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**HOLDING FAST THE FAITHFUL WORD**

*(Titus 1:9)*

In Titus 1:5 we read that Paul had left Titus in Crete in order to set in order the things which were lacking there, and to ordain elders in each city on the island as Paul had appointed him. In Titus 1:6-8 the apostle goes on to list the criteria by which Titus was to evaluate the suitability of those whom he would appoint as elders. *“If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unseemly, for a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God, not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre, but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate.”* (A bishop is simply an overseer in N.T. terms; the job of the elders was to “oversee” each of the churches.) The attributes listed are all commendable and in today’s language we could summarise them by saying that the elders needed to have characters and ways of life which were beyond reproach.

In Titus 1:9 the apostle Paul adds another criterion for those who would be elders – *“Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.”* It is this particular attribute of those who would be elders that we are to concentrate upon. *“Holding fast the faithful word as they have been taught.”* Consideration of this particular criterion could initially suggest some doctrines which Paul might have in mind. But just what did Paul have in mind when he said – holding fast the faithful word? What particular faithful words did he have in mind? Let us go to the Scriptures and see what words they identify categorically as faithful words and which are necessary for us to hold fast.

There are some six references directly to faithful words in the New Testament, apart from the text verse. One of these is in Paul’s first letter to Timothy and we realise that as well as leaving Titus in Crete, Paul had left Timothy in Ephesus to do the same work there. In 1 Tim 3:1 Paul says – *“This is a faithful (AV – true) saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.”* This is a parallel passage to Titus 1 and lists the characteristics of those who would be bishops or overseers. It is not proposed to consider further that passage at present, rather let us go on to some of the other texts, which are more pertinent to our subject.

**“TO SAVE SINNERS”**

The **first faithful saying** for consideration is in 1 Tim 1:15, where the apostle says to Timothy – *“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief”* Why would Paul be telling Timothy or emphasising to him that this is a faithful saying? It is certainly a faithful saying, it is the very foundation of the Christian faith. But when we think about the environment in Ephesus and also that which Titus faced in Crete, we can easily see why Paul mentions this particular truth as being of very great importance. In 1 Tim 1:3-7, Paul says to Timothy - *“As I besought you to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that you might charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith; now the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned, from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling, desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.”*

So Timothy in Ephesus was confronted with a situation where some were abandoning their faith in Christ Jesus and reverting to being teachers of the law, and it was therefore most pertinent that Paul mention in his letter to Timothy that one of the faithful sayings to be emphasised was *“that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”* Titus also had to confront the same problem in Crete. We previously read Tit 1:5-9, let us turn now to vv 10,11 - *“For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the cir-*

*cumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.*” Both at Ephesus and Crete there was a tendency in that day to revert to the teachings of the law. Also in Galatia, Paul writing to the church there says - *“O foolish Galatians, who bath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you. This only would I learn of you, Received you the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?”*

These circumstances of course belong to the first century A.D.; we are now on the brink of the 21st century. Is then this exhortation to hold fast the faithful word, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, still important, is it so necessary for us to be forthright about that doctrine? “He came into the world to save sinners”, what does that really mean? Who are the sinners that He came to save? How privileged we are to believe and understand what Paul says to the Romans - *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”* (Rom 5:12) No Bible Student would question or doubt the truth of these words, but many professedly Christian people deny or have no comprehension of the clear statements of the Scriptures as to the origin of sin with our first parents, how it came upon mankind, and more importantly how it is to be overcome. This is a challenge to us all, and who knows what greater challenges we are going to face in the days to come.

## THE RESURRECTION

He came into the world to save sinners, but what does it really mean to save sinners? If we asked around, we would probably find that most believe that saving sinners means taking them from the earth and translating them into heaven. This is not the answer; and we are privileged to know that God’s plan to “save sinners” makes a perfect and more far-reaching provision for all in due time, by the resurrection from the dead.

Let us see how in the early church the hope of the resurrection was very quickly lost sight of, and also how important it is. Returning to Paul’s first letter to Timothy whom he had left in Ephesus; in Chap 1:18-20 we read - *“This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them might war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience, which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck, of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander”* These had put aside the faith and had even made shipwreck of some. What did Hymenaeus do that made their faith shipwreck? The apostle leaves us in no doubt, for in 2 Tim 2:16-18 he tells us in no uncertain terms - *“But shun profane and vain babblings, for they will increase unto more ungodliness, and their word will eat us doth a canker, of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus, who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some.”*

Hymenaeus and Philetus had lost faith in a future resurrection, had lost faith in the salvation which Christ has provided for the world of mankind, and even more seriously, had overthrown the faith of some. When we think about it, how critical is this conviction that the resurrection for the whole of mankind is still future? How many people do we find who really believe that? How many professedly Christian people have no answer or hope for the millions who have never heard the gospel? So we see that the apostle’s words that Christ Jesus did indeed come into the world to save sinners, to save the whole world of mankind, is a faithful saying, which, while we take it for granted, is something which we actively need to hold fast.

Another text which has come under severe criticism in time past, not among the brethren but from “outside” is 1 Tim 2:3,4 - *“For this is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved and to come unto a knowledge of the truth.”* This text we frequently refer to and we all rejoice in. One interpretation of this text is that God wills all to be saved but it will not happen because they do not want it, they turn a deaf ear. That God’s will is that all be saved is a truth which assuredly we all have to really hold fast. According to Strong’s Concordance, wills is the correct word. God wills all to be saved. The point is - will it come about? Surely, it will through the resurrection, and that is also when it will come about.

Yet many still say, yes, God wills all to be saved, but it will not happen if they do not want it. In the next breath, they will say that God is all-powerful, omnipotent, ruler of the universe. How do these two statements balance? If God wants something done and He is all-powerful, why wouldn’t it happen? So, again, the doctrine of the resurrection, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners is really a key issue and something which we must also hold fast.

## THE CALL OF THE CHURCH

**A second faithful saying** which we must hold fast is found in Paul’s second letter to Timothy - 2 Tim 2:11. To put this verse into context, we need to read several earlier verses in the chapter - *“Thou therefore my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ... Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead*

according to my gospel, wherein I suffer trouble, as an evildoer, even unto bonds, but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying, For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." (2 Tim 2:1-3,8-12) In a nutshell, what is Paul here telling Timothy? Is it not the calling of the church? Paul was suffering "all things for the elect's sake", those whom God had chosen.

Just how important is an understanding of the calling of the church to the overall plan of God? There are at least four good reasons why we must hold fast to this faithful saying concerning the call of the church. The **first reason** is that it gives us confidence, an understanding of the calling of the church gives us assurance. Romans 8:28 is a very well known verse - "*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.*" How often we hear this verse misapplied to natural disasters and the like? In the overall plans of God, these are working out His purposes in "the big picture", but the text is saying that "all things work together for good for them who love God, the elect." "*Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.*" (Rom 8:33) Who indeed can lay anything to the charge of God's elect - if we believe that we are of the elect, what a tremendously powerful statement that is to us!

The **second reason** why it is so important for us to hold fast the faithful saying of the calling of the church is that it explains to us the church's pilgrimage during the present gospel age. "*But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that you should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light; who in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.*" (1 Pet 2:9-12) How often do we hear the mission of the church during the gospel age misrepresented? Truly, we acknowledge that we are strangers and pilgrims as the elect of God.

This leads us the **third reason** why it is so important for us to understand this doctrine, for, if we understand the church's pilgrimage, then we recognise the need for our sanctification as outlined in 2 Cor 6: 14-18. Verses 16 and 17 read - "*And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God, as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.*" In a word, our dedication or our fervour to be sanctified depends upon our understanding of the pilgrimage of the church.

The **fourth reason** why it is important for us to understand the faithful saying of the calling of the church is that it gives us an overall view of God's plan. We are not the only ones who are being "saved". No, the calling of the church enables us to see the manifold wisdom of God's plans and purposes. "*To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God... to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known (or made known) by the church the manifold wisdom of God.: (Eph 3:9,10) Further in Rom 8:19 we read - "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."* The earnest expectation of **all creation** - consider the power of those words! How critical these things are!

Reading on in Romans 8, verses 20-22 - "*For the creation was made subject to vanity (futility), not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*" The whole creation travails in pain, waiting until the church is complete! How important it is to understand this faithful saying!

### **"ALL THINGS NEW"**

This brings us to the **third faithful saying, in Rev 21:1-5.** "*And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea. 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. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall be there any more pain; for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new And He said unto me, Write, for these words are true and faithful.*

What a wealth of promises is in these words. Let us just take from Verse 4 - "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes!" Do we really believe that? Some people say that there will surely always be sorrow and there will always be tears. So when we declare that we believe that a day will come when there will be no

more tears, their response is likely to be - “get real” or “this is pie-in-the-sky stuff” But this faithful saying we hold fast, there is to be not only no more tears but no more sorrow or crying or pain, and no more death itself. This is surely just the most wonderful hope, is it not? How blessed we are to understand it and to hold it fast, for it is the fulfilment of the first faithful saying which we considered in 1 Tim 1:15, that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Here it is fulfilled!

Another reason why we must hold fast to this faithful saying is that it is at this time that the second faithful saying that “if we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him” will be fulfilled.

The final reason why we can hold fast to the faithful words of Rev 21:1-5 is found in the last verse (v5) - “*He that sat upon the throne said. Behold I make all things new; and He said unto me, Write, for these words are true and faithful!*” Amen. (GS:98/99)

## Acceptable Thoughts and Words

*“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer” Psalm 19:14*

How beautiful in the sight of right-thinking people is a well-balanced character, and, in contrast, how unlovely are the undisciplined and ungoverned - the selfish, the unjust, the unkind and the violent-tempered. Naturally, the one awakens in us emotions of pleasure and admiration, and the other of pain. If such is the appreciation of virtue and the abhorrence of the lack of it among mankind who have lost much of the original image of God, with what keen appreciation must they be observed by a pure and holy God.

People of the world, who have no personal acquaintance with God, have no special thought as to how they appear in His sight; but with what carefulness should those who love Him and who value His approval study to conform their conduct to His pure and holy mind. True, all the justified and consecrated, notwithstanding their imperfections and shortcomings through inherited weaknesses, are acceptable to God through Christ, whose robe of righteousness amply covers us; but the measure of our acceptableness to God, even through Christ, is only to the extent that, while availing ourselves of His imputed righteousness, we are earnestly striving to attain actually to the standards of perfection.

By so doing we manifest our actual appreciation of the Divine favour. With what confusion and chagrin would one be covered who, in the midst of a fit of violent temper, or an unjust or mean transaction unworthy of his dignity of profession, should be suddenly surprised by the unexpected appearance of a beloved friend of high and noble character. Yet the eye of such a one is ever upon us. How constantly, then, should the above prayer of the Psalmist be in the minds of God’s consecrated children? The thoughts of our hearts are not manifest to others until we express them in words or actions; but even the very thoughts and intents of our hearts are all open and manifest to God. What a comfort to the honest-hearted!

The Psalmist repeats this enquiry another way, saying. “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?” and then replies, “By taking heed thereto, according to Thy word.” Then he frames for us this resolution, “I will meditate on Thy precepts, and have respect unto Thy ways. I will delight myself with Thy statutes; I will not forget Thy word.” (Psa 119:9,15,16) Here is the secret of a pure and noble life, acceptable to God. It is to be attained, not merely by prayers and righteous resolutions, but, in addition to these, by careful, painstaking heed; by systematic and diligent effort of self-cultivation; by the persevering weeding out of evil thoughts and the constant cultivation of pure, benevolent and noble thoughts; by nipping in the bud the weeds of perversity before they bring forth their hasty harvest of sinful words and deeds.

### THE DIVINE STANDARD

But observe, further, that this heed or care is to be taken, not according to the imperfect standing of our own judgment, but according to God’s word. The standard by which we test our lives makes a vast difference in our conclusions. The Psalmist further commends this standard to us, saying, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.” (That is, if we take heed to our ways according to God’s law, it will turn us completely from the path of sin to the path of righteousness.) “The testimony (the instruction) of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple” (the meek, teachable ones - clearly pointing to them the way of righteousness.) “The statutes (the decrees, ordinances and precepts) of the Lord are right (the infallible rules of righteousness) rejoicing the heart” (of the obedient).

“The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean (not a menial, servile fear, but begotten by love - a fear of falling short of His righteous approval), enduring for ever. More to be desired are they (the law and testimony of the Lord) than gold; yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is Thy servant warned (concerning the dangers of the way and the snares of the adversary and concerning everything which is calculated to discourage or hinder growth in

grace), and in keeping of them there is great reward. Who (in the use of his own fallible judgments, and without the standard of God's law) can understand his errors (can rightly judge himself)?" When, as we measure ourselves by this standard we detect and deplore our shortcomings, let us remember the Psalmist's prayer, "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults" - thus supplementing our efforts by our prayers.

But there is still another part of this prayer which the Lord thus puts into our mouths. It reads, "Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me; then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression." Well, indeed, may we pray and strive to be kept back from such sin - sins of pride and arrogant self-will which does not meekly submit to the will of God. Let us beware of the slightest tendency toward pride and self-will, or the disposition to be wise above what is written, or to take for granted what God does not clearly promise. If we watch and strive against the very beginning of that proud and haughty spirit which surely presages a fall, then, indeed, we shall be "innocent from the great transgression."

### **MEDITATING ON GOD'S WORD**

"Blessed is the man... whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who doth meditate therein day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." (Psa 1:1-3) If we make the word of God the theme of our constant meditation, its principles will soon be assimilated and become part of our mental make-up, making our characters more beautiful and commendable both to God and to those about us; and in harmony with this habit of the mind the acts of life will speak.

The purified fountain will send forth sweeter waters than formerly, bearing refreshment and good cheer to all who come in contact with it. It will make for happier homes - better husbands, better wives and better children. It will sweeten the temper, soften the voice, dignify the language, cultivate the manners, ennoble the sentiments and lead its charming grace to every simple duty. It will bring in the principle of love, and cast out the discordant elements of selfishness. Thus it will make the home the very garden-spot of earth, where every virtue and every grace will have ample room to expand and grow. It will not only thus favourably affect the individual and the home-life, but it will go out into the avenues of trade, and truth and fair dealing will characterise all the business relations, and thus God will be honoured by those who bear His name and wear the impress of His blessed Spirit.

While the heights of perfection cannot be reached as long as we still have these imperfect bodies, there should be in every child of God a very perceptible and continuous growth in grace, and each step gained should be considered but the stepping-stone to higher attainments. If there is no perceptible growth into the likeness of God, or if there is a backward tendency, or a listless standstill, there is cause for alarm. Let us constantly keep before our eyes the model which the Lord Jesus set for our example - that model of the complete fulfilment of the will of God. Let us follow His steps of righteousness and self-sacrifice as nearly as a full measure of loving zeal and faithfulness and loyalty to God will enable us to do, and we shall have a blessed sense of the Divine approval now, and the glorious reward of Divine favour in due time. (R4834)

### ***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.)

## “So Run that you May Obtain”

(1 Corinthians 9:24)

The apostle Paul, as a man of his time, was evidently familiar with the Olympic and Roman Games of his day and drew analogies from them to point the way to Christians. One great distinction, of course, he hastens to make, is that participants in the public games sought the reward of local acclaim and honour, the winner's wreath or crown, all corruptible prizes which soon fade. The Christian, on the other hand, is seeking an incorruptible crown, one which will never fade, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to all who finish the course with faith and joy.

With the modern Olympic Games to be staged in Australia in the year 2000, we will all be brought into contact, to some extent, with accounts of the athletes' aspirations and preparations. We can be sure that none will be taking a casual approach to their events, their training will be intense, hearts and minds will be fully absorbed in physical and mental preparations, other interests and pleasures will be set aside until all the heats and finals have been fully completed. As Paul reminds us, they know only too well that in public games events, there can be only one winner, intensifying the degree of dedication required. The Christian needs the same sort of zeal, but thankfully in our race all faithful unto the finish are to receive the crown.

Though the apostle Paul particularly uses the analogy of the footrace to illuminate his exhortations to the Lord's people, there are earlier lessons along this line in the Old Testament. The wise man and the psalmist both have advice for us -

(1) Proverbs 4:11,12 - *“I have taught thee in the way of wisdom, I have led thee in right paths. When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.”*

Psalm 119:30,32 *“I have chosen the way of truth, I have set my heart on your laws. I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free.”* (NIV)

In the first instance, the necessity for listening intently to the coach's instructions to avoid stumbling is stressed. For the Christian, this means watchfulness and prayer, a meek and teachable spirit, for elsewhere he warns us that *“pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”* (Prov 16:18) In the second instance, the psalmist emphasises the need to know and follow the rules. For the Christian, this means familiarity with our training manual, the Word of God, the sole guide as we run the race. At times we may falter, but our Father is every ready to forgive the contrite runner.

### **RUNNING INSTRUCTIONS**

However, the most direct instructions for the Christian concerning the race and the prize of faithfulness for which each entrant is running are given by the apostle Paul in his letters to the believers at Corinth and to his Hebrew brethren. In the first, he points out the urgency and immediacy of the running, and issues a challenge to maximum effort and personal discipline. In the second, he outlines the preparation necessary, the persistence required and the prospect before each runner, with a reminder that lives of faithful ones of past ages, and we might well add men and women of faith down the gospel age, are there to encourage and to urge us on.

The apostle's familiar words to the Corinthian brethren read (Revised Standard Version) - *“Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one... I do not run aimlessly. I do not box as one beating the air; but I pummel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.”* (1 Cor 9:24-26) The challenge so clearly set before us then is to *“so run that we may obtain the prize”* and a prime pre-requisite is self-control.

The apostle is of course not suggesting here that Christians are competing with each other for the prize, but rather that the same diligence, the same concentration of endeavour which an athlete strives for, is necessary. The apostle Peter expresses a similar idea in his words - *“wherefore, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things you shall never fall, for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”* (2 Peter 1:10,11) The calling to which he here refers, elsewhere defined as a *high* calling, a *holy* calling and a *heavenly* calling, is indeed the goal towards which each entrant in the race is running. Diligence - single-mindedness and zeal - is not merely an option for any serious runner in our race but a necessity.

It is common nowadays for athletics or sporting coaches to require of their competitors or team members

that they be “focussed” on the task in hand. All their thoughts and efforts are to be concentrated on preparation for the event, with the desired goal firmly fixed in mind and heart. The same “focus” is surely the need of the Christian entrant in his or her race also, as Paul indicates in Phil 3:13-15 (RSV) - *“Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it (the prize) my own, but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward (high - AV) call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature be thus minded.”*

Though the apostle in these words does not specifically refer to running. Vine tells us that the word translated “straining forward” (AV - “press”) is used as a metaphor from the foot race and pictures “speeding on earnestly”. We will see more on this point later from the letter to the Hebrews, but the point of dedication to the course on which each one has entered is clear. The apostle is not suggesting that victory in the race rests upon our own efforts, for the victory is by faith, manifested in daily seeking to do the Father’s will. *“This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”* (1 John 5:4)

## **SELF-CONTROL**

Turning again to Paul’s words to the Corinthians, we note that as well as requiring the complete dedication of every contestant who would gain the prize, there is a need to be “temperate in all things”. The verb translated “is temperate” (AV) is used figuratively of the rigid self-control practised by athletes with a view to gaining the prize and is of prime importance to each Christian entrant in the race. One of the precious fruits of the Holy spirit is “temperance” or self-control. It is also one of the vital characteristics to be added to our faith, being next after virtue and knowledge (2 Peter 1:5) It needs to be exercised in respect of our own pattern of life and in all our dealings with others.

An area which most athletes pay great attention to is diet. For the Christian, what he or she eats and drinks needs to be chosen wisely, but what is taken into the mind and heart is far more important, for it is out of the abundance of the heart - what has been stored up there - that the mouth speaks. This can either glorify God or bring shame to His name when the careless expression or thought slips out. Faulty diet will surely slow the reflexes and retard progress and only those things which will sustain faith and strengthen character have any real place in a Christian’s diet.

A right and nourishing diet on our part may also bless other runners in the race - *“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying.”* (Eph 4:29) This shows up another difference between the public games event and the race in which the Christian is engaged. In the latter, helping another competitor is quite allowable, even encouraged, and will not lead to disqualification or loss of ground. The ministry of exhortation and encouragement is a privilege and is open to all the Lord’s people. *“Let us cheer our homeward journey, by sweet fellowship in prayer; thus the law of Christ fulfilling, thus each other’s burdens bear”.*

## **ENCOURAGEMENT**

The apostle concludes his instructions to the Corinthian brethren with words of personal testimony and example. As a runner, he runs with a fixity of purpose, not wandering on and off the track, not looking to left or right but straight on ahead, running a disciplined race. He enlarges on this in his words to the Hebrew Christians, as we read in Hebrews 12:1,2 - *“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

In his letter, the apostle has just listed many of the great characters of Old Testament times who were pleasing to God because of their faith and who await what is described as “a better resurrection”. Their faith and faithfulness should be, he says, an incentive and encouragement to us. To illustrate this, he draws a picture for us of a crowd of spectators at the Games, looking on and urging on the contestants. To these, we might add the faithful ones, known to our God, who finished their course with joy down through the gospel age. *“A crowd of witnesses around hold thee in full survey; forget the steps already trod, and onward urge thy way.”*

There would seem to be three key points which Paul here seeks to impress on his readers and they come down to us, as it were, as the words of our apostolic running coach -

- (1) lay aside every weight
- (2) run with patience
- (3) look unto Jesus

As each year passes, it is surely good to review the lap just completed, to take to our hearts the lessons learnt, to make any reparations necessary, and then without any further backward glance, press on in the strength which our dear Saviour has promised will be provided still.

## PREPARATION

As part of the weight laid aside, the apostle tells us that he had determined to forget those things which were behind him. There would have been many features of his past life which the one-time zealous Pharisee and persecutor of Christians would, following his conversion, wish to put behind him, but all of us have memories of failures, mistakes, and so on which would be better forgotten. The habit of recrimination is a corrosive one, rather we do better to learn the lessons, make any reparations needful, then having obtained forgiveness, press on.

Present-day athletes seek to carry as little as possible in the way of unnecessary weight, such as items of clothing which would create wind resistance, they choose light weight footwear and so on. The Christian is not concerned with this type of weight but the burdens of unbecoming habits, unprofitable activities, associations or distractions, can seriously affect the running of our race. In these matters, we cannot judge others, but we need to examine our own lives to ensure we are carrying no surplus baggage. For running footwear, feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace might be a good choice, having in mind Isaiah's picture of one running over the mountains with good tidings of salvation.

Many things which are quite proper for mankind in general need to be carefully scrutinised by the Christian lest the Adversary use them to find a means of stumbling him or her. There may be areas where we are especially vulnerable and even in points where we feel strong, Satan may play on pride. So for safety in our running, let us hear again the words of the wise man - "*keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life... let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.*" (Prov 4:23,25) The only true focus for our eyes we will see shortly.

## PERSEVERANCE

Once prepared for the race, the need is for patience or endurance, without murmuring or complaint. This is another characteristic to be added to faith and follows temperance or self-control which we considered earlier. The apostle had just previously exhorted the Hebrews to renewed faith and determination; they had begun well under very severe trials, so he urges them - "*cast not away therefore your confidence which hath great recompense of reward, for you have need of patience that after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise.*" (Heb 10:36) A good start is important in any race, but perseverance must follow.

The Christian race is not what would be termed a sprint or dash, requiring a short burst of speed. Equally careful preparation and training is still needed for Christians, but their course is "unto death", that is, it is a whole-of-life experience. "*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*" (Rev 2:10) The race will surely have its difficulties, we may be disappointed with others who were once running with us, but our Heavenly Father knows and His promise is that His grace is sufficient. In his lovely benediction, Jude assures us also that our Heavenly Father is "able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." (Jude 24)

## PROSPECT

The third and final point of the apostle's exhortation to would-be runners is to run "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith", and to consider His example. Two aspects are here present, first He is our goal, on whom our eyes are to be set, the one who has gone on ahead to prepare a place in His Father's house for all who by faith complete the course, and who waits to receive each one unto Himself. It was He to whom we were first drawn by God; it was He in whose strength we set out to run the race of faith set before us. This course of trust and obedience He first faithfully completed and His perfect example is the second aspect of Paul's exhortation. Consider Him! It was our dear Saviour who endured the cross for us, who endured the opposition of sinners against Himself, but for His faithfulness was raised and is now seated at the right hand of God's throne.

The apostle advises any of us who may be inclined to grow weary or to faint by the way to consider Him and by faith to draw new strength to continue on. In Hebrews 6:20, He is spoken of as our "forerunner". In this instance the allusion is not to the footrace but to the idea of a scout or herald sent before royalty, but it again shows our Saviour as going on in advance of His footstep followers. These are to be with Him where He is, even in heaven itself; they are to be like Him and see Him as He is "*He (Christ) is the Head of the body, the church... the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.*" (Col 1:18)

But not only is our dear Saviour our perfect example, our source of strength and our goal, but He is also the only solid foundation of unity among all runners. The true unity of the Spirit, with its sevenfold basis, which the apostle Paul commends to us in Eph 4:3-6 will not come about of its own accord, by human efforts or rules, or by unanimity on every point of doctrine. Rather, it will grow as each one looks steadfastly upon Him who is the Author and Finisher of faith for every faithful runner in this great race. The closer we each look on



Him, the more we shall see Jesus in others and be closer drawn together in love.

Run the straight race, through God's good grace,

Lift up your eyes and see His face.

Life with its way before us lies.

Christ is the path, and Christ the prize.

For the Christian, each passing year presents an opportunity for further running in the race for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, another year of opportunity for faithfulness and for growth in grace and knowledge, for usefulness in service. Let us resolve then to run with patience the race set before each one of us, in full assurance of faith, confident that He who first invited us to enter upon the race will also provide the grace and strength to finish the course. His promise to natural Israel in Isaiah 40:29-31 seems so well to cover all aspects of Christian progress, and particularly in any time of stress and weariness is surely ours to claim.

*"He giveth power to the faint, and to them who have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint."*

*"Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord!"*  
*Psalms 27:14. (98/99)*

## **"Riches of Glory"**

*Ephesians 3:14-21*

The Apostle Paul was a master of the art of prayer. It would be difficult to find anywhere so profoundly deep thoughts in such a short space, as this prayer of his in Ephesians 3:14-21. Every expression is worthy of being pondered and prayed over. This prayer is intercessory, for his love for the Church was of a parental nature. Paul's tender solicitude for others puts to shame our oftentimes indifference. Being apostolic and for the Church as a whole, this intercession embraces us. Without this example we might have wondered how the great Apostle of the Gentiles would express himself in prayer, and for what he would make intercession. This prayer leaves nothing to be desired, and like our Lord's intercessory prayer in John 17, is certain to be answered. As we consider it in detail, let us each say, This is Paul's prayer for me, sure to be heard and answered if I have the faith to believe and receive.

### **"FOR THIS CAUSE" (V.14)**

This phrase connects up with verse one, which in turn is linked with the previous chapter. The intervening verses constitute one of Paul's characteristic parentheses. A part of the hidden mystery was that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs with Israel. The middle wall of partition had been broken down. Because they were now fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God, Paul offers this prayer for them. For this cause "I bow my knees unto the Father, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." We are told that it was customary for the Jews to speak of the angels as God's upper family, and of men as his lower household. Since families take their name from their progenitor, having a common father constitutes a strong bond of unity.

"That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory." We are acquainted with the idea of government grants. They may be for education, housing, road improvements, hospitals, or sometimes given to individuals for distinguished services. Naturally the amount of the grant depends on the richness or otherwise of the country in question. Paul prays that God would give us a grant, according to the riches of his glory.

How rich is God? What are his resources? His is all the silver and all the gold and the cattle on a thousand hills. How easily God could make every one of his children a millionaire. Is Paul going to ask such a grant for us? Would we have been more interested in this prayer had this been included? But money is far too poor and mean a thing for God to include in a royal grant. God's gifts are priceless - things that money cannot buy. Think of even the natural gifts that he has given to man. And remember that in this prayer we are dealing not with natural but with spiritual gifts. How fearfully and wonderfully made is man. Think of his God-given gifts of reason, memory, imagination, will, sight, hearing, and all the senses. How much in money values are these things worth? What would we take, say, in exchange for our sight or any one of the things mentioned above? How paltry is money in comparison with such gifts. As the natural man is so abundantly blessed of God, Paul does not insult the new creatures in Christ Jesus by requesting for them such a thing as money.

### **"STRENGTHENED WITH MIGHT"**

If natural grants are so wonderful, what must spiritual grants be like? With quickened interest let us go on

and see. The first thing that Paul asks is that we be “strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man.” One of the best of natural blessings is that of good health. It is necessary as a foundation for all the others. One who is always sickly and ailing is not in a position to enjoy the good things which he is otherwise in possession of. Appropriately, therefore, Paul begins here. He asks that we should be strong and robust, thoroughly able to enjoy the pleasures and discharge the duties of the spiritual life.

Nations today, as never before, are piling up armaments, not for aggressive purposes, but to enable them to keep what they already have. It is needful for their security and freedom that they be strong, faced as they are with strong and extremely powerful potential enemies. This is true of us. We have foes far too strong for us who would soon despoil us of any treasures included in a spiritual grant if the power to hold and to keep were not first given.

So valuable is this grant of power that stress is laid upon it. “Strengthened *with might*.” Paul has two prayers recorded for us in this Epistle. The first is in chapter one, and in verses 18 and 19 we read, “that ye might know what is the *exceeding greatness* of his power to usward who believe.” This power came at Pentecost, and has been in the possession of the Church ever since. Before it came, it is on record in John 20:19 that “the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled *for fear of the Jews*.” How different it was afterwards, when we read that the Scribes and Pharisees and rulers *marvelled at their boldness*.

The practical question which we should each put to ourselves in this connection is, Am I possessing and enjoying this item of God’s grant from his riches of glory? Is the inner man so strengthened that I am free from all fear, anxiety, and worry? Peace comes from the conscious possession of adequate resources. Have I abiding within, the peace that passeth all understanding, because of the conscious and constant possession of the mighty power of the spirit of God within? Faith and full surrender are the two simple conditions which will enable us to make contact with a power abundantly adequate for all our need.

#### **“THAT CHRIST MAY DWELL IN YOUR HEARTS BY FAITH”**

It must have been rather a shock for Zacchaeus in his elevated position, when Jesus stopped and looked up at him. Can you picture his amazement and rapture when the Lord said, “Make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house.” What an honour to entertain Jesus even for a passing visit, and how proud it made the despised tax gatherer. But this provision of our grant means not a passing call but an abiding presence. Just what is meant, however, by Christ dwelling in our hearts? Paul, of course, was not referring to the heart as a physical organ. In these modern times, science has revealed as never before the wonders of the mind and particularly of the subconscious mind. It tells us that the conscious to the subconscious is as the surface of the sea compared with the vast unfathomable ocean depths.

In this subconscious mind of man, God dwells, governing all the important and vital functions of our bodily organism. These he has placed entirely beyond man’s control. The beating of the heart, the respiration of the lungs, the digestive processes, etc, are all involuntary, for if otherwise, man could not keep himself alive. The same principle is illustrated in the wonderful instincts of the insects, birds, and animals. Instinct is just a little bit of the mind of God given to them. Similarly, in ways beyond our understanding, Christ dwells in us, in our subconscious as well as our conscious mind. Perhaps the radio affords the best illustration of this. What takes place in the broadcasting room is reproduced in our own home just as if it were an extension of the Broadcasting House. Distance is annihilated. In like manner we may think of the Lord by means of the carrier wave of the Holy Spirit, radiating his thoughts of light, life, and love to us. Thus he dwells in our hearts just as two intimate friends dwell in each other by close affinity and friendship.

The Lord can dwell in us only as his mind is reproduced in us, just as it is with the radio program. We must think his thoughts, experience his feelings, share his sentiments, and work towards his objectives. Psychologists tell us that our conscious minds are being continually stimulated by our subconscious, whether in good or bad directions. Similarly, if our subconscious mind is kept on the Lord’s wave length, the result will be that our conscious mind will be continually stimulated by him. We have all experienced how a great joy or a great grief sheds a brightness or casts a shadow over the inner life even when we are not thinking consciously of it. So is it with the indwelling of the Lord. With Christ dwelling in our hearts by means of our faith, there is produced an abiding sense of the sunshine of peace and joy. An inward music and rhythm in the soul is experienced. There is a sabbath feeling of holy rest, even when we are not consciously thinking of him. Thus, we are strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man, *in order that* Christ might dwell in our hearts by faith.

#### **“THAT YE, BEING ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE”**

There are two metaphors here: that of a tree firmly rooted in the soil, and that of a house solidly built on a sure foundation. It is rather unusual to speak of love as a foundation. Generally faith is regarded as the foundation and love as the superstructure. There are, however, pictures within pictures, and love in its turn can be looked upon as a basis for other blessings. To be rooted and grounded in love means, in the first place, to be estab-

lished in the sure confidence of God's love for us, regardless of all circumstances. As Whittier has expressed it in his poem, "The Eternal Goodness":

"Yet in the maddening maze of things,  
And tossed by storm and flood;  
To one fixed stake my spirit clings,  
I know that God is good."

This is really the essence of the message of Jesus, whose mission was to reveal God as our Father. What a dreadful thing it would be if God were other than Love? Just as it would be if a child should begin to doubt if father or mother were other than kind and loving. Taking our Heavenly Father's love for granted, as the natural child does, has the greatest stabilizing effect on our lives. In every experience, pleasing or painful, we can say, in line with what Jesus has told us, "My Father knoweth what things I have need of." In this way we can be immovably rooted and grounded in his love. This is what we might call the subjective aspect of the matter.

There is, however, also another, an objective aspect which concerns not God's love for us, but our love for him and for others. Love for God is demonstrated, not by sentiment and emotional feeling, but by obedience to his revealed will. Jesus himself gave us this as a test, as recorded in John 14:21: "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." Going by this rule, it is easy to gauge the measure of our love for God. One of Jesus' outstanding commandments is the new commandment which he repeatedly emphasized, that we love one another as he loved us. How simple and sure is this index of our love for Christ.

We cannot, however, possess this love for God and for our brethren in Christ without having a sympathetic love for all. Do good unto all as you have opportunity, is the apostolic injunction. In this prayer Paul requests for us that we be rooted and grounded in love as a general and all-comprehensive principle. It is the farmer's practice to have a regular rotation of crops because of the fact that each particular species takes from the soil the elements suited for its growth and development. Paul tells us here that the only soil that suits our growth, and which never becomes impoverished, is the soil of love.

But Paul uses not only the picture of a tree rooted and grounded in love. He suggests here also the metaphor of some great building which demands a firm foundation. He is going on to speak of a superstructure in his next item of the royal grant, which is such that only love is capable of sustaining its weight. Before passing on to its consideration let us impress upon ourselves the importance of keeping our hearts free from all forms of lovelessness, encouraging only thoughts of love for others embodied in loving words and loving deeds. We remember Dickens' immortal "Christmas Carol" and the wonderful transformation of "skinflint Scrooge." Our aim must be to eliminate all Scrooge-like tendencies, and to encourage the Christmas spirit of peace and good will in our hearts all the year round.

### COMPREHENDING THE LOVE OF CHRIST

"That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height."

You will notice that the above quotation is followed by the expression, "and to know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge." There seem to be two ideas here, the breadth, length, depth, and height; *and* to know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge. If there are two ideas, to what does Paul refer when speaking of the breadth, length, depth, and height? Expositors differ in their opinions, but we have a guide to Paul's meaning in his prayer recorded in the first chapter of Ephesians. These two prayers are complementary the one to the other, and the parallel in chapter one to this expression of dimensions in chapter three, seems to be in verse 18: "The eyes of your understanding [*Diaglott*, "heart"] being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

Reading this text as "the eyes of your heart," gives us the same idea as in chapter three of *love* being the foundation for this particular knowledge. This point of view is confirmed by the fact that the mystery and magnitude of the High Calling is revealed in Ephesians more clearly than anywhere else in, the New Testament. So true is it the case that it makes this Epistle what we might call the Highlands of the Bible. How profoundly exalted are the ideas in these expressions contained in chapter one, verses 3 to 5, and 9: "Blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ"; "according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world"; "predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself"; "having made known unto us the mystery of his will, that in the dispensation of the fullness of times, he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth."

In the chapter in Volume One of *Studies in the Scriptures* on the "Mystery Hid from Ages," there is a diagram of a pyramid with the top stone detached, showing a perfect pyramid in itself. This illustrates beautifully the idea in this verse, Ephesians 1:10, of "gathering together in one all things in Christ." Everything by and by will be conformed to the perfect lines and angles of the top stone. But the wonder of the *mystery* of the

breadth, length, depth, and height of it is introduced by Paul in the next verse: "In whom (Christ) also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Chosen in him before the foundation of the world, the Church are to be sharers in the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, as his Bride and Joint-heirs.

With the background of this Epistle in mind, we have little difficulty in interpreting these expressions of breadth, length, depth, and height. As we, too, stand all astonished with wonder, we also feel the need for such expressions. How broad is the Divine Plan of the Ages, the eternal purpose of God? How wide and comprehensive is its scope? It embraces all things in heaven and in earth. Its length, how far-reaching! Centred in the Logos, it reaches from the beginning to the end of time: from before the foundation of the world to the ages to come and beyond. Its depth? From the uttermost, reaching down and taking hold of those who were dead in trespasses and in sins. Its height? To the uttermost. Though by nature the children of wrath, the wonder of the promise is: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me *in my throne*." Verily truth is stranger than fiction, and this call of the Church is in comparison to the most wonderful fairy tale ever written, as the light of the sun at noonday is to that of a candle. (The Herald)

*(To be continued)*

## **At the Feet of Jesus**

*(A Christmas/New Year Meditation)*

*"When they (the wise men) were come into the house, they saw the young child (Jesus) with Mary, His mother; and fell down and worshipped Him; and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh." (Matt 2:11)*

One of the interesting records in Scripture in connection with the birth of our Lord is that concerning the wise men from the east, who came seeking the newborn Jesus, the King of the Jews, with presents of myrrh, frankincense and gold to lay at His feet. We should be able to gather from this incident some valuable suggestions respecting our obligations to the great Messiah, and the propriety of renewing these and increasing them as we approach the opening of another year.

The wise men, according to tradition three in number, arrived in Jerusalem and began making enquiries about the newly-born Jewish king. The news soon spread, and the holy city was in commotion because, according to the prophets, Messiah, promised for centuries, was due to appear about that time, as we read, "all men were in expectation of Him." This expectancy would naturally be heightened by the coming of the wise men, or magi, from a far country, supposedly Persia, to pay homage to Messiah.

God chooses as messengers of His good tidings not only wise men and women, but reverential ones, people of faith. His choice of these messengers from the east to arouse the people of Judea and Jerusalem was no exception to this rule. Although heathen men, in the sense of not being of the nation with which God had so far dealt and to whom He had so far confined His gracious promises, they were, nevertheless, good men, reverential men, who earnestly sought to enquire as to the coming blessing of peace on earth and good will amongst men.

When they found the Saviour, they were not daunted by the fact that His home surroundings were of the humbler sort and they proceeded to worship Him in three senses of the word:-

- (1) They fell before Him, prostrating themselves, thus physically expressing their reverence.
- (2) They worshipped Him in their hearts and with the tongue gave expression to their rejoicing and adoration.
- (3) They opened their treasure box and presented to Him gifts appropriate to royalty; myrrh representing submission, frankincense, praise and gold, obedience.

With what degree of reverence have we bowed the knee, prostrated ourselves, given outward evidence through presentation of our bodies in full submission to our great King? For we not only know of Him but we have heard, not uncertainly, but with the voice of Him who speaks from heaven, of His great and precious promises for us and for all mankind. Have we offered our myrrh? Have we shown a willingness for service even to the extent of bitter experience, a joy to honour our King to the extent of suffering with Him? Have we worshipped Him in heart, not with an outward form of godliness without the power? In other words, have we offered Him the frankincense of heart adoration, appreciation and gratitude?

Have we laid at His feet our earthly substance, our gold? Have we realised that 'all that we have and all that we are' are offerings far too small to be worthy of acceptance by the great King, Emmanuel? Is this our present attitude? Will it be our attitude through the coming days, even until the end of our present pilgrimage? The apostle's words, "present your bodies living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God, your reasonable service", apply not only to the primary consecration of our hearts to the Lord, but are, as the scriptures express it, a covenant of sacrifice, an agreement to die daily to self and to be alive daily more and more in the Lord's

service to glorify Him in our bodies and spirits which are His.

If this has not been our attitude in the past, should it not be our future course? Either way, should we not also seek to continue to grow in knowledge, in love, in service, in worship and in the privilege of laying our little all at the feet of Him who is our gracious heavenly King, whose kingdom is soon to be established, and who has invited us to sit with Him in His throne, to share His glory, to participate as spiritual Israel in the great work of pouring out blessings upon the world of mankind, of every kindred, people, nation and tongue?

When we give our hearts, this includes all that we have and are in the highest and noblest and fullest sense. That which was illustrated in the three gifts of the wise men is all comprehended in the brief statement, "My son, give me thy heart!" Whoever give their hearts to the Lord fully and unreservedly, give their bodies, their worship and reverence and praise, their earthly treasure, time, talents, influence, money - their all - to be used in joyful service for the glory of their King.

The challenge today to those who have heard the Divine invitation but have never yet taken this step is to make a prompt response, glad in the knowledge that God is willing to accept their offering and service, and for the opportunity still open for them to present themselves now under the covering of the merit of the dear Redeemer's "robe of righteousness". This, the apostle declares, is their "reasonable service", by so doing, they may have a share in the gracious hope before all the Lord's people of a transcendent reward of glory, honour and immortality.

The challenge to those who have already accepted the Lord's favour, who have already presented their bodies as living sacrifices, who have already given the Lord their hearts, is to ensure that the sacrifice once placed upon the altar must remain there. The longer it remains there, the more joyful will be the service, the more appreciated every opportunity for self-sacrifice, the more thankful the heart and the more rich the experience of the peace of God which passes all understanding.

I give my heart, I long to love Thee better  
Than ever I have done in years before;  
That all I do may be a joy, not duty,  
Lord Jesus, grant it, may I love Thee more.  
(Charlotte Murray)