness. We therefore find that the High Priest's garments were garments "for glory and beauty," and that on his forehead was the inscription "Holiness to the Lord." We are privileged to be of the antitypical priesthood, and personal holiness is one of the chief things for which we are striving.

WHAT WILL HELP US OVERCOME?

Suppose we now ask, What will help us to be overcomers? While we have seen that God will supply all our needs, we must on our part see that we put that supply into use, and so make it effective. First, then, a real *desire* to be an overcomer would help us. We must hold back nothing from the altar of sacrifice, however dear it may be to the flesh, but must make a full consecration. Then we must have a real *love* for all that is pure and good, and we must have so great an appreciation of the overcoming character, as to make it more to be desired than gold. It will greatly help us, also, not merely to *desire*, but to *will* to be an overcomer. Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat. That is the secret. We must have the desire and the will behind it, and the purpose in our heart to be overcomers; but more, we must *want* to have a character like our Lord Jesus Christ's; to be made a copy of God's dear Son.

To know ourselves will also help us. To apply the searchlight of Truth and the quickening power of the Spirit within. Then the knowledge of God will help us. To *know* God. Not to know about him but to have that experience with his Son which brings to us a true knowledge of the Father. We require also to know Jesus, to have tasted that the Lord is gracious, whom having not seen we love, that we might by the eye of faith look unto him who is the author and finisher of our faith — to consider him lest we be wearied and faint in our minds.

A knowledge of the Word of God is not only helpful, but necessary. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" is the Apostle's injunction. Why? Because it will teach and admonish. We need the word for cleansing – "washing by the word." It can also be used as a mirror, which, if rightly arranged, will reflect the Lord's glory. At the same time it will reveal our own imperfection, and by this means we may be transformed into his image, from glory to glory. It was through the knowledge of the Word of God that Jesus proved himself the overcomer in the wilderness. "It is written," was the end of all argument with the Devil; and so it must be with us. When under special trials or tests, we must remember that: *the Word is written for our special help.*

There are some things which we are not called upon to overcome; they are to be avoided altogether – pride, "doting about questions and strifes of words, whence cometh envy, etc.," desire for riches, whereby many "fall into temptation and snare...flee these things." (1 Tim 6:4-6,9-11) The apostles counsel us – "resist the devil, and he will flee from you"; "be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (James 4:7, Rom 12:20)

FORCES TO BE OVERCOME

Now we come to the things we must overcome in order to share in the Kingdom. The three great forces from which come our trials and tests, are (1) the flesh, that which lies closest to us; (2) the world, that which lies all around us; (3) the Devil, the power of the air. How are we to meet these? Shall we beat about the air, striking at anything or at nothing in particular? No, as already said, the Lord has taught us the science of warfare, so that all may be done orderly and calmly. First, then, we have the flesh, with all its cravings and desires seeking to be realized. How is it to be met? The Apostle gives us the Key – "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5: 16). "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk." By walking, thinking, speaking and acting in the Spirit, we overcome the flesh and its desires.

In addition to the flesh we have to fight against the world, with all its glitter and show, its offers of fame, fortune, and applause. How shall we resist the world? By the Spirit again? Well, yes; but a particular operation of the Spirit, *viz., Faith*. "This is that which overcometh the world, even your faith." Faith grasps the exceeding great and precious promises of God, the unseen, yet eternal, things, enabling us to live above the things of the world. *In the world but not of it*, is the way Jesus put the 41-latter. It was through *Faith* that the elders obtained a good report (Heb. II: 2). It was *Faith* that enabled Abraham to become a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land which was not his own, dwelling in tents: "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." And so it is with us. It is only by the power of faith, faith in God and in his Word, that we may hope to overcome the world.

Then we have the third great force for evil, the Devil, that wily foe spoken of as "the prince of darkness," and yet capable of transforming himself into an angel of light; the adversary of God, and the accuser of the brethren. How are we to meet him? With a strong resistance, writes James, and with the complete protection of the armour of Righteousness, writes Paul. If he attacks the head, we have the helmet of salvation. If the body, the vital parts, we have the breastplate of righteousness. If he attacks the feet, we have the sandals of the preparation of the gospel of peace. Then, in order that we might have a shield of *Faith* and our arm free to use it for our protection, we must be girt about with *Truth*; and, lastly, the Sword of the Spirit, not an offensive, so much as a defensive, weapon.

There, then, stands the Christian warrior, enabled to withstand, even in the evil day; and having overcome all, to *stand*. In whose righteousness is he to conquer? In his own? No. "Not mine own" as the Apostle said, but "the righteousness of God" (as represented in the Christian armour), which is through the faith of Christ, who of God is made unto us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption –complete covering. (I Cor. I: 30). "His raiment is my glorious dress."

TAKE COURAGE – CONSIDER HIM

We do not need to let appearances or feelings disquiet or cause us to be discouraged. Daniel did not appear to be the overcomer when King Darius caused him to be shut up in the lions' den. A stone was fixed at the mouth of the den, and sealed with the King's signet and with the signet of his lords, that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel. To all appearance the presidents, governors, and princes, the counsellors and the captains of Darius, overcame Daniel. But what were the facts; the morning declared it. The King spent a sleepless night, and was there early next morning with a lamentable voice enquiring for Daniel's safety.

Then answered the overcomer. "Oh King, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut up the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me, forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, Oh King, have I done no hurt." Then the record shows that the King commanded the persecutors of Daniel to be cast into the lions' den, and the lions had mastery over them in the morning. The powers of evil may appear to have the mastery now, but it is only appearance of victory. "The upright shall have the dominion in the morning."

Above all, let us “Consider him who bore the contradictions of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your mind. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” Remember that all chastening is for our profit, that it may yield in us the peaceable fruit of righteousness, and that we may be partakers of our Father’s holiness. Jesus was the great overcomer, tempted in all points, yet without sin. By looking unto Him, the author and finisher of our faith, considering well how He overcame in all His trying experiences, we will be helped to share in His triumph. Remember His cheerful word of promise to us—“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16: 33).

These are a few of the many exceeding great and precious promises to the overcomers, for their help and encouragement. Rev. 2: 11,—"Not hurt of the second death." Why, we would ask, is the Second Death in the Church’s zone? We are even as Israel’s first-born, typically, on that night before leaving Egypt; but who, through the sprinkling of the precious blood, escaped unhurt. Wonderful promises are these; and finally, our text,—“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.” This is surely the crowning promise—to sit and share with our Redeemer and Lord in His Kingdom, even as He sits and shares with His Father (and *our* Father) in His Kingdom! (JG: 1909)

Moses The Man of God

(Psalm 90: title)

Moses himself is one of the towering figures of the Old Testament and several aspects of his life remind us of or point us to our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. The title “man of God” is truly a noble one, and indicates a person specially chosen by God for a particular service, a person very close to God in heart’s desire and character. The writer of the concluding verses of Deuteronomy testified of him - “there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face”. Elsewhere it is said that God spoke face to face with Moses “as a man speaks unto his friend.” Moses in turn spoke of a greater prophet like unto himself who was to come, even our Lord Jesus Christ.

During his life Moses made mistakes and the scriptures duly record these, but the final testimony to his faithfulness is given by the writer to the Hebrews in that great honour roll which is Chapter 11. The prayer of Moses which Psalm 90 records is thought to have been composed near the end of his life, perhaps not long before the nation was to pass over into the promised land of Canaan, which he personally would view from afar but not enter. So this grand character looked back over all the way in which Jehovah had brought the nation, and no doubt the overruling of his own life since first he was commissioned by God.

MOSES’ PREPARATION

Just as the apostle Paul declared that God had known and called him even before he was born, so we see in the circumstances of Moses’ life how God foreknew and was preparing his servant. His providential deliverance at the time of his birth surely makes us think of the way in which the young child Jesus was also preserved by divine provision, Moses in the court of Egypt with the princess, Jesus in the land of Egypt with his parents.

Again, like the apostle Paul, the early years of Moses’ upbringing were preparing him for quite a different purpose from that envisaged by his instructors in the royal palace. Paul the young zealous pharisee with excellent prospects, humanly speaking, in the Jewish Sanhedrin, was, under God’s hand, to be the great definer and preacher of the faith of the despised Jesus of Nazareth. Moses, the royal protege, was to lead a captive people out of bondage in Egypt to their own land.

Paul’s testimony to Moses in Hebrews 11:24-26 records that “by faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.”

Moses’ first subsequent reaction as a young man of 40 to the plight of his own people was however a rash one and he was forced to flee. A further 40 years of preparation was in fact necessary before this man, who is elsewhere described as “very meek, above all the men who were upon the face of the earth” would be ready for God’s appointed service. In His wisdom, He saw that Moses needed this period of growth in wisdom and understanding. Great patience was also going to be needed to deal with the nation.

God’s plans for any whom He chooses for His service are never hasty or poorly conceived, and so in God’s due time, He was ready to reveal Himself to Moses at the burning bush and to commission him for service. We read in Exodus 3:2-6 that in Mount Horeb “the angel of the Lord appeared unto him (Moses) in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush, and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire and the bush was not con-

sumed.” Moses turned aside and God told him to take off his shoes since he was on holy ground. “Moreover He (Jehovah) said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.”

God further assured Moses that He was now ready to deliver His people Israel and that Moses himself was to be used by Him for that mission. We recall his subsequent experiences at the hand of Pharaoh when he begged him to let his people go, his problems with the nation’s idolatry after the exodus while he was in the mount Sinai being instructed by God, difficulties with the constant murmurings and faithlessness of the people, until finally after 40 long years of wilderness wanderings, during which all the adults who came out of Egypt except Joshua and Caleb died, they came in sight of the promised land.

THE VIEW FROM PISGAH

Into this land, Moses was not to be permitted to enter, but God’s task for him had been faithfully completed, and Joshua, one of the two faithful spies of so many years before, was God’s appointee to lead the people into Canaan. Nevertheless, God graciously granted Moses a glimpse of that land and the final acts in the story of Moses, the man of God, are given us in Deut 34:5,6,10-12. “So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab according to the word of the Lord. And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-Peor, but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. In all the signs and the wonders, which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, and in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel”.

Meanwhile, the time drew near for Moses to leave the camp of Israel and to go alone into mount Nebo and from the height of Pisgah to view the promised land, to die there and sleep in an unmarked grave, awaiting that better resurrection which the faithful of old looked forward to. (Heb 11:35) This must have been an emotional time for this faithful servant of God, now 120 years of age, and his thoughts would no doubt go back over the tempestuous years of his leadership of an often stubborn and wayward people on the one hand, and the wonderful overall provision and protection of Jehovah on the other.

So whether at that time or a little earlier, he was lead to meditate upon the permanence and unchangeableness of God and the relative shortness and fragility of human life. The words of his prayer come down to us in Psalm 90 and have particular application in the first place to natural Israel as Moses interceded for their restoration and for the return of the divine blessings. But they also reach into the hearts of all God’s people, for we have come to know and love and trust that one of whom Moses prophesied, saying, “a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me, him shall you hear in all things whatsoever he shall say to you.” So much of Israel’s experiences, their deliverance from Egypt, the tabernacle provisions, the Passover commemoration, indeed speak so clearly to us of our Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE PSALM OF MOSES

The early verses of this prayer psalm of Moses dwell on the everlasting nature of God, as creator and sustainer of all things. To the nation of Israel He had been in a real sense their dwelling place, their habitation, their spiritual home. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth” was Jehovah’s declaration through the prophet Amos. (3:2) This thought of God’s dwelling place comes over into the gospel age message also, for the Lord’s people of this time are also to dwell in Him and in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. He in turn, we learn, will dwell with us, as was manifest to natural Israel in the wilderness in the cloud and the fire and later in the Shekinah glory in the tabernacle.

This mutual abiding is beautifully brought out by the apostle John, quoting our Lord’s own words in the context of the vine and branches analogy -”Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can you, except you abide in me. (John 15:4) This abiding is surely a fore-taste of our ultimate dwelling place with Him, in that place He has gone to prepare for us - our eternal habitation. “We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens”. (2 Cor 5:1) There we shall see and commune with our dear Lord, face to face.

Verse 1 of the psalm may well include the thought of a refuge as well as a dwelling place. The same word as is translated “dwelling place” in this verse is translated “habitation” in the next psalm (verse 9) “Because thou hast made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come near thy dwelling, for He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.”.(Psa 91:9-11) The first two verses of the same psalm add further - “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in Him will I trust.”

There is surely no greater security for any child of God, for one who trusts Him in any age, than to abide in His secret place, in the habitation of God. The word “abide” is not much used nowadays but it well encompasses the idea of constant and enduring residence. Though many in Israel failed to recognise or acknowledge

it, Jehovah had watched over His natural people, sometimes to discipline or punish, often to protect. So in this age, our Father may in love need to chasten or discipline us, yet He is ever faithful; what He has promised He will fulfil in us. "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Heb 13:5)

REDEEMING THE TIME

In contrast to the unchangeableness of God, to whom a thousand years is just like yesterday when it is past, Moses goes on to point out the brevity and uncertainty of human life, hence his prayer -"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." (Verse 12) This does not entail filling every moment with great activity but the wise use of time. There is need for times of rest, of reflection, of recuperation - it is indeed only with wise use of such means that we will be ready for active service for our Heavenly Father and for His people. As for Moses, preparation for service is so important, we must first take in before we can give out.

For many, the daily round and common task, particularly in these busy times, make heavy demands on time and strength but our Heavenly Father knows all about us each one and He can answer the briefest prayer, the whispered plea of the weary or troubled soul. Still today, His grace is sufficient. But without neglecting rightful duties, it remains important for us to heed Paul's words -"See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." (Eph 5:15,16) The word "redeem" here is defined as "buying up for oneself", that is, "buying up the opportunity" for some act or word for which the time is just right. This means "making the most of every opportunity, turning each to the best advantage, since none can be recalled once missed." (Vine)

So in Psalm 90, Moses reflects on the mercy and steadfastness of God, as he nears the end of the way, and his words of praise and meditation and exhortation come down to us today. Moses looked out upon the prospect of the promised land, which in this life he would not enter. By the signs around us in the world, national, political and religious, we view by faith and spiritual sight the prospect not so far ahead, we believe, of the glorious kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ - "millennial Canaan, our home beyond the tide". The psalm concludes - "O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days...Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it."

Let us daily remember God's mercies past and with fresh heart and renewed strength press on in service to our dear Lord, in the home, in the workplace, in the congregation.. "Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all, especially unto them of the household of faith." (Gal 6:9,10) (98/99)

The Burial of Moses

By Nebo's lonely mountain, on this side Jordan's wave,
In a vale in the land of Moab, there lies a lonely grave;
And no man knows that sepulchre, and no man saw it e'er,
For the Angels of God upturned the sod, and laid the dead man there.

That was the grandest funeral that ever passed on earth;
But no man heard the trampling, or saw the train go forth
Noiselessly as the daylight comes when the night is done,
And the crimson streak on ocean's cheek grows into the great sun

Noiselessly as the spring-time her crown of verdure weaves,
And all the trees on all the hills open their thousand leaves;
So, without sound of music, or voice of them that wept,
Silently down from the mountain's crown the great procession swept.

Perchance the bald old eagle, on grey Beth-peons height,
Out of his rocky eyrie looked on the wondrous sight;
Perchance the lion stalking still shuns that hallowed spot:
For beast and bird have seen and heard that which man knoweth not.

This was the bravest warrior that ever buckled sword;

This, the most gifted poet that ever breathed a word;
For never earth's philosopher traced with his golden pen,
On the deathless page, truths half so sage as he wrote down for men.

And had he not high honour? the hill-side for his pall,
To lie in state, while angels wait with stars for tapers tall,
And the dark rock-pines, like tossing plumes, over his bier to wave,
And God's own hand, in that lonely land, to lay him in the grave!

In that strange grave without a name, whence his uncoffined clay
Shall break again—most wondrous thought—before the Judgment day,
And stand, with glory wrapped around, on the hills he never trod,
And speak of the strife that won our life with the majestic Son of God.

Oh, lonely tomb in Moab's land! oh, dark Beth-peor hill!
Speak to these curious hearts of ours, and teach them to be still.
God hath His mysteries of grace, ways that we cannot tell;
He hides them deep, like the hidden sleep of him He loved so well.

(Cecil Frances Alexander)

Guided by God's Eye

"I will guide thee with Mine eye"—Psa. 32:8

The eye is one of the most important organs of the body with which to give expression to the feelings. Either anger or pleasure are usually expressed by this means. One thought which we may take from the text is that one may be so desirous of doing the Divine will that he will be continually on the alert to please, just as a dutiful child, being on the alert to do the will of the parent, would look at the parent's eye, not waiting for the rod. So all of God's dear children of the Church should be looking unto Jesus for the expression of the Father's will concerning them. They look to Jesus as the Author of their faith and the one who shall be the Finisher of it. They look to Him as the great Counsellor and Guide of life. As we sometimes sing:

“Oh, Let no earth-born cloud arise
To hide Thee from Thy servants' eyes!”

Another thought is that as the eye is the symbol of wisdom, so God guides all things in wisdom. He sees to it that His children receive the necessary counsel, the necessary aid. Since He is the All-Wise One, nothing can escape His attention. Still another thought is that as we recognise the Divine purpose, the Divine will, the Divine outworking of that will, we see that in the present time God is not trying to save the world, but only “the called,” “the elect,” who are obedient in sacrifice. All who are of the First-born should seek to follow the same course as God, to be co-workers with Him. They should have no will of their own but do the Father's will.

One of the most important lessons for the spiritual Israelite to learn is to look to the Lord for leading in all of life's affairs – never to attempt any undertaking, either temporal or spiritual, without seeking to note the will of the Lord concerning it. We are marching toward the antitypical Canaan and know that other experiences are due us and must be undergone ere we can inherit the promises. The lesson for us is prompt and thorough obedience to the Lord's leadings without murmurings – with joyfulness; and this can be expected only on the part of those who have learned the lessons previously given them, and above all, the lesson of faith –confidence in the Lord's power and goodness and faithfulness. (R.4852)

HE IS WITH THEE

He is with thee! — in thy dwelling,
Shielding thee from fear of ill;

All thy burdens kindly bearing,
For thy dear ones gently caring,

Guarding, keeping, blessing still
He is with thee! — in thy service

He is with thee certainly,
Filling with the Spirit's power,

Giving in the needing hour
His own messages by thee.

He is with thee! —
with thee always

All thy nights and all thy days;
Never failing, never frowning,

With His living kindness crowning,
Turning all thy life to praise.

(F.R.H.)

The Ministry of Comfort

“The Lord hath anointed me... to comfort all that mourn, to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.” (Isa 61:1-3)

Our text is surely good tidings in a very broad and a very deep sense. Its message is one of “comfort,” not only to Zion, the consecrated church, but to *all who mourn*; and as mentally we cast our eyes over the world we are deeply impressed with the thought that the vast majority of mankind are in mourning: as the Apostle expresses it, “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together.” There are undoubtedly a few who are full, satisfied, and who mourn for nothing, and who, therefore, under these conditions, are excluded from any share in this promised blessing; but they are exceptions to the rule. Some of them are wealthy in this world’s goods, and feel that they have need of nothing, and are kept busy with their efforts to enjoy themselves. There are others of the same full class who, though not wealthy, have a very self-satisfied feeling as respects their moral status: they do not realize themselves as sinners; they do not realize their daily imperfections nor their need of a Saviour; and are not mourning for anything, and not therefore in the way to be comforted with any of the comforting assurances and promises and provision which the Lord has made for those who mourn.

So far as the world is concerned, our Lord’s ministry of comfort to them is chiefly a future work. We rejoice, however, that the time is sure to come when all that mourn, all the “groaning creation,” shall be brought under the blessed influences and provisions of the Millennial kingdom, and shall there come to know the consolations which God has provided in Christ:—the balm for every trouble, every wound; the cure for every blight, every sin and every imperfection; and their privilege of profiting by these to the fullest measure by giving themselves unreservedly into the care of the Good Physician. But the poor world, blinded and deceived by the god of this world as respects the character and plan of Jehovah, can neither see, hear, nor appreciate now the wonderful provisions made for them, and hence they cannot receive the blessing, the consolation the “comfort” now, but must wait for it until the establishment of the Lord’s kingdom, the binding of Satan, and the opening of their understanding with the eye-salve of the truth.

But as respects Zion, the consecrated church, this comfort is now her privilege, and all children of Zion need to be comforted. First of all, they need the comforting knowledge that their sins are forgiven, and that they are

no longer strangers and aliens and foreigners, but children of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ their Lord, if so be that they suffer with Him. They need to be comforted, too, with the assurances of the Lord's Word that our God is very sympathetic, "very pitiful," and that if anyone be overtaken in a fault he may be restored, and "not be utterly cast down." If the children of Zion had no such consolations as these they surely would be utterly discouraged, disheartened, and faint by the way; hence the Lord has provided these comforting assurances, pointing out to them that having begun a good work in them he is desirous of completing it, if they will permit him to do so, and that to this end they must abide in Christ by faith, coupled with obedience to the extent of their ability. What Christian is there who has not shared these consolations, these comforts, and what Christian has not needed them, and realized that without them he would long since have been undone?

MEANS OF PRESENT COMFORT

The Scriptures point out to us that our comfort comes through fellowship with the heavenly Father and with our Lord Jesus: we are comforted, not by believing that they are ignorant of our weaknesses and shortcomings, nor that they have a low standard of righteousness and a sinful basis of fellowship, but quite to the contrary of all this, they comfort us with the assurance that although our every imperfection is known to the Lord He is yet very sympathetic, very merciful; and that having provided, in the great sacrifice at Calvary, a full propitiation (satisfaction) for all sins, the Lord is very pleased to apply, on behalf of each of His adopted children, in full measure, the riches of grace necessary to the covering and offsetting of every unintentional, unapproved error and failure. What comfort is here! What consolation! What privileges of fellowship with the Father and with the Son!

This comfort, the Scriptures assure us, comes to us through the Holy Spirit—the channel, and, hence indeed, called the Comforter. (John 14:26) Those who have the Holy Spirit may have the comfort; those who do not have the Holy Spirit may not have this comfort, this consolation. It is only as we receive of the Spirit of the Lord, the mind of the Lord, His disposition, that we are able to understand and appreciate the lengths and breadths, the heights and depths of His love and compassion and provision for us, and to be comforted thereby.

Nevertheless, this comfort of the Holy Spirit (the channel of divine favor), reaches us through the Scriptures, for the Scriptures are the medium, or sub-channel through which the knowledge of God's grace and the comfort of all knowledge reach us; in the Apostle's language, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and *comfort of the Scriptures* might have hope."—Rom. 15:4.

Yet while this comfort is of the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit, communicated through the Scriptures, we are informed that in great measure it is communicated by the members of the body of Christ one to another, as the Apostle, for instance, after relating certain features of the divine plan respecting the deliverance of the church, says, "Wherefore, *comfort one another* with these words." (1 Thess. 4:18) Similarly, the Apostle declares that he sent Timothy to the church at Ephesus, and again to the church at Colosse, that *he might comfort* their hearts. This, of course, signifies that he was to draw their attention to the exceeding great and precious promises of the Lord's *Word*, and that thus they might drink in the Holy Spirit of all the promises, and that thus they might be comforted, not only with respect to the things promised, but with respect to the loving compassion and sympathy of Him who promises them.

Writing to the Thessalonians, the Apostle says that he sent Timothy—"to establish you and to *comfort you* concerning your faith, that no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto: for verily, when we were with you we told you we should suffer tribulation, even as it came to pass and ye know. For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you." (1 Thess, 3:2-5) Here again it is evident that the comforting signifies and implies establishment in the faith once delivered to the saints, that all the terms and conditions of our covenant should be clearly held in mind, and that the promises of reward at the end of the journey might serve to comfort, strengthen and establish the children of Zion in their endurance of the tribulations as good soldiers. This comfort, again, was of the Lord, through the Holy Spirit, through the agency of Paul and Timothy. Again, the same Apostle, speaking in the same strain, says: "Wherefore, *comfort yourselves* together and edify one another, even as also ye do."—1 Thess. 5:11.

AMBASSADORS OF COMFORT

All of the Lord's people need to remember that in proportion as they are ambassadors of the Lord, and His representatives, it will be their privilege not only by and by in the kingdom to "comfort all that mourn," and to be the trees of righteousness, whose leaves will be for the healing of the nations (Rev. 22:2), but they should remember that in the present life they have a ministry of comfort to perform also, toward all who mourn *in Zion*—toward all of the Lord's people who are in any tribulation, physical or mental disquiet, disease; and they

should remember, too that just in proportion as they are filled with this spirit now, it is their privilege to bind up the broken-hearted, and comfort the mourning ones.

None can have this spirit of helpfulness, this disposition to comfort and strengthen, and to edify, and to upbuild the household of faith, except they have in considerable measure the spirit of the truth, the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of love. In proportion as they seek to cultivate this privilege of mutual helpfulness, in comforting and upbuilding and strengthening, in that same proportion they will find the spirit of love developing and abounding in their own hearts, and that their likeness to the Lord Jesus, the Head of the Body, is becoming more pronounced from day to day and from year to year.

Finally, in view of what we have seen respecting the Lord's goodness toward His people, and the methods by which He comforts them through the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures and the brethren, let us note one of the Apostle's expressions respecting the great comfort and consolations which God has provided for His consecrated, faithful people, saying:—

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, the God of all comfort, who *comforteth us* in all our tribulation, that we may be *able to comfort* them which are in any trouble, by *the comfort* wherewith we ourselves are *comforted of God*.”—2 Cor. 1:3, 4.

So then, all of our lessons and experiences in life in connection with trials and difficulties and tribulations, if we are rightly exercised by them, should bring us larger experiences in the Lord's comfort, through the gracious promises of His Word and the spirit of the same; and should make us the more capable and efficient agents and representatives of the Lord, His Word and His spirit, in communicating comfort to others about us in their trials and difficulties. (R.2664)

Brotherly Counsel

If we look into the record given us in the Acts of the Church of the first days, we find several outstanding characteristics that marked their collective life, as the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. First, we are told that they waited constantly upon the teaching of the Apostles. There was no printed Word of God then, as in the Lord's Providence there is now. In our case this would mean that our Church fellowship would function round the open Bible, where the Apostle's teaching, and that of the prophets of old are recorded for our instruction. More important still, it is here “the Saviour's welcome voice, sheds Heavenly peace around and life and everlasting joys attend the blissful sound.” Let us, like these early Christians, cherish the spirit of fellowship, not regarding ourselves as isolated units, but as members of ONE BODY of which the LIVING HEAD IS CHRIST. Let us regard no sacrifice or inconvenience too great to surmount in order to meet regularly together and exhort one another, and enthuse one another in the Christian way. The early Church persevered in fellowship, partaking often of this privilege in each other's homes, and over the hospitality of a simple meal.

The first characteristic of our communion together should be reverence. Reverence is the pervading tone of Heaven; it predominates over every other characteristic save Love alone. There is nothing so real as true Piety, or Godly fear. It introduces us into that which is within the veil. A sense of God's Reality, of His holiness, of His right over us, of His concern for us, of His glorious designs for us and for all. This is the foundation of all Piety and therefore of all Peace. In this spirit we view one another; not as in the flesh, but as in the Presence of God, endeavouring to preserve the unit of the Spirit in the bond of Peace, forbearing one another in Love, recognising in each other those who have been reconciled in Christ and called and chosen by God, as His peculiar people, a people for a purpose. How careful this would make us, so that in nothing would we offend one another, but rather sacrifice self in order to serve one another in Love, viewing our service for one another as rendered unto Him.

A Christian Church ought to be an exhibition of heaven upon earth — a manifestation of Christ below — a witness for God in the midst of the world, so that the world looking at the Church may be able to say: “This is a specimen of what that which is called the Gospel can do; this is a model of what the Christian teaching can achieve.” And so all with whom we come into contact in our intercourse in life will say: “That man does not say much about his Christian beliefs when transacting his business, but there prevails in all that he does an integrity, a singleness of eye, a simplicity of purpose, a faithfulness to his engagements, and a superiority to trial, that proves he must have some fountain of peace and comfort and joy that we have not; we will go and hear what he hears, learn the lessons he has learned, and taste, if it be possible, the happiness which we see in his character.” Such a one becomes to mankind either the salt that silently keeps a society from corruption, or the light shining on the hilltop that illuminates the earth with a ray of the glory of heaven. (F.G.M.)

THE TRIAL OF YOUR FAITH.

Though we know there must be trials, and there will be tears below,
Yet we know His glorious purpose, and His promises we know!
Only ask—“What saith the Master?” and believe His word alone,
That “from glory unto glory” He shall lead, shall change His own.

Ever more and more bestowing,
Love and joy in riper glowing,
Faith increasing, graces growing
Such His promises to you!

He is faithful, He is true!

Each Amen becomes an anthem, for we know he will fulfil,
All the purpose of His goodness, all the splendour of His will,
Only trust the living Saviour, only trust Him all the way,
And your springtime path shall brighten to the perfect summer day.

— F.R. Haveergal.

All His Paths

All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.-Ps. 25:10.

“All the paths.” It is no small effort of faith to say so, when blessings are blown upon and schemes crossed, and fellow-pilgrims (it may be beloved helpmeets in our spiritual joys), are mysteriously removed, to say, “All-all is mercy. All-all is well!”

But they are “the paths of the Lord”-His choosing; and, be assured, He will “lead His people by the right way.” It may not be the way of their own selecting. It may be the very last way they would have chosen. But when He leadeth His sheep, “He goeth before them.” The Shepherd stakes off our pasture-ground. He guides the footsteps of His flock. He will lead them by no rougher way than He sees needful. Does a father give his child his own way? If he did it would be his ruin. Will God surrender us to our own truant wills, which are often bent on nothing so much as wandering farthest from Him? He knows us better. He loves us better.

Believer, it is the loftiest triumph and prerogative of faith to have no way-no path of thine own-but with childlike simplicity and reliance to say, “Teach me Thy paths.” “Undertake Thou for me!” Lead me howsoever and wheresoever Thou pleasest. Let it be through the darkest, loneliest, thorniest way-only let it bring me nearer Thyself.

“Oh, tell me, Thou life and delight of my soul, Where the flock of Thy pasture are feeding; I seek Thy protection, I need Thy control; I would go where my Shepherd is leading.

Oh, tell me the place where Thy flock are at rest, Where the noon tide will find them reposing!

The tempest now rages, my soul is distrest, And the pathway of peace I am losing?”

Would that we could keep our eye not so much on the path as on the bright wicket-gate, which terminates it. When standing at that luminous portal we shall trace, with adoring wonder, the way in which our God has led us, discerning the “need-be” of every teardrop- and to the question, “Is it well?” to which often on earth we gave an evasive answer, be ready with an unhesitating, “It is well!” What a light will then be flashed on these three oft mysterious words, “God is love!” Then, at least, shall we be able to add the joyful comment, “We have known and believed the love which God hath for us.”

Meanwhile, if you are treading a path of sorrow, consider, as an encouragement, that your Lord and Master trod the same before you. Behold, as He toiled on His blood-stained journey, how submission to the Divine will formed the secret of His support. “Even so, Father!” “Not my will, but Thine be done!” The true David was strengthened with what sustained His typical ancestor in a dark and trying hour, “O Lord, Thou art my God!” Believer, if it be your God in covenant who is leading you, what more can you require? “His ways are verity and judgment.” He will guide you, while you live, by His counsel, and afterward receive you into glory. My God! if such be the design of Thy dealings and discipline,

“I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, For thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.”

(J.R. MacDuff, D.D.)

THE WEAVER

My life is but a weaving

Between my Lord and me;
I cannot choose the colours
He worketh steadily
 Oft-times He weaveth sorrow
 And I in foolish pride,
 Forget He sees the upper
 And I, the underside.
Not till the loom is silent
And the shuttles cease to fly,
Shall God unroll the canvas
And explain the reason why.
 The dark threads are as needful
 In the weaver's skillful hand,
 As the threads of gold and silver
 In the pattern He has planned.

The Fruit of the Spirit

(“*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.*” - Gal. 5:22)

THREE GROUPS OF THREE

Commentators, generally, have suggested that the nine elements of fruit mentioned in Paul's inspired analysis may be taken in three groups of three, corresponding to three sides of the much diversified Christian experience. The first three, Love, Joy and Peace find their sphere of operation in the inner life of fellowship with God, which is known only to God and to the Christian's own consciousness. Long-suffering, Gentleness and Goodness describe the Christian's character in relationship with others. Faithfulness, Meekness and Self-control manifest themselves in the personal character, which interprets itself in words and deeds, even in face and manner. In those who possess it and are themselves possessed of it, the Spirit of Christ bears fruit in every region of human life.

The essence, then, of the life and character of one producing the fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy and Peace. These cannot be called *duties*; they should not be thought of as *virtues*, even; they are simply the result of communion or fellowship with God – the *fruit* of the Spirit. The *love* of God has been shed abroad in the Christian's heart by the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5) The exalted Head of the Church was anointed with the oil of *gladness* and this anointing flows down upon the members of the Body as righteousness, peace and joy, in the Holy Spirit. (Rom 14:17) These three elements of the fruit are in the private, inner life which God alone beholds. Nevertheless when *Love* and *Joy* and *Peace* are within, they cannot but find outward expression, and make their possessors *loving, joyful and peaceful; loving* towards God, the brethren and all mankind; *joyful* with a calm but contagious and beneficent happiness; *peaceful*, with a sense of rest which cannot but diffuse itself in the direction of those with whom they come in touch.

Again, in their relationships with the brethren and all mankind, fruit-bearing Christians are seen to be Long-suffering, Gentle and Good. “Long-suffering”, it has been observed, “is the capacity to present the same calm surface today, tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow, in spite of anything and everything.” It is long temper, as contrasted with short temper; the ability to “bear all things”. (1 Cor 13:7) “Gentleness” is to touch others lightly, and then only with a healing touch; to manifest a disposition at all times to be tender in the treatment of others – even in just reproofs. “Goodness” is to be good to others; to pronounce benediction upon them, to be benevolent to them, to see that they benefit from their association with us.

Finally, the true Christian character, as it develops, results in a practical, alert, circumspect outward life. Bright with a secret happiness, long-suffering with an infinite forbearance, the fruit of the Spirit will be seen in Faithfulness, Meekness and Self-control. The truly spiritual man or woman will be *faithful* in every duty, loyal to every promise. They will be dependable in business. Their friends will receive faithful and careful counsel. Their employer will get service out of them in which his just interests will be as their own. Their employees will find them watchfully equitable, considerate, courteous. They will take great care to owe no one anything. The local ecclesia will be well and truly served by them, be it ever so large, or small, or unresponsive. They will be known to be those who will take trouble for others, and who are glad to be their servants indeed for Christ's sake. They will be *meek*, avoiding any manner or habit of assertion among the brethren in matters of opinion or work. And with and over it all, they will be *self-controlled*. They will, for the glory of

the Master, *their* Master, and so that they may be truly serviceable in their ministry to others, watch and pray over their own acts and habits; over bed, and board and literature, and companionships, and recreation, and imagination, and tongue – over thought, word, and deed.

“THIS ONE THING I DO”

Will they progress thus, to perfection? No, not in this life! Indeed, as though to caution against such a thought the Apostle immediately presents the case of a brother overtaken in a fault, urging all, as they seek to restore the erring one, to do so in the spirit of meekness, lest they also should be tempted. (Gal 6:1) Perfection in this life is not present to the Apostle’s mind, here or elsewhere, for them or himself. In Phil 3:13, he emphatically declares: “I count not myself to have apprehended.” But he did not stop with that confession. His further words show that he had an objective which reached beyond the present life. “This one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil 3:13,14)

Let us then follow Paul as he followed Christ. As the Apostle Peter declares: “If ye do these things ye shall never fall.” “The contingency is not in the doing of these things *perfectly* and regardless of the righteousness of Christ to cover our transgressions and compensate for our *daily* shortcomings; but if, added to our faith in the imputed righteousness of Christ, we have cultivated all these graces to the extent of our ability, we shall not fail. When we have done all that we can do, we are still unprofitable servants, not daring to trust in our own righteousness but in the ample robe which is ours by faith in Christ, while, with constant “diligence”, we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that the righteousness of Christ is only applied to such as desire to forsake sin and pursue that ‘holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.’”