

The Dawn

A Herald of Christ's Presence

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“His Government and Peace”

*“For unto us a
child is born, unto
us a son is given:
and the
government shall
be upon his
shoulder. . . . Of the
increase of his
government and
peace there shall
be no end.”*

—Isaiah 9:6,7

WITHIN THESE PAGES DURING the year 2017, we have highlighted many of the headline news stories of this country and of the world. The end of the year is now approaching, and the beginning of 2018 draws nigh. The sincere hopes of many at the start of 2017 were perhaps lofty, as they contemplated the desire for peace, security, and happiness, both at home and abroad. There was, no doubt, even anticipation among some that this year would, perchance, be different from past disappointments in this regard. Has it been so? A brief recap of world events in 2017, many of which have been cited during the course of the year on these pages, likely provides the answer:

—The inauguration of this country’s 45th president, Donald Trump, in January, and the resulting charges and counter-charges of collusion and interference in the 2016 election.

—Renewed threats and fears of cyber-terrorism and hacking, especially at the top levels of government.

—Repeated, failed attempts by Congress to repeal and replace current health care laws with new ones, though at the same time admitting that the existing system needs changes made.

—A deadly chemical attack by the government of Syria against its own people in April, highlighting the ongoing civil war which has raged there for over five years, taking the lives of nearly half a million people.

—The related question of the United States’ involvement in the affairs of other nations—to intervene or isolate ourselves—which continues to perplex our leadership and citizens.

—Changes in religious adherence, with Christianity declining and Islam increasing, but most notably, atheism and agnosticism now ranking third in the world.

—Society’s continuing moral decay, where it now seems that every kind of lifestyle is deemed acceptable.

—Escalating violence on various fronts, such as has occurred because of increasing racial tensions, frequent terrorist attacks in various parts of the world, and the growing threat of nuclear conflict with North Korea or possibly Iran.

—The ongoing immigration debate, and the related argument concerning construction of a wall at the United States and Mexico border to prevent illegal entrance into this country.

—The phenomenon of “fake news” and “leaks,” with government leaders on all sides making claims and

counter-claims, leaving the people to wonder—what is truth?

—Natural disasters, such as fires in the northern plains and in California, devastating hurricanes—Harvey, Irma and Maria—and major earthquakes in Mexico, all of which have taken many lives, and caused billions of dollars in damage.

—The October mass shootings in Las Vegas, which left over fifty dead and hundreds wounded, and was the worst act of its kind in modern United States history.

—Most recently, the ongoing controversy surrounding the United States flag and the national anthem, and the question of appropriate forums for Americans to show dissent.

We can surely ascertain from the foregoing recap of the year's major news events that any hopes for a more peaceful, secure and happy world in 2017 have long since been dashed. The trend concerning man's ability to properly rule over himself continues downward. This is true both among leadership of the nations as well as with the people. At every level, and in all facets of present institutions—political, social, economic, and religious—current world conditions are resulting in increased uproar, instability and gloominess among earth's inhabitants.

Thanks be to God, however, that such will not be true of world conditions when Jesus is the sovereign Ruler, the "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." (Rev. 19:16) How appropriate it is, at this season of the year, and with current world conditions as they are, to review the blessed assurance of God's promises centered in Jesus, whose birth much of the world will celebrate this month.

CHRIST'S GOVERNMENT TO INCREASE

Under Christ's righteous rule, the "increase of his government" will also mean a corresponding manifestation of peace and goodwill. This will be a monumental change for mankind. Never in the history of man has the expanding influence of a government brought with it the assurance of lasting peace. Had the kings of Israel been obedient to the laws of God, that kingdom would have been an exception, but they were not obedient. When we compare the better with the worse, there have been some noble rulers who have sought the best interests of the people over whom they have ruled. Even these, however, have been tainted with selfishness, and have lacked the necessary wisdom to be entrusted safely with unlimited influence in world affairs.

Today a divided, troubled and fearful world bears stark testimony to the failure of all human efforts to govern the nations properly. The despair of the people which has resulted from this failure haunts the human race and is as a plague which is robbing mankind everywhere of genuine peace and joy. In the face of this dire extremity, the people continue to turn in every direction to seek a way out of their dilemma. The vast majority, however, do not realize as yet that there is only one way out, which is God's way, the way of his kingdom, in which Jesus will be the King.

How meaningful should be the Christmas message this year to those who can grasp its real significance and have faith in all that it implies. It should mean much more than merely the singing of beautiful carols or the display of attractive decorations or the

exchange of simple gifts. These, at the most, should be but reminders of the greater event which we commemorate by them. This was God's gift to the world, the gift of a Savior, a Redeemer, and a King who is soon to rule all nations—indeed, God's "unspeakable gift." (II Cor. 9:15) At no time has this knowledge been so important as a basis for hope in the hearts and lives of the hopeless. At no time has there ever been a greater opportunity on the part of those who understand the real meaning of Jesus' birth to herald wide the glorious message of his kingdom, that it is soon to be manifested for the blessing of all nations and the solution of all the problems of a dying world.—Gen. 22:18; Ps. 22:27; Acts 3:25

SCRIPTURAL TESTIMONY

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given," wrote the prophet. (Isa. 9:6) This is one of the many prophecies concerning the birth of Jesus, that glorious one who was hailed by the angel. We recall those momentous words, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:10,11) Indeed, the promised child was born, the foretold son was given, and, as the promised Christ, or Messiah, he was to be the Savior of the world.

Then, to emphasize the importance of the event and to explain further its significance, "a multitude of the heavenly host" were heard "praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (Luke 2:13,14) Hardly

any passage in the Bible is more familiar than this one. It will be repeated by millions again this year. Throughout the centuries, however, and more so now than ever, it has seemed merely the expression of mankind's wishful thinking. It serves as an inspiration for a few days, but is soon forgotten for another year as the world continues on its downward course.

In reading the prophecy concerning the birth of Jesus, the Son whom God would give, many have failed to notice the prophetic assurance that "the government shall be upon his shoulder." The world-wide kingdom of peace and life which is guaranteed by divine power will be a blessed reality at exactly the due time foreordained by God, and will become operative by the authority vested in his Son, Christ Jesus. By contrast, for many centuries the view of most has been that the world must bring about its own kingdom of peace by human efforts. Only those who have seen the matter as it is set forth in the Scriptures, and have exercised full confidence in the promises of God, can be truly blessed by the Christmas message.

To make sure that we understand the thought that the kingdom government will rest upon Christ's shoulder, and not man's, the prophet adds, "The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this." (Isa. 9:7) "This," which will be performed by the zeal of the Lord, refers to those things that the prophet has spoken of in his preceding words. Let us note what the prophecy says.

First, there is the promise of the child, the son, who would be born and upon whose shoulder the responsibility of the new world government would

rest. Jesus was this child. His birth was not by the will of man, for the fulfillment of this part of the prophecy was accomplished by God's direction and power. When the angels sang of peace on earth and goodwill toward men, they meant that through this one and through the kingdom in which he would in due time rule, God would bring peace to the nations. They meant, also, that his birth was an expression of God's goodwill toward men, not that men would suddenly and of their own volition begin to exercise goodwill toward one another.

“WONDERFUL, COUNSELLOR, THE MIGHTY GOD”

“His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” (Isa. 9:6) All of these titles are ascribed to Jesus by God and are indicative of the various ways in which the “increase of his government” will be manifested for the blessing of the people. The title “Counsellor,” for example, aptly describes his role as “mediator between God and men.” (I Tim. 2:5) One of the fundamental causes of all suffering, death, and problems in the earth is the fact that the human race is estranged from God through rebellion against his law. One of the functions of Christ's reign will be to bring about reconciliation between God and men. Peace with God is a necessary prerequisite to peace among men. As long as men are at enmity with God and disobedient to his law, they will be enemies of one another.

The first step toward the reconciliation of the world by Jesus was the sacrifice of his life as man's Redeemer. This outstanding act of love for the subjects over which he was later to be Ruler is one of the

things which entitles him to be called “Wonderful.” The rulers of this world are considered wonderful if, through their ability as leaders, they can induce their subjects to die for them and for the cause they represent. Jesus, however, reversed this procedure. The foundation of his greatness, and of his world rulership, was laid by his own sacrifice, the giving of his own life that his subjects might live.

It is no wonder, then, that Jesus merits the title, “The mighty God.” This does not mean that he is the Almighty God, the Heavenly Father and Creator. It simply means that Jehovah has exalted him to such a high position in the carrying out of the divine plan for the reconciliation and salvation of the human race that he is to be recognized as God, a mighty one, to whom honor is to be accorded. We, his followers of this present Gospel Age, are bidden to honor the Son even as we honor the Father. (John 5:23) During Christ’s kingdom reign, mankind is prophetically represented as saying of this mighty one, this divinely provided Counsellor, “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us.” (Isa. 25:9) The thought seems to be that the people will come to recognize Jesus as the “mighty God,” through whose death and kingdom rule they are being reconciled to Jehovah and saved from the clutches of sin and death.

“EVERLASTING FATHER”

The thought of salvation from death is further emphasized by the title, “The everlasting Father.” Christ Jesus is the one who will give everlasting life to the people. The word “Father” means life-giver. No other ruler in the earth has even attempted to

give life to the people. Yet, how essential this is to the lasting peace and joy of mankind. We might visualize a world enjoying all the blessings of peace and security that human governments have ever promised, yet it would still be a sin-sick and dying world. However, the “increase” of Christ’s influence among the nations will be so widespread and all-comprehensive that even the great enemy Death will crumble before him in defeat and destruction.

“He must reign,” Paul writes, “till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” (I Cor. 15:25,26) Think what this will mean to a dying race! The destruction of death, while it will first be manifested in the restoration to health of the living, will not stop there. All the victims of this great enemy—the billions who have been struck down throughout all the ages of the past—are to be awakened from the sleep of death. Thus, they too will take their places in the kingdom arrangement, and have the opportunity to gain everlasting life through obedience to the just and righteous laws of that new order.

Here again we are reminded that the responsibility for the fulfillment of all the wonderful things promised through the kingdom of Christ will be “upon his shoulder,” and that “the zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.” If we were thinking of these wonderful promises of the Bible from the standpoint of what human beings might be able to do, our thoughts and our wishes would be but vain imaginations. It is not so, however, when we take God’s viewpoint. Jesus’ birth was a miracle. During his brief ministry he demonstrated what miracles of healing and of raising the dead are possible when

divine power is employed. He was raised from death by a miracle. The “zeal of the LORD of hosts” performed this, and we have the blessed assurance that divine power will also be used for the restoration of all the dead. In a world in which death is universal, how blessed is the promise of the time coming when “there shall be no more death.”—Rev. 21:4

“PRINCE OF PEACE”

The prophet also describes Jesus as “The Prince of Peace.” We have already noted that in his role as Mediator, or Counsellor, Jesus will establish peace between God and men. This peace will be based upon obedience to the divine laws of righteousness and justice. All those who are obedient to God will be at peace with one another, for they will all have acknowledged the one supreme authority. The Prophet Micah tells us that “people shall flow unto it,” recognizing the authority of Christ’s kingdom. Being taught the Lord’s ways, nations “shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks, . . . neither shall they learn war any more.” (Mic. 4:1-3) When this prophecy is fulfilled there surely will be “peace on earth,” not because men have devised a way of living at peace with one another, but because of God’s goodwill toward men in providing a Prince of Peace to teach them the principles of justice and love embodied in his laws.

This peace on earth established by The Prince of Peace will be more than peace among nations. It will also be peace within nations—economic peace, symbolized by the expression: “They shall dwell—every man—under his own vine and under his own fig-tree, with none to make them afraid.” (vs. 4, *Rotherham*

Emphasized Bible) It will mean peace in every community and in every home. It will mean peace of heart and mind, which will never be disturbed again by the fear of war, or poverty, or sickness, or even death. Nothing will be permitted to “hurt nor destroy,” says the prophet, in all that holy kingdom. (Isa. 11:9) In this promise, the reason ascribed for the conditions of peace, tranquility, and safety assured by the reign of Christ is that “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”

When the earth is filled with the knowledge of God and the people live in harmony with that knowledge, they will enjoy peace among themselves and within themselves. This peace will be the outgrowth of their peace with God, which they will have found through the acceptance of the redemptive work of Christ. Upon this basis, and through obedience to the divine standards of righteousness, man will live in peace, security and happiness, and gain everlasting life.

ON THE THRONE OF DAVID

Isaiah also prophesies that the reign of The Prince of Peace will be upon the “throne of David, . . . to order it, and to establish it.” (Isa. 9:7) This is a reaffirmation of the promise that the Messianic kingdom reign would come through the lineage of David, and that his dominion would be reestablished by God through Christ. The kings of Israel were recognized by God as representing him, and the nation of Israel was his kingdom. Of Solomon, we read that he “sat on the throne of the LORD as king instead of David his Father.”—I Chron. 29:23

However, this arrangement ceased when King Zedekiah was overthrown and the nation was taken into captivity in Babylon. "Remove the diadem," the prophet said, "and take off the crown. . . . It shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him." (Ezek. 21:26,27) Jesus is the one referred to in this prophecy as having the right to reestablish the throne, or kingdom, which was then overthrown. From this standpoint, his rulership will be upon the throne of David.

From the time God's typical kingdom was overthrown until Christ begins his reign over the nations, the earth is without a divinely established government. From this standpoint, the reestablishment of the throne of David by Christ Jesus is the prophetic manner of assuring us of the divine authority to rule which is vested in him. While the kingdom of Christ will be vastly more powerful and more far-reaching than was the typical kingdom of Israel, it will in many respects be like it. God was Israel's Lawgiver, and if the people had obeyed those laws, and if their kings had administered them properly, they would have been blessed indeed.

KINGDOM ADMINISTRATION

The laws of God's kingdom will also be divine laws, to be administered by Jesus, the divine King. He will have associated with him those who have proved their worthiness of that high position by suffering and dying as he suffered and died. These will come forth in the "first resurrection" to live and reign with Jesus. (Rev. 20:6) Thus we are assured that all the rulers in the new kingdom will be righteous administrators of God's law. Their earthly

representatives, described as “princes in all the earth,” and who “obtained a good report through faith,” will also have been previously trained and prepared for their positions of responsibility. (Ps. 45:16; Heb. 11:39) Upon their resurrection from the dead, they will be capable of administering the visible phase of the new kingdom wisely and in harmony with the righteous laws and instructions which will be given to the people through them.

The throne of David—symbol of divine rulership—will be established, not temporarily, but as the prophet says, “from henceforth even for ever.” (Isa. 9:7) The mediatorial phase of the kingdom, under the Christ, will continue for a thousand years, sufficiently long enough to restore the human race to life and to full harmony with God. In the complete sense of the word it will not be until the close of the reign of Christ that the prayer, “Thy kingdom come; thy will be done in earth,” shall be fully answered. Christ’s rulership will be the means by which this prayer will be answered. When he shall have completed the work of reconciling the world to God, Christ will, as Paul explains, turn over the kingdom to the Father. (I Cor. 15:24-28) Then the supreme and everlasting reign of God himself shall have come, and his will shall be recognized and obeyed in earth even as it is in heaven.

Truly, the prophet was right when he wrote concerning Jesus that “of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.” It will have no end because it will not stop short of removing from earth every element of unrighteousness and every enemy of God and men. He will extend his sphere of influence until everything which has disturbed

the peace, security and happiness of the people and robbed them of God's blessings shall be destroyed. This is the blessed hope which may be ours now, even as this most tumultuous year comes to an end. With full faith in the promises of God's Word, let us once more commemorate the birth of The Prince of Peace. ■

OBITUARIES

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

Sister Joan Dudney, Hartford, CT—September 23.

Age, 101

Brother John Mercer, Kensington, Australia—October 1. Age, 86

Brother Ebe Manohar, Coimbatore, India—November 7. Age, 70

Sister Florica Cap, Cluj, Romania—November 8. Age, 57

Sister Anne Boychuk, Winnipeg, Canada—November 13. Age, 81

Brother Daniel Larson, Chicago, IL—November 13. Age, 77

Sister Eloise Long, Zanesville, OH—November 15. Age, 94

Brother Ralph Gottshall, Clearwater, FL—November 16. Age, 101

Faith in Jesus

Key Verse: *“On the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.”*

—Acts 3:16, *New American Standard Bible*

Selected Scripture:
Acts 3:11-21

supernatural power. Peter immediately gave credit to God, as he replied to the people, “Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus. . . . But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and . . . put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses.”—vss. 12-15, *NASB*

THE SETTING OF OUR KEY

Verse is the healing of a lame man, one of the first post-Pentecostal miracles. This healing is made all the more dramatic by the knowledge that the man had been disabled since his birth. He was not an accomplice previously planted in the crowd to stage a healing. This miracle was genuine. In his exuberant joy the healed man went about leaping, praising God, and clinging to Peter and John in deep gratitude.

—Acts 3:1-8

The crowds of people, who had known the lame man all his life, began to gather around Peter and John. These men were wonderful miracle workers, imbued with

With these words, and continuing in our Key Verse, Peter testified in truth that it was through Jesus that this man was healed. Faith in Jesus' name was the critical element in this miracle, in order that he might be established as our great High Priest, Author of our faith, and Savior of mankind. Thus Jesus was put forward to the people, as the newly formed Christian Church would be founded upon him, and no other. "No man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."—I Cor. 3:11, *NASB*

The Scriptures state: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." (Acts 4:12; Gal. 3:26) Indeed, faith in Jesus is essential, yet not all people have accepted the name of Jesus as their Savior in the present life. What will become of them?

Peter, continuing with his sermon, spoke of the time when Jesus would return and begin the work of restoring the whole human family. "And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."—Acts 3:20,21

It is then that three mighty Biblical doctrines will be displayed in full power—Ransom, Resurrection, and Restitution. Jesus' ransom will provide for the resurrection of every human being that has ever lived, and the opportunity for full restitution to life. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. 2:9-11) We look forward to that time when all will have faith in Jesus, and confess his name. ■

Faith to Discern

Key Verse: “*Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord.*”

—*Acts 13:12, New American Standard Bible*

Selected Scripture:
Acts 13:1-12

FAITH TO DISCERN IS THE focus of our Key Verse. Faith is not gullible acceptance of unsubstantiated claims. That is credulity. Faith is defined as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Heb. 11:1) The Bible supplies harmonious evidences of yet unseen things as well as the substance of all our hopes for both the present and the future. Together, these provide us solid faith to discern the truth.

Barnabas and Saul, whose name was changed to Paul, had been set apart by the Holy Spirit to do a great evangelistic work. They would begin an unprecedented missionary journey to carry the Gospel message westward. By ship they sailed from Seleucia, Antioch’s port, and soon arrived at the eastern shores of Cyprus. (Acts 13:2-4) They followed the arrangement that God put in place, going first to the synagogues of the Jews and preaching the Gospel. Paul acted in harmony with his statement, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”—Rom. 1:16, *NASB*

Paul and Barnabas’ ministry in Cyprus was unopposed until they came to Paphos. There they encountered Elymas, a Jewish false prophet and magician, who evidently relied

on the help of Sergius Paulus, the local proconsul, to gain business. The proconsul was an intelligent man, and had the makings of a discerning faith. If he accepted the message of Barnabas and Paul, Elymas' livelihood would be jeopardized. Thus, Elymas opposed the two missionaries and tried to dissuade Sergius Paulus from hearing and accepting the Gospel.—Acts 13:6-8

Discerning the evil in Elymas' character, Paul took a bold initiative. Filled with the Holy Spirit, he straightly looked at him, saying, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord? Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time. And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand. Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord."—vss. 10-12, *NASB*

Sergius Paulus' belief was enabled by the power of the Gospel that came to him from the Lord through Paul. Today, consecrated believers continue to be empowered by the strength received from their discerning faith in God's Word. Paul offers guidance to those who are weak in faith. He says, "Though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil."—Heb. 5:12-14, *NASB*

Let us practice and apply the principles of Scripture daily, in all aspects of life, that we may attain spiritual strength and maturity. Our sensibilities will thus be guided by a God-given ability to discern between good and evil. We thank God for the gift of a discerning faith. ■

Faith to Persevere

Key Verses: *“After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”*

—Acts 14:21,22,
New American
Standard Bible

Selected Scripture:
Acts 14:8-11,19-23

well, said with a loud voice, Stand upright on your feet. And he leaped up and began to walk.”—Acts 14:8-10, *NASB*

The populace exploded with enthusiasm. Paul and Barnabas were proclaimed to be human forms of the gods Hermes and Zeus. The people immediately prepared to

WE MARVEL AT THE GRACE

of perseverance that God gave to Paul. Our Key Verses record his extraordinary degree of commitment to Christ. The setting of our lesson is Lystra, a prominent city whose citizens were accustomed to worshipping the gods of Rome. While there, Paul and Barnabas became instant celebrities by healing a lame man. As was the case with Peter’s public demonstration of healing recorded shortly after Pentecost, this man was also known to be disabled from his birth.

We read, “At Lystra a man was sitting who had no strength in his feet, lame from his mother’s womb, who had never walked. This man was listening to Paul as he spoke, who, when he had fixed his gaze on him and had seen that he had faith to be made

offer sacrifices to them because the temple of Zeus was nearby. When Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their robes, rushed out into the crowd, and with much difficulty restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them.—vss. 11-18

The crowd's fickle favor soon turned against Barnabas and Paul. "Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. But while the disciples stood around him, he got up and entered the city. The next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe." (vss. 19,20, *NASB*) The courage and godly resolve of Paul in this instance is a landmark in Christian faith. His example of perseverance in service to God and spreading the Gospel of Christ, even in the face of death, should resonate deeply in the hearts of all who now believe.

After much success in Derbe, Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, "strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." (vss. 21,22, *NASB*) The brethren of the Early Church knew about Paul's tribulations. When he spoke, it was not of empty platitudes, but of proven principles based on persevering faith.

Paul's experiences flavored many of his writings. One of the most encouraging of these in regard to perseverance is found in his epistle to the Romans. "We also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 5:3-5, *NASB*) A lifetime of Christian perseverance will not leave any of us disappointed, because our hope is well founded in the Scriptures. May we, by the grace of God, have faith to persevere to the end of our earthly sojourn. ■

Faithful Seekers of the King

Key Verse: *“After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”*
—**Matthew 2:11,**
New American Standard Bible

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 2:1-12

For example, Melchizedek, king of Salem, was used of God although he was not of the lineage of Abraham. (Gen. 14:18-20) Likewise, the Prophet Balaam, who was a Midianite, was used of the Lord for a specific purpose. Despite this man’s waywardness and eventual conspiracy against Israel, he was inspired to prophesy of the coming Savior. He declared, “I see him, but not now; I behold him, but

THE SCENE UNVEILED IN

our Key Verse is iconic in Christian belief. Wise men from the east sought the Babe born in Bethlehem. Finding him, they bowed to the ground and worshiped, presenting gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. We do not know for certain what their religious heritage was. Regardless of this, God gave them to understand this monumental event, and they exhibited faith that the sign of the star would lead them to the newborn king.

Although God deals in a very special way with his chosen people, there are those outside the pale of the chosen ones who also receive favor from God. For

not near; A star shall come forth from Jacob, A scepter shall rise from Israel.”—Num. 24:17, *NASB*

Perhaps this prophecy of a star and the coming of the Savior was known to the wise men. It may be that this inspired their search for Jesus. Whatever signs or sources they had studied, it was God who led them to the young child by his own method. They first came to Herod who, upon hearing the reason for their journey, tried to use the wise men as agents to find the favored child. He sent them to Bethlehem saying, “Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him.” (Matt. 2:8, *NASB*) Worship, however, was not what Herod had in mind. Rather, it was murder.

When the wise men left Herod, “the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.” (vss. 9,10, *NASB*) Their gifts were very appropriate for this special child. Gold was given in recognition of his kingly office, frankincense in association with his praise and offering up of himself, and myrrh for the sufferings he would experience.

After finishing their tribute, the wise men departed by a way that God directed. “Being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.” (vs. 12) We rejoice to realize that God guided them on their journey to find Jesus, overruled their meeting with him, and directed their path as they departed from his presence. So it is with us as faithful seekers of the King. We see the paths in our lives that eventually led us to him. We experienced the joy of meeting with him by faith. Our paths are blessed and directed of the Lord as we go forth to serve him in life. Wise men, imbued with knowledge given by God, still seek him. Let us ever be faithful seekers of our Lord and Master, Christ Jesus. ■

Faith to Unite

Key Verses:
“Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”
—Ephesians 4:1-3,
New American Standard Bible

Selected Scripture:
Ephesians 4:1-16

love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” “These things I command you, that ye love one another.” “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a

THE URGING OF OUR KEY

Verses is to walk in a manner worthy of the calling which we have received. Paul says we must first have humility, gentleness, patience, and tolerance for one another, in love. Then, he continues, we must be diligent to maintain unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. It also requires faith to unite. Some have, in error, created “creeds of men” to unite Christian people in faith. These have proved unsuccessful, because the creeds are of human origin. No carefully worded list of what must be believed has ever brought about true unity. It may only be obtained through the manifestation of a proper and loving spirit.

This theme is repeated often in Scripture. “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye

pure heart fervently.” “This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.”—John 13:34; 15:17; I Pet. 1:22; I John 3:23

With the foregoing verses in mind, it is distressing that consecrated believers divide over doctrines that often have little or no scriptural foundation. Paul reminds us of what the essential elements of Christian unity consist: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.” (Eph. 4:4-6, *NASB*) Beyond these, the apostle adds no other basis for unity.

Each believer is given grace from the Lord according to the measure of Christ’s gift. (vs. 7) In other words, the gift of grace works differently in each of God’s children. No two are exactly alike in appearance or in mind. Because we are different, conflicts arise. Love for one another must be applied in conflicts so that unity of the Spirit may result. The brethren at Corinth wrestled with the problem of divisions. Paul counseled them, “By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. . . . If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.”—I Cor. 12:13-18, *NASB*

The church was given apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Their ministry to us is for the “equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God.” (Eph. 4:11-13, *NASB*) May we be equipped to become mature, loving, patient, and sound in faith. Being sound in the faith, let us stand united as a new year begins! ■

Shining Forth as Lights

*“Ye are the light of
the world. A city
that is set on an
hill cannot be hid.”
—Matthew 5:14*

IN THIS SERIES OF STUDIES

concerning the search for God's people, we have considered many of the experiences associated with the spread of the Gospel message. Beginning with Jesus' earthly ministry, continuing with the work of the apostles and the formation of the Early Church, we have examined the Scriptural events which framed this important period in God's plan. We have seen that the search for those who would appreciate and love the “good news” centered in Christ began in a very small way, in the regions of Judaea and Galilee.

This search soon spread to Samaria and other adjoining regions. It went south to parts of Africa, north into Asia and Asia Minor, and finally west to Europe. It was the tireless efforts and great sacrifice of many dedicated servants of God which contributed to its success, as shown by the large number of individual ecclesias which were established as a result of their endeavors. Without the work and ministry

of these faithful men and women, the search for God's people would likely have come to a halt soon after it started.

We are thankful, however, that this has not been the case. As noted in the opening lesson of this series, the search for those who will be of the Christ class has progressed from the time of our Lord's First Advent until our day. We also note again that the object of this search has not changed from what it was in the days of the apostles. The completion of this special work of selecting and preparing the footstep followers of the Master will be followed by God's promised kingdom. Then, God will "search out" the remainder of mankind, including all those in the grave, whom he will raise, and give the opportunity to also be his people. Of that time, John the Revelator wrote: "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."—Rev. 21:3

One of the important privileges of all those down through the ages whom God has used to search out others to constitute his people, is that of shining forth as lights in the world. It is the light of God's truth, which reveals his radiant character, that those who have come to know him desire to reflect to others. That light has been especially manifest in the fact that God, in his abundant love, sent his "only begotten Son" to be man's Redeemer. (John 3:16) In this last segment of this series, we will look at the manner in which all those striving to serve the Lord can faithfully shine as lights, for the purpose of searching out those who will be God's people, whether now or in his coming kingdom.

WITNESSES OF JESUS

During the Gospel Age the light of God's glory has been manifested in quite a different manner than in past periods. When in our text Jesus said, "Ye are the light of the world," he was speaking to his disciples. The era during which God miraculously manifested his hand in the protection and blessing of his chosen people, Israel, and in the punishment of their enemies, was rapidly drawing to a close. In a few short years God's typical people were to hear those fateful words, "Your house is left unto you desolate." (Matt. 23:38) Subsequently, the light of God was to shine out through other channels, and by different means.

In this new arrangement, Jesus was the Leader, the Captain, the Forerunner. He declared of himself, "I am the light of the world." (John 8:12) Jesus knew that he would not personally remain in the world, and that the work of God entrusted to him would be continued by his representatives—his "ambassadors." (II Cor. 5:20) In Revelation 20:4, they are referred to as those who are "beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God."

This language describes martyrdom, or the giving up of life in the service of Jesus and the word of God. During the Gospel Age, faithfulness leads to death, and we are encouraged by the promise, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."—Rev. 2:10

In the beginning of the age, and continuing through the lifetime of the apostles, miracles were employed which demonstrated the glory of God. Jesus healed the sick and raised the dead. The apostles did the same, but they themselves died, and

the onlooker was given no evidence of divine overruling or care in their lives in this regard. Although Jesus was raised from the dead, few aside from the disciples believed it. The Holy Spirit was poured out upon the waiting disciples at Pentecost, but their enemies refused to accept what they saw and heard as evidence of God's hand in their affairs. Instead, they alleged that the disciples were intoxicated.

Soon after the apostles fell asleep in death, all miraculous demonstrations of divine protection and love ceased, and the Lord's people throughout the age since have been called upon to walk entirely by faith. They have been witnesses of Jesus, not because divine favor has been miraculously manifested toward them, but because they have been faithful in proclaiming the "gospel of Christ," which, as Paul asserts, is "the power of God unto salvation."—Rom. 1:16

The commission given to these by Jesus was that they should be his witnesses in all the world by preaching the Gospel. (Matt. 28:19; Acts 1:8) In ages past, when the Lord's people were called his witnesses, it was because God revealed his glory by the miraculous manner in which he dealt with them. In the Gospel Age, those who witness for Jesus have done so by proclaiming the marvelous plan for human salvation which Jesus was sent into the world to execute. In proclaiming this gospel, they tell not only of the mighty miracle of Jesus' resurrection, but also of the miracle of the resurrection of those who will live and reign with him.

Furthermore, the full gospel message calls for a declaration of that great future miracle which will be necessary for the awakening of all the dead, and

the restoration of the willing and obedient to full perfection of life as human beings on the earth. In proclaiming the facts concerning these miracles, the witnesses of Jesus are strengthened by their knowledge of what occurred in the past. They know that the God who delivered Israel from Egypt, who escorted them safely through the Red Sea and across the Jordan River to victory in Canaan, who sent an angel and destroyed an Assyrian army in one night, and who delivered the three Hebrews from the fiery furnace, is abundantly able to fulfill all his good promises pertaining to the deliverance of all mankind from sin and death.

Only a handful of these witnesses for Jesus ever actually saw him, but they believe the testimony of those who affirm the fact that he lived, and died, and was raised from the dead. They also believe and proclaim the testimony of Paul that when Jesus was raised from the dead he was highly exalted above angels, principalities, and powers, and above every name that is named, to the right hand of the Majesty on high. (Eph. 1:18-23) They also accept and preach the further testimony of Paul which declares that ultimately “every knee should bow, . . . And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”—Phil. 2:9-11

These witnesses of Jesus are glad to occupy this place, as his ambassadors, in the arrangements of God, because they delight to obey the divine command to honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. Indeed, they realize that they cannot honor the Father at all, except as they do so through the Son. (John 5:23) They know that to honor and worship the resurrected and glorified Jesus, and to

serve as his witnesses, does not detract from the glory of God, for they understand that it was the Father's power that exalted his Son to this high position at his own right hand.

As "witnesses of Jesus, and for the word of God," these go forth with a song of praise upon their lips—praise to God for his love in sending Jesus to be the Redeemer and Savior of the world. They praise God's divine wisdom which designed such a loving plan of salvation, and his justice which, while it could not clear the guilty, made provision to wash away their sins by the blood of the Redeemer. They praise the power of God by which every feature of his glorious purpose is implemented and made sure.

These do not go about shouting emotionally, Praise the Lord! However, they do praise and honor God by making known his loving plan as it is centered in Christ Jesus. They rejoice that the Holy Spirit of God has authorized them to be witnesses of Jesus. They rejoice that they are authorized to explain the plan of God as it relates to those who are invited to be joint-heirs with Jesus in the spiritual phase of his kingdom, as well as to proclaim the glorious hope of "restitution" for all mankind during the thousand years of Christ's reign.—Acts 3:20,21; Rev. 20:4,6

THE WORLD NOT CONVERTED

This glorious testimony which has been given throughout the age by the witnesses of Jesus has not converted the world, nor will it now convert the world. It was not God's plan that it should—his will being that the chief accomplishment of this witness work would be the reaching and development of

those who would join this special class and prove worthy to live and reign with Christ.

Incidentally, others have heard, and to some extent have been blessed. Thus they have been in a measure prepared for the blessings of the kingdom which will reach the world during the kingdom. Millions of others have also heard the message, but have paid no attention to it—yet it has been a witness even to these. Jesus said that “this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end [of the Gospel Age] come.”—Matt. 24:14

Jesus likened his individual witnesses to candles shining in the dark. We know that a candle does not project its light any great distance into the darkness. It is of benefit only to those who are close to it. Similarly, the light of the Gospel shining through Jesus’ witnesses is a guide and a great blessing to those who, by belief and devotion, draw near to it and to the Lord whom it represents. The outside world, however, sees only an indistinct glimmer.

As Jesus explained, the darkness of this world “hateth the light,” and therefore those who dwell in darkness usually turn away from the light even when they see it. (John 3:19,20) Satan is largely responsible for this. As the god of this world, he has blinded the minds of those who believe not, “lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”—II Cor. 4:4

Someone has said that the light of the Gospel as it shines through the witnesses of Jesus is like a lighthouse at the edge of the ocean. It is not put there to light up the ocean, but to guide the mariner. Thus, the Truth was not intended to enlighten the

world during the Gospel Age, although it has been the only light in the world. This light, however, has been a guide to God's own people, enabling them to find and to walk in the "narrow" way which leads to "glory and honour and immortality."—Matt. 7:14; Rom. 2:7

"AS THE SUN"

Through Jesus' witnesses of the present age, the Gospel is preached until "the end" comes—the end of the age. Jesus' parable of the wheat and the tares also speaks of the end of the age. The witnesses of Jesus are, in this parable, called "children of the kingdom," and when the work of the harvest is fully consummated, these "children of the kingdom" are said to "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."—Matt. 13:38,43

This shining forth as the sun will be in association with Jesus, the foretold "Sun of righteousness" who is to arise with "healing in his wings" to enlighten and bless the whole world of mankind. (Mal. 4:2) The faithful witnesses of Jesus will become, as the church triumphant, a part of that "Sun of righteousness," and together with Jesus will cause the knowledge of the glory of God to fill the whole earth, "as the waters cover the sea."—Isa. 11:9; 40:5

When the "Sun of righteousness" arises with "healing in his wings," and the "children of the kingdom" shine forth with him, Satan will be bound, that he may "deceive the nations no more." (Rev. 20:1-3) With the ruler of darkness thus prevented from interfering with the shining forth of light from that glorious Sun, all the world will have an unrestricted

opportunity to become acquainted with Jehovah, the true God, and with his beloved Son who died for them that they might live. Then will be testified to all that great truth that Jesus gave himself “a ransom for all.”—I Tim. 2:4-6

The work of enlightening all mankind will require the thousand years of Christ’s kingdom. First, the living generation will have turned to them the “pure language” mentioned by the Prophet Zephaniah. (Zeph. 3:8,9) This will be immediately after the “fire of [God’s] jealousy” has destroyed the symbolic earth—that is, its present evil systems—in the great “time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.”—Dan. 12:1

Many who go through that fiery trouble will be quite ignorant of the true God, hence the necessity of having the pure message of truth given to them in order that they might have an opportunity to know and serve God properly, “with one consent.” However, that will be only the beginning. There will then come the awakening of the many billions who have died. As each generation of these hears the voice of the Lord calling them forth from the tomb, they also will need to be enlightened. Thus, although the Sun will be shining throughout the kingdom, it will not be until near its close that the vestiges of darkness from the long night of sin and death will have been fully banished from the minds of all the people.

The Prophet Zechariah gives us a beautiful illustration of this. He speaks of the thousand years of Christ’s reign—that period during which the Sun of righteousness will be shining—as a “day.” He says, “it shall be one day which shall be known to the

LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.”—Zech. 14:7

“It shall be in that day,” the prophet continues, “that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem.” (vs. 8) These living waters are spoken of in Revelation 22:1,2 as a “river,” which will flow from the “throne of God and of the Lamb.” On either side of the river is pictured the symbolic “tree of life,” bearing all needed life-giving fruit, and “the leaves of the tree” are “for the healing of the nations.” It will be then that the invitation is proclaimed to all people, “Come. . . . take the water of life freely.”—vs. 17

Thus, in this beautiful combination of symbols, the future work of the present witnesses of Jesus is portrayed. At the present time, our message to all who fully believe is to take up their cross and follow Jesus into death. Soon, the work of selecting this faithful class—the Christ, head and body—will be complete. Then, the light concerning God’s plan will be revealed to all mankind, and they will be given the opportunity to drink of the life-giving waters proceeding from his throne. Finally, the grand culmination of the search for God’s people will come to pass, and the full meaning of these words will be manifest. “In the dispensation of the fulness of times,” Paul says, God will “gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.”—Eph. 1:10 ■

*“The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us
therefore cast off the works of darkness,
and let us put on the armour of light.
Let us walk honestly, as in the day.”*

Romans 13:12,13

Soundness of Mind

*“God hath not
given us the spirit
of fear; but of
power, and of love,
and of a sound
mind.”*

—II Timothy 1:7

THE WORDS OF OUR TITLE

imply that a mind may also be unsound. A mind which is unable to reason properly, and thereby make good choices and come to logical and wise conclusions, may be afflicted with physical disease and impairment, such as can happen with any part of the human organism. In these instances, the individual is unable to think correctly through no fault of his own. In some cases, such as those involving people afflicted with Alzheimer’s disease or severe dementia, there may be no awareness at all by the individual that their mind lacks soundness. While science continues to look for answers and cures for physical diseases of the mind, we are thankful to rest our hope in God’s kingdom, which will heal all man’s diseases, and he will no longer say, “I am sick.”—Isa. 33:24

There is another sense in which a mind may be unsound. Although not physically diseased, a mind may become impaired as a result of an improper

course of conduct in life, sinful influences from our surroundings, and the ever-present power of Satan, the arch-enemy of sound thinking. These aspects of our subject are those which we will presently consider. The Scriptures point out the remedy for such mental unsoundness, which if applied properly and used daily, will give us the guidance needed to “walk in wisdom.”—Col. 4:5

PAUL’S WORDS TO TIMOTHY

At the time of writing his second epistle to Timothy, the Apostle Paul was nearing the end of his ministry. He was not only in prison but was also out of contact with most of the brethren. He was under strict surveillance by the authorities, and anyone who visited or cared for him would be subject to close scrutiny and possibly arrest. In spite of the obvious risks, Paul did not hesitate to ask Timothy to visit him and give him much needed comfort and fellowship.—II Tim. 1:3,4

From the viewpoint of worldly thinking this action by the Apostle Paul seemed to be unwise, exposing Timothy to almost certain arrest and persecution. It would seem that Paul was not showing the real spirit of love and sacrifice. However, the Apostle associated his request with the enlightenment of mind that resulted from God’s Holy Spirit being operative in Timothy’s life. In verse 6, we read, “Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.”

The laying on of hands was the means whereby the apostles were authorized by God to convey the Holy Spirit to those whom the Lord had called.

(Acts 8:17; 19:6) Apparently Paul desired to remind Timothy of the great gift he had received and the responsibility associated with it. This responsibility stemmed from the enlightenment of his mind with respect to God's plans and purposes, as it does also in the individual lives of all who have been blessed with the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul expresses the thought thus: "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."—I Cor. 2:16

HOLY SPIRIT'S EFFECT ON JESUS' MIND

There is no greater example of the operation of the Holy Spirit upon the mind than what we see in Jesus. Although we do not have much information concerning him as a young man, we are told that during this time, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." (Luke 2:52) This text speaks volumes if we read between the lines. It is evident that he was looked up to and was even respected by his elders and peers. To be in favor with God would seem to indicate also that Jesus was able to, and did, keep the precepts of the Law. However, he was a man, and even though perfect, was limited to human reasoning and understanding.

At the age of thirty, Jesus came to John to be baptized. John recognized him as one set apart, and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) When Jesus was immersed by John in the River Jordan, the Bible states that "the heavens were opened unto him" and that John "saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon" the Son of man.

(Matt. 3:16) The thought implied in the heavens being opened to Jesus is that, because of the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, the hidden things with respect to God's plans and purposes were now to be revealed to him. He was already thoroughly familiar with all that was written in God's Word. However, he did not understand the full meaning of the types and shadows and the prophecies until it was revealed to him as the result of the power of the Holy Spirit.

Psalm 40:6 is a prophecy concerning Jesus at the time of his baptism and enlightenment by the Holy Spirit: "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required." The phrase, "mine ears hast thou opened," has the thought of the opening of the inner ear cavity, and well pictures the opening of the mind to the revealing of truths which had previously been hidden.

This new discernment caused Jesus to understand that the sacrifices and offerings performed under the Mosaic Law did not accomplish God's ultimate purpose. It was also revealed to Jesus that he was the one pictured in the many sacrifices offered for sin under the Law and that, to fulfill these, it would be necessary for him to die as the great and only efficacious sacrifice for sin. The reaction of Jesus to this revelation of God's purpose for him is stated in these words: "Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first [the Law sacrifices], that he may establish the second [the better sacrifice]." (Heb. 10:9) Thus Jesus immediately began laying down his life in the prescribed way, which finally ended in death on the cross.

These are some of the thoughts the Apostle Paul wanted Timothy to call to mind. By the Lord's grace he had been one whom God had called to be part of the spiritual seed of Abraham and to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. The Scriptures had been opened to Timothy so that he could discern the will of God in his life and be confident in knowing the source of his understanding—God's Holy Spirit. It is this same spirit that motivated Jesus to obedience even unto death, and it is the also the spirit that Paul urged Timothy to stir up within himself.

NOT THE SPIRIT OF FEAR

As the apostle states in our theme text, this spirit that God has given to us through his Word is not the spirit of fear. The word translated fear in this text means "timidity." Timidity implies a lack of courage, boldness or determination. The lesson we should derive from the text is that anyone who truly has God's Spirit does not lack a strong conviction in his purpose and that his determination to carry out the Lord's instructions will never falter, regardless of the consequences.

When Jesus sent his disciples out into the various towns and cities of the Jews to preach "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," he knew they would meet all kinds of opposition, even violence. (Matt. 10:7,16-22) Since the disciples would not receive the Holy Spirit until Pentecost, Jesus felt it was necessary to instruct them how they were to act under stress.

In verses 23-28, he said, "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another. . . . The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his

master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul [being].”

Following successfully the instructions that Jesus gave manifests a mind controlled by the Holy Spirit. It is dominant over the natural fleshly inclination to escape from pain, suffering, and confrontations. To avoid those things under the circumstances Jesus outlined would manifest the spirit of fear. What have the footstep followers of Jesus to fear as far as violence to their bodies is concerned? Their bodies of flesh are already reckoned dead.—Col. 3:3

SPIRIT OF POWER

The apostle says we have been given the spirit of power. The Greek word translated “power” denotes miraculous power, usually by implication a miracle itself. The power of the Holy Spirit and its enlightening influence over the minds of the footstep followers of Jesus is truly a miracle. It reveals to us our true relationship to the Heavenly Father. The Apostle Paul expresses the thought in this way: “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption [sonship], whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; . . . if so be that we suffer with him

[Christ], that we may be also glorified together.”—
Rom. 8:15-17

The force of this text is that it emphasizes the reality of our sonship and the necessity for suffering to realize our hope. An adopted child may partake in all the privileges of the family, although it is not begotten and born in the family. However, we are begotten of the Spirit and are therefore sons of God by his miraculous power. (John 3:6) Thus it is the Spirit of true sonship that enables us to cry “Abba, Father.” *Abba* is the Aramaic word for Father, and when used together as “Abba, Father,” it conveys a feeling of closeness, love, confidence and trust. Its New Testament usage is only found with regard to those who have received the gift of begetting by the Holy Spirit of God. The word was also used by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, to emphasize his closeness to the Heavenly Father. “Abba, Father,” he prayed, “all things are possible unto thee: . . . nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.”—Mark 14:36

The power of the Holy Spirit on our minds is evidenced in all that we see or understand. God has revealed himself to us through his Word, and we see his character in the qualities of justice, love, wisdom, and power demonstrated in his plan. Everything—whether it be the handiwork of creation, or our experiences in the narrow way—we relate to this divine arrangement which has so graciously been revealed to us and of which we have been invited to partake.

The Apostle Paul expresses the thought in a most eloquent way. Speaking of God’s grace, he says, “Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom

and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him. . . . In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”—Eph. 1:8-10,13

The “holy Spirit of promise” is God’s Holy Spirit. We have been sealed with it, set apart and specially identified, showing that henceforth we are part of his family and privileged to share his thoughts. In sharing the thoughts of the Father, we are expected to bring our own thoughts into full harmony with his. We do this by looking to, and following, the example of his Son, Christ Jesus. Our goal in this, Paul says, is to bring “into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”—II Cor. 10:5

SPIRIT OF LOVE

Our text also states that we have received the spirit of love. The spirit of love is the essence of God’s Holy Spirit. As a result of being Spirit begotten, we were given the ability to recognize and appreciate true love. We saw it manifested in its highest form in the Heavenly Father’s plan for redemption for the world, and in our Lord’s selfless sacrifice of his own life on the cross in order to provide the means for that redemption. This was done, “while we were yet sinners,” that the beneficent purposes of God toward his human creation might be realized.—Rom. 5:8,9

It follows that anyone who truly has the Lord's Spirit will feel compassion and love toward the poor groaning creation and will earnestly desire to be a part of the arrangement that God has designed to end the world's suffering. The desire to be an agent of blessing thus becomes a strong power which greatly assists us in our determination to conform our lives to the divine pattern. The Apostle John, in defining this highest form of love, states, "By this we have known love, because he laid down his life on our behalf; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (I John 3:16, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*) Jesus said, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:12,13) It is by conforming our lives to this pattern of unselfish love that we will become qualified to be an instrument of blessing in the Lord's hand in the next age.

The spirit of love manifests itself by works devoid of self-interest. We do this by serving the brethren and doing good as far as possible to all men. (Gal. 6:10) Because of our love for the Heavenly Father and his plan of salvation, we are also constrained to witness concerning his love and to tell others about the kingdom. This could bring to us suffering and persecution. We may rarely think of love in this setting. In the final analysis, however, the activities to which the highest form of love motivates us, including those which may result in suffering, will prove us as worthy followers of the Master.

The Apostle Paul exemplifies this when he states concerning his own suffering, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is

behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." (Col. 1:24) Here the apostle surely had in mind some of the experiences such as are recorded in I Corinthians 4:11,12 and II Corinthians 11:24-28: "Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it." "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

It is no wonder that the apostle could properly admonish the Corinthians, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." (I Cor. 11:1) All the experiences Paul recounted came as a result of his ministering to the brethren and preaching the message of the kingdom. His zeal was fueled by his love for the Heavenly Father, the brethren, and the Gospel. It was in this way that he partook of the afflictions of Christ. It was not that his suffering added anything to the efficacious merit of Christ's sacrifice, but rather that Paul and every other potential member of the body of Christ must suffer.

It is through suffering that we learn to be submissive and to develop the fruits and graces of the Spirit. All will not have the same experiences, but all must suffer in some way because of their service to the Lord. Jesus said, “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it.”—Mark 8:34,35

A SOUND MIND

The spirit of power and of love that has been given to us by the Lord enables us to overcome the spirit of fear. In this way, our spiritual minds are prepared to develop in a way that will enable us to make prudent judgments—that is, exercise a sound mind—on matters that are spiritual. The phrase “sound mind” in our text has the meaning of discipline, self-control, or moderation. This implies a mind that exercises control over the selfish propensities of the fallen flesh.

The process of developing a disciplined mind is outlined for us in Romans, the 12th chapter. As this process continues, it will result in far-reaching and sweeping changes of viewpoint. Apostle Paul states in verse 2, “Be not conformed to his world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” From the context of this verse, it is obvious that the renovation of our minds is associated with a complete reversal of our previous way of thinking. Who among our friends in the world would think of yielding himself as a “living sacrifice,” even for the cause of Christ? (vs. 1) As we delve

farther into the lessons of the chapter we find that those facets of character the apostle stresses we are to strive for are, in many instances, quite contrary to those which are approved by the world.—vss. 9-21

The apostle stresses this very point in another place: “For consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption; therefore, as it is written, Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord.”—I Cor. 1:26-31, *Revised Standard Version*

The point that is of vital importance in this lesson is that we, as the footstep followers of Jesus, have been figuratively beheaded, and we have accepted Jesus as our Head. (Rev. 20:4) His wisdom in matters concerning the things of the spirit becomes our wisdom if we have been completely severed from the things of the world. Indeed, we are to develop “the mind of Christ,” the soundness of which is unflawed and perfect.—I Cor. 2:16; Phil. 2:5

In the verse following our theme text, Paul further admonishes Timothy: “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.”

(II Tim. 1:8) The apostle's request gave Timothy the opportunity to manifest his love for the Heavenly Father, the Truth, and his brother in Christ—Paul. If the spirit of power and of love, devoid of fear, were sufficiently in control of Timothy's heart and mind, he would exercise the spirit of a sound mind and come to visit and minister to Paul if the opportunity were made available. In spite of the consequences, he would consider that the experience was his "reasonable service."

Let us who have named the name of Christ likewise be "put . . . in remembrance" to "stir up the gift of God" which is in us. Let us put aside the spirit of fear, and exercise the spirit of power, and the spirit of love, and the spirit of a sound mind—God's Holy Spirit—to the end that we might share in his glory in the kingdom. ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

DECEMBER 7—"When he was reviled, he reviled not again."—I Peter 2:23 (Z. '01-298 Hymn 335)

DECEMBER 14—"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."—Matthew 5:7 (Z. '01-332, '00-70 Hymn 247A)

DECEMBER 21—"Who is worthy?"—Revelation 5:2 (Z. '02-333 Hymn 338)

DECEMBER 28—"He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head."—Psalm 110:7 (Z. '02-14 Hymn 116)

“Brethren, Give Diligence”

*“Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.”
—II Peter 1:10*

ANOTHER YEAR IS DRAWING to a close, and despite the troubles, uncertainties and evil conditions in the earth, one thing remains constant.

It is the loving watch care of our Heavenly Father over his consecrated people. With joy we can testify that God has guided and directed us through another year. He has blessed us in countless ways, but he also has allowed trials for our development and testing. Our varied experiences during the past year should reinforce to our minds the words of Paul when he said, “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”
—Rom. 8:28

Our opening text reminds us of the necessity to “give diligence.” There is perhaps no better time to prompt ourselves to action in this vitally important responsibility than at the close of one year and the beginning of another. Indeed, the diligence required to make our “calling and election sure” will be just

as great in 2018 as it has been in 2017. One reason for this is the fact that the three great enemies of the footstep followers of Christ—the world, the flesh, and our adversary the devil—are still very active. They still seek to stumble and thwart us from our goal of being “faithful unto death.”—Rev. 2:10

THE WORLD

It is not the people of the world who constitute our enemy. Rather, the world is our enemy because its general spirit is one that will not help us make our calling and election sure. It is a spirit that will hinder us in our endeavors to overcome the things that are of little worth. This point is very plainly and strongly set forth in these words of the Apostle John: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”—I John 2:15-17

A proper appraisal of true values for the Lord’s followers emphasizes in our minds the reality of the Scripture that says, “The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (II Cor. 4:18) The importance of understanding this comparison of values is critical to the true Christian. The things which are “seen” are the things of the world. They are merely temporal, and do not last. Those things “not seen” are the things of God. They are eternal, and abide forever, just as God is “from everlasting to everlasting.”—Ps. 90:2

The general spirit of the world, particularly as we come in contact with it today, is far from righteousness. Toward matters pertaining to God it often displays the spirit of indifference. If that attitude should enter into our hearts and minds, and there reside, it will surely find its expression in a spirit of lethargy, complacency, of taking things for granted, and lukewarmness. (Rev. 3:14-17) Such a spirit would not only show indifference to God, but also manifest itself in a lack of diligence in battling against our enemies—the world, the flesh and the adversary.

In his parable of the sower, Jesus made this statement: “He . . . that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.” (Matt. 13:22) Here the Master tells us of two very definite enemies which we meet in the world. The “care of this world” is a frontal attack from the enemy. Indeed, we each have the cares of our present life, but they are not inherently our enemy. The question is, how are we handling them, and with what spirit? Then there is the “deceitfulness of riches.” This can be a more subtle attack, because such deceitfulness can infect our character whether we possess the riches or not.

The cares of this life can be found in our homes, our activities, our neighborhoods, our jobs, and in many other aspects of daily living. These cares are to be properly met, whether they are to wives, husbands, children, neighbors, employers, or others to whom we have responsibilities. We are “worse than an infidel,” Paul says, if we do not meet these obligations.—I Tim. 5:8

In fulfilling these requirements, however, we must ensure that we are not depriving God of something that he has a legitimate right to expect. This is because we also owe him much, even life itself. Are we rendering “unto Caesar” more than is his due? Are we rendering “unto God” less than he should receive? (Matt. 22:21) These are sobering questions we must ask ourselves, as we fight against the tendency to let the cares of this life choke our heavenly aspirations.

In I Corinthians 2:12, Paul makes this statement: “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” If success in the affairs of this life, or success in the deceitfulness of riches to any extent seduces us from our consecration and devotion to God, then we are not properly valuing those spiritual things he has “freely given to us.” The world may consider us failures if we put greater value on the things God has given us than on what the world has to offer. If so, let us rejoice!

If we want to know how rich we really are, we should not base our answer on how much we might leave behind when we die. Rather, the much greater thought should concern how much we will take with us when we die, and of what sort these riches will be. That is of utmost importance. Jesus, in his sermon on the mount, counseled us along this line, saying we should be “rich toward God,” and lay up “treasure in the heavens that faileth not.”—Luke 12:21,33

Paul admonished, “Be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a

crooked and perverse nation [Greek: generation], among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life.” (Phil. 2:15,16) If we are fighting the battle against the world’s spirit to the extent that we have become lights, holding forth God’s Word, then we are progressing as the Lord desires. Let us, therefore, always keep in view “the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”
—I John 5:4

THE FLESH

The flesh is a most formidable enemy because it is with us every moment of our life. Its ambitions, passions, human desires, and dreams are often at the center of our weaknesses and shortcomings. The flesh is subject to temptation from without and prone to weaknesses from within. Our battle, however, is not merely to control the urges of fleshly gratification. It is a battle of the human nature against the spiritual nature. The proper, wholesome aims and ambitions—to which human beings have a legitimate right—conflict with the aims, desires, hopes and prospects of the child of God. It is the battle of self-will against the doing of God’s will.

As with our fight against the world, the proper appraisal of values is key in battling against the flesh. The things of the flesh are temporal, while the things of God are eternal. Here are very familiar words to consecrated believers: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what

is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”
—Rom. 12:1,2

How can we stimulate the work of being transformed so that we may ascertain, and perform to the best of our ability, the good, acceptable and perfect will of God? The next verse helps us to answer this. It reads, “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly.” (vs. 3) In verse 16 of the same chapter, the apostle adds, “Be not wise in your own conceits.” Then, in Galatians 6:7,8, Paul says, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

The foregoing passages remind us that the work of transformation involves a great battle against pride and catering to the flesh. Some may naturally love possessions. Consequently, they especially have to fight the flesh’s inordinate desire to gain possessions. Others may love themselves too highly, and must fight a great inward battle. To one extent or another, we all have to do battle against ourselves. We have to fight pride. We have to fight natural selfishness. We have to fight self-conceit.

Most people in the world do not have this fight. They want to be masters of their own destiny. That is based upon pride. As children of God, however, in humility we depend upon his providences in our life because we have faith that he knows what is best for us in every experience. (Isa. 26:3,4) We recall these words: “We . . . worship God in the Spirit,

and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” (Phil. 3:3) To have this mindset is to control the natural fleshly tendencies of pride and selfishness. Such humility and acquiescence to the Lord’s will is essential if we would win the battle against that enemy which we call our flesh.—Jer. 17:5,7

THE DEVIL, OUR GREAT ADVERSARY

The devil is a very sly foe and, in fact, often uses our fallen flesh and the spirit of the world to attack us. He has even convinced some people that he does not exist, or that, if he does, he is not really harmful. How deceitful such suggestions are! On the contrary, our great Adversary, Satan, is busy all the time. Peter wrote, “Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith.” (I Pet. 5:8,9) This text of Scripture tells us that the way in which we must resist the devil, as he walks about seeking those he might devour, is to be “stedfast in the faith.” Just as the victory which overcomes the world is faith, so faith is likewise a very effective and necessary weapon against Satan and his ploys.

God’s Word, the faith “once delivered unto the saints,” is being assailed today more than ever before. (Jude 1:3) Truths that have separated us as a people of God, and have given us an understanding of the depths of his love, are constantly under attack. The Scriptures, which reveal the justice, wisdom, love, and power of God through his plan of the ages, are more and more cast aside as falsehoods. We are not ignorant, however, of Satan’s devices. Let us do as Paul said, “Put on the whole armour of God, that

ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” (II Cor. 2:11; Eph. 6:11) Let us remain steadfast in the faith, and stand for the integrity and honor of the Gospel of the kingdom!

Our Master speaks of those who hear God’s Word, but “then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts.” (Luke 8:12) This has happened throughout the Gospel Age, both with individuals and even whole organizations. This can also happen to us if we do not remain steadfast in the faith. “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.”—Heb. 2:1

We must fight the world, its spirit, the cares of this life, and the deceitfulness of earthly riches. We must also fight the flesh with its pride, selfishness, and its desire to honor self, more than honoring the Lord. Then, also, we must fight the devil with his attempts to confuse the issues of truth. We must stand by the Word of God, because if we do not, the adversary will seek to take it out of our hearts. In all these things, we must “fight the good fight of faith,” and “lay hold on eternal life,” to which we have been called.—I Tim. 6:12

NOT ALONE

It might seem that the battle against our enemies is too great, and victory unlikely. Indeed, if we were alone in this fight we would surely be defeated. However, we are not alone. We have many comrades in this warfare, those upon whom we can depend for help, support, and encouragement in every time of need—namely, the Lord, the Truth, and our brethren.

“With us is the LORD our God to help.” “The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.” “Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.” (II Chron. 32:8; Heb. 13:6; Josh. 1:9) Is there not great consolation in these words? We realize that it is in God’s strength that we will win the conflict. Because the battle rages, decisions have to be made, and sometimes it seems that we fight alone, but it is not really so. We have never fought alone! Even though we may walk through the “valley of the shadow of death,” we need not fear any evil, for God is with us.—Ps. 23:4

“Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me,” the psalmist continues. God even prepares a table of spiritual food for us, as David testifies, “in the presence of mine enemies.” (vs. 5) Indeed, in this battle we are never alone, and it is because of our knowledge of this that it is a “good fight of faith.” It gives us courage to know that our warfare is under the banner of the Captain of our salvation, and to do his will and keep his commandments is the desire of our hearts.—Heb. 2:10

In the natural world, there is dew on one flower and not on another simply because one opens its petals to receive the dew and the refreshment that comes with it, while another keeps its petals closed, permitting the dew to fall away. For the child of God, if we open our hearts to the promises in his Word of help and strength for every time of need, and to his many providences, then we will be refreshed spiritually. We will go forth strong in the realization of the Lord’s goodness toward us; of his

understanding, of the assurances of his mercy and of his grace. We will also be reminded of the strength that these promises have given to all the people of God throughout past ages. With such knowledge, we are enabled to face the battle without shrinking.

TRUTH—BY WHICH WE ARE SANCTIFIED

We also are blessed with the Truth. Petitioning God, Jesus said, “Thy word is truth,” and prayed that his followers “might be sanctified through the truth.” (John 17:17,19) The Truth is a mighty sanctifying power in our life. It helps us not to be conformed to this world because it has given us an understanding of true values. It assists us in transforming ourselves into the likeness of God’s dear Son. The word of truth tells us what the will of God is, and what is good and well pleasing in his sight.

If Satan cannot take the Truth from us by injecting erroneous doctrines into our minds, he will try to do so by making us complacent. He will tempt us to forget that we are students of the Bible, and will try to plant seeds of indifference in our mind. The Heavenly Father has given us fundamental doctrines. These are the truths which have been handed down to us from the patriarchs of old, the prophets, our Lord Jesus, the apostles, and the many faithful servants God has used to show forth his loving plans and purposes. (Eph. 4:11,12) Let us not be complacent, nor look for something “new,” but continue to study and consider these wonderful features of God’s holy Word. By so doing, we will grow in grace and in knowledge, and will be prepared for the battles which lay before us.

BRETHREN OF “LIKE PRECIOUS FAITH”

We have our brethren to help us in this fight. The apostle chose his words well when he wrote, “to them that have obtained like precious faith.” (II Pet. 1:1) What a blessing it is to have fellowship with those of like precious faith. It is a source of encouragement to us that we have others who can share our fellowship and our mutual love for the Lord and for his truth. The brethren are often a source of stimulation when our zeal and faith may have lagged.

We know that there are often trials and testings amongst the brethren. This is permitted by God to the intent that we each examine ourselves—our words, actions, thoughts, and heart motives—to determine whether they are pure and holy. Let us who are in Christ bear one another’s burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ, which is the law of selfless love. (Gal. 6:2; John 13:34,35) Let us stand shoulder to shoulder encouraging one another as, together, we fight the world, the flesh, and the devil.

The Prophet Malachi wrote: “Then they that feared [reverenced] the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”—Mal. 3:16,17

This text of Scripture has special application to the consecrated followers of Jesus. We speak often one with another because we need the help and

encouragement it provides. We do not forsake “the assembling of ourselves together” because we need the fellowship of one another. (Heb. 10:25) Even when there are only two or three, we can rejoice because we know, as Jesus promised, that “where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”—Matt. 18:20

IMPORTANCE OF LITTLE THINGS

Our battle will be won or lost, not by the big things we may do, but by the little things. It is the little sacrifices, small expressions of sympathy, little acts of unselfishness, modest victories over small temptations, impromptu opportunities to witness, quiet works of service, and many other seemingly inconsequential words and actions by which the victory is achieved. If we are faithful in the little aspects of our fight, we will be properly prepared to win the larger battles. “He that is faithful in that which is least,” Jesus said, “is faithful also in much.”—Luke 16:10

As we review our experiences and progress during the year coming to a close, and look forward to the prospects of 2018—both the joys and the trials—let us dedicate ourselves once again to the sentiments of our opening text: “Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.” With the support and help of the Lord, the Truth, and the brethren, may we continue to fight the “good fight of faith” and “lay hold on eternal life.” By such determination, and with God’s abounding grace, we shall gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil. ■

TALKING THINGS OVER

“I Wish I Knew What To Do!”

HOW OFTEN WE hear this statement made by those who are zealous for making known the glad tidings of the kingdom. May we suggest one thing that practically all can do is to send one or more *Dawn* gift subscriptions to their friends. Just think, one gift subscription means that *The Dawn* magazine enters the home twelve times during the year as your messenger of Truth. Isn't this something worthwhile doing? Each subscription is only \$12.00, and you can have three names entered for just \$30.00! It is simple to do when you use the coupon(s) below, and on the next page.

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SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

The speakers listed below are routed through the Pilgrim Department of The Dawn. Their visits are furnished free upon request. Write to: The Dawn Pilgrim Department, East Rutherford, NJ 07073. A visit will be arranged whenever possible.

J. Freer

Waynesboro, MS	December 1	Dallas, TX	7,8
Gulfport, MS	2	Austin, TX	9,10
New Orleans, LA	3	Laramie, WY	11,12
Benton, AR	4,5		

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

M. Balko

Jacksonville, FL December 3

J. Parkinson

Chicago, IL December 30,31

H. Montague

Chicago, IL December 30,31

CONVENTIONS

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

IBADAN NIGERIA CONVENTION, December 2—Ibadan Ecclesia Place of Fellowship. Contact C. O. Egbu, #24 Bola Fayemi Street Coca Cola Mokola Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Phone: +2348033339949 or Email: egbucaje@gmail.com

CHICAGO NEW YEAR'S CONVENTION, December 30,31—Addison Park District, 120 E Oak Street, Addison, IL 60101. For programs, contact J. Farrell. Phone: (630) 469-9511 or Email: jean9farrell@gmail.com. For accommodations, contact A. Pop. Email: accommodations@chicagobible.org

PHOENIX CONVENTION, January 13,14—Drury Inn & Suites, Happy Valley, 2335 W Pinnacle Peak Road, Phoenix, AZ 85027. Mention “Christian Group-Phoenix Associated Bible Students” and Confirmation #2295610. Contact A. Mengos. Phone: (480) 390-3767 or Email: samengos@yahoo.com

SACRAMENTO CONVENTION, February 16-18—Holiday Inn Express, 2224 Auburn Blvd., Sacramento, CA 98521. Contact J. Freer. Phone: (916) 879-4655 or Email: shootingln@aol.com

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

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

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

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

*“If we love one another, God dwelleth in us,
and his love is perfected in us.”
—I John 4:12*