



Volume XV. No. 1 MELBOURNE, 1st JANUARY, 1932 Price —Twopence Halfpenny

JOY COMETH IN THE MORNING.

“Sing unto the Lord, (ye saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness : for His anger is momentary ; in His favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning . ”
Psa. 30:4, 5.

THE watchman said, “The morning cometh.” (Isa. 21:12.) Through making this answer, he forewarns us of night, but assures us of the morning. There is a morning, says he, therefore, do not give way to faintness of spirit, but there is a night between; therefore, take warning that you may not be surprised nor dismayed, as if the promise were broken, or some strange thing allowed to befall you.

There may be delay. he intimates, before the morning —a dark delay, for which we should be prepared. During this he calls for watchfulness, for the length of the night is hidden, the time of daybreak is uncertain. We must be on the outlook, with our eyes fixed on the eastern hills. We have nothing wherewith to measure the hours, save the sorrows of the Church and the failing of hearts.

During this delay the watchman encourages us to “inquire,” to “return,” to “come.” He expects us to ask “how long?” and say, “when will the night be clone?” He takes for granted that such will be the proceeding of men ‘ - .,:- really long for the morning. To the hills of Seir thy will again and again return, to learn of the watchman what is the promise of the day; for no familiarity with the night can ever reconcile them to darkness, or make morning less desirable.

It is right for us to desire the morning, to hope for it, to inquire as to the signs of it hour after hour. God has set this joy before us, and it were strange indeed if, when compassed about with so many sorrows, we should forget it, or be heedless as to its arrival, for the coming of the morning is the coming of Him whom we long to see. It is the coming of Him “who turneth the shadow of death into the morning.” (Amos 5:8.) It is the return of Him whose absence has been night, and whose presence will be day. It is the return of Him who is the resurrection and the life, and who brings resurrection with Him, the return of Him who is creation’s

Lord, and who brings with Him deliverance to creation, the return of Him who is the Church’s Head, and who brings with Him triumph and gladness to His Church.

All the joy, the calm, the revivifying freshness of the morning, are wrapt up in Him. When He appears clay appears, life appears, fruitfulness appears. The curse departs. The “bondage of corruption” is no more. Clouds, storms, troubles, sorrows vanish. The face of nature reassumes the smile of unfallen times. It is earth’s festival, the world’s jubilee.

“The heavens rejoice, the earth is glad, the sea roars and the fulness thereof, the fields are joyful and all that is therein; the trees of the wood rejoice, the floods clap their hands, and the hills are joyful together before the Lord, for He has come, for He has come to judge the earth, with righteousness shall He judge the world, and the people with his truth.”—Psa. 96:11 ; 98:7.

This morning has been long anticipated. Age after age has attracted the Church’s eye, and fixed her hope. On the promise of it her faith has been resting, and towards the hastening of it her prayers have gone forth. Though afar off, it has been described and rejoiced in as the sure consummation towards which all things are moving forward according to the Father’s purpose. “There is a morning,” has been the word of consolation brought home to the burdened heart of many a saint when ready to say with David, “I am desolate,” or with Jeremiah, “He hath set me in dark places as they that be dead of old.”

Let us dwell for a little time on some of these Old Testament allusions to the morning, beginning with the Psalm from which our text is taken.

David had been in sorrow, and in coming out of it he makes known to the saints his consolations : “Sing unto the Lord, (1 ye saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness. For there is but a moment in His anger; in His favour is life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”— Psa. 30:4, 5.

The earnest of that morning he hath tasted, but the morning itself he anticipates. Then joy has come. Then he can say (verse 11), “Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing; Thou hast put off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness.” But it is the voice of a greater than David that is heard in this Psalm. It is, like the 16th and 18th, one of Christ’s resurrection Psalms. He was “lifted up,” so that His foes were not made to rejoice over Him. He cried and was “healed.” His “soul was brought up from the grave.” There was anger against Him “for a Moment,” when He bore the sinner’s curse. But in Jehovah’s favor there was “life.” He had a night of weeping, a night of “strong crying and tears,” when His soul was sorrowful “even unto death,” and when beneath the waves of that sorrow He sunk, commending His spirit into the Father’s hands. But it was a night no more. Morning came, and with morning, joy. Coming forth from the tomb, He left all His sorrow behind; His sackcloth was put off, and He arose “girded with gladness.” He found morning and joy; and He is “the first fruits of them that slept.” There was a morning for Him, therefore there shall be one for us—a morning bright with resurrection glory.

Let us next take Psalm forty-ninth. These are Christ’s words, as is proved in Matt. 13:35. from the quotation of verse 4. He summons the whole world to listen. He “speaks of wisdom,” for He is Wisdom. He points to the vanity of riches, and their insufficiency to redeem a soul ; and who knew so well as He what a ransom was needed? He sees men going on in their wickedness, self-confidence, and vain-glory. He contrasts the wicked and the righteous. “Over the wicked the righteous shall have dominion in the morning.” The morning then brings dominion to the righteous— redemption from the power of the grave. In this Jesus rejoiced, in this let us rejoice. This joy of the morning was set before Him : it is the same joy that is set before us. Dominion in the morning is that to which we look forward—a share in the first resurrection of which those who partake live and reign with Christ.

Look again at the forty-sixth Psalm. It is the utterance of the faith of Israel’s faithful ones. The earth is shaken (verse 2, compare with Haggai 2:6 and Heb. 12:26, 27), the sea and the waves roar (verse 3, compare with Luke 21:25), but there is a river whose streams gladden them. God is in the midst of her.

Nay, “God helps her when the morning appeareth” (verse 5, margin), just as in the morning watch He looked out from the fiery cloud and troubled the Egyptians. Then the heathen are scattered at His voice—He sweeps off every enemy, He makes wars to cease, and sits Himself on high over the nations, as King of kings, “exalted in the earth.” From which we gather that the morning brings with it deliverance from danger—victory over enemies, the renewal of the earth, peace to the nations, the establishment of Messiah’s glorious throne. What a morning of joy that must be, for the Church, for Israel, for the whole earth—resurrection for the Church, restoration for Israel, restitution for the earth !

Look at the 110th Psalm. We see Jesus at Jehovah’s right hand, waiting till His enemies be made His footstool; and then He who said unto Him “Sit,” shall say, “Arise” (Psa. 82:8.) He is yet to have dominion on earth, and to sit upon the throne of his father David. Willingness, beauty, holiness, brightness shall mark His people in that morning of joy which His coming shall produce.

Read also “the last words of David” (II. Sam. 22:1-4), in which, as in the 72nd Psalm, “the prayers of David are ended,” or summed up. “There shall be a just one ruling in the fear of God; as the light of the morning shall He arise, the Sun of an unclouded morning, shining after a rain upon the tender grass of the earth.” Not till that Just One comes is that morning to dawn, for He is its light, and from His countenance is to break forth that light in which all earth is to rejoice. Then the darkness of the long night shall disappear, and the tribulation tasted in the time of absence be forgotten in the abounding blessedness of His everlasting presence.

Let us hear how in “the Song,” the bride refers to this same morning. She rejoices in the bridegroom’s assured love, and her desires and longings are not questionings as to the relationship in which she stands to him. This is with her a settled thing, for she has tasted that the Lord is gracious. “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine.” What directions do her longings take? Her “eyes are toward the hills,” over which she expects to behold him coming like a roe. Thus she pleads with him not to tarry, “Make haste, my beloved; and be thou like a roe, or to a young hart on the mountain of spices” (8:14). Thus she also anticipates the morning of fuller joy, even while enjoying present fellowship. “He feedeth among the lilies until the day breaks and the shadows flee away” (2:16, 17). And thus the bridegroom himself, feeling if one may so speak, the loneliness of the night, and that it is “not good to be alone,” longs like herself, for the day, and resolves to climb the hills, where he may not only be regaled with freshest odors, but may catch the earliest • gleams of dawn. “Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense” (4:6). On that hill let us meet Him in faith, and watch with Him in hope, yet ever remembering that though His joy which faith gives here, is unspeakably comforting, it is not the gladness of the marriage supper—it is not the blessedness of the bridal day. For He Himself, while telling His disciples, “Lo, I am with you always,” says also this, “I will not henceforth drink of this fruit of the vine until the day that I drink it new with you in My Father’s Kingdom” (Matt. 26:29).

There is the joy of deliverance from overwhelming danger. This was the joy of the Jews when their adversary perished and Mordecai was exalted :—”The Jews had light, and gladness and joy, and honor . . . the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast, and a good day” Esth. 8:16). Such shall be the Church’s joy in the morning of her great deliverance. There is the joy of escape from captivity and return from exile, such as made Israel feel as men that dream. Such shall be the Church’s joy when her long captivity is done. Then shall her mouth be filled with laughter, and her tongue with singing; having sowed in tears she reaps in joy (Psa. 66:2). There is the joy of harvest (Isa. 9 :

3), and such shall be the Church’s joy. There is the mother’s joy when her pangs are over, and the child is born into the world (John 16:20). With such joy shall we rejoice, and our joy no man taketh from us. The joy in reserve for us is manifold and large; it will abide and satisfy; it is the joy of the morning—a long glad day before us; no evening with its lengthening shadows, no night with its chills and darkness. “There

shall be no night there, and they need no candles, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 22:5).

The prospect of this morning—this “morning of joy” --nerves and cheers us under all our tribulation. Were this morning an uncertainty, how dark would the night seem! How difficult for us to fight against faintness and despair ! But the thought of morning invigorates and braces us. We can set out faces to the storm, for behind it lies the calm. We can ‘bear the parting, for the meeting is not distant. We can afford to weep, for the tears shall soon be wiped away. We can watch the tedious sick bed, for soon “the inhabitants shall not say, I am sick.” We can, look quietly into the grave of buried love and cherished hope, for resurrection shines behind it. Things may be against us here, but they are for us hereafter. The here is but an hour; the hereafter is a whole eternity.

A TOKEN OF MY COVENANT.

What shall I render unto Thee ?
What praise sufficient could there be
For all Thy benefits toward me,
O Thou Most High ?

I’ll drink Salvation’s cup to-day
Which Thou hast poured.
Be Thou my stay! Assist me as
Thy saint to pay My vows to Thee.

Remembering Thy Heavenly call,
I’ll strive to be sincere to all.
I pray for grace lest I should fall
From simple Truth.

In thought, in word, in all my ways
Thy holy standard I would raise,
Nor please, nor honor self, but praise,
My worthy King.

To-day in matters small or great,
I’ll serve with faithfulness and wait
For further joys. Oh, blessed state,
Thus serving Thee!

I’ll strive to “choose things that excel”;
All anxious care I’ll seek to quell,
And all discouragements repel,
And be content.

I’ll neither murmur nor repine!
I’ll trust my heart to care Divine,
To make of it a sacred shrine
Where Thou canst dwell.
—V.N.S.

Published by the Berean Biblical Institute, at National Bank Chambers, 226 Glenferrie Rd.,
Hawthorn, Melbourne E 2.
(Monthly) 2/6 per annum, post paid,

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THE NEW YEAR.

THE opening of a new year is a most favorable time for special circumspection—for reviewing the year past, for the looking forward to the things coming upon the earth, and for a general survey of present conditions in the world, amongst the Lord's people, and particularly in our own hearts. This circumspection should be taken with a view to our continual growth in knowledge and in grace, that we may hold fast to our hope in Christ, and wait patiently for Him.

Never before in the history of the human race has there been such momentous happenings in the world as have been witnessed during the past twelve months. Thinkers in all walks of life regard the outlook with doubt, if not with anxiety; but just here it is the position of the Lord's people and the provision for their welfare that we have in mind.

It is because the Lord has called us out of the world to constitute the New Creation, His "Body," His "Bride," to share with Him His spiritual, heavenly glories and honors, therefore we should ever keep this in mind and strive for these things, for "even hereunto were ye called."—1 Pet. 2:21. Called to "glory, honor and immortality," it remains for us to make this calling and election sure. (Rom. 2:7; 2 Pet. 1:10.) Again, we are reminded, "Let us fear lest a promise having been left us of entering into His rest (the heavenly rest) tany of you should seem to come short of it."—Heb. 4:1.

In the 91st Psalm the prophet tells who will stand, namely, those whose habitation is the Lord; those who abide under His shadow; those who trust under His wings for protection. The picture is that of a mother hen, who, when the hawk is about, clucks for her brood, calling them under her shadow, under her wings, under her special protection.

When considering the matter of the trials and testings of all the spirit-begotten New 'Creatures in the truth, we need to continually remember that they will surely be on three main points—(1) Faith, (2) humility, (3) love.

To fail in any of these will mean disaster. To come off conqueror in all three of them will mean energy and devotion to know and to do the Father's will. The time is short, and the tests will be severe. But He who is on our part is greater than all that he against us, and ready to render every assistance needful if our hearts be but loyal along the points mentioned; and if not loyal, then it would not be the will of God that we should be numbered amongst the Elect, because we would not be of the fore-ordained class, "Copies of His Son."

These thoughts lead us up to the propriety of good resolutions, holy vows, and the opening of the new

year is an excellent opportunity for these. Whoever is of a really and properly thankful heart will feel at this season particularly like saying with the Psalmist, "What shall I render unto the Lord, my God, for all His benefits to- me?" For the gracious favor and blessings received 'throughout all the days of our lives, and particularly during the past year, with its many changing scenes that have shaken the whole world. Then comes the response, "I will take the cup of salvation (which is the cup of sacrifice), calling upon the name of the Lord (for grace to help me). I will pay my vows unto the Most High, in the presence of all the people." And the more Fully we comply with these intentions and heart desires, the more complete will be our blessing and keeping, under whatever circumstances may be permitted of the Lord, and the greater our progress toward the Heavenly Inheritance. 4

Life and Death.

So he died for his faith; that is fine—
More than most of us do.
But, stay, can you add to that line
That he lived for it, too ?

In his death he bore witness at last
As a martyr to truth;
Did his life do the same in the past
From the days of his youth ?

It is easy to die; men have died
For a wish or a whim—
From bravado or passion or pride—
Was it harder for him ?

But to live—every day to live out
All the truth that he dreamt,
While his friends met his conduct with doubt,
And the world with contempt;—

Was it thus that he plodded ahead,
Never turning aside?
Then we'll talk of the life that he led—
Never mind how he died.

EC.

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Communion with God.

(Continued from December issue.—No. 4.)

IN continuation of this subject respecting the privilege and benefits of communion with our Heavenly Father, and the causes and reasons for the permission of affliction, including sickness, as applying to the consecrated Church, further consideration is now given to the words of the Apostle James : “The prayer of faith shall save the sick.”(James 5:15.)

Three main classes of sufferings were brought to mind in our previous number, attention being directed to the first class—all the sufferings of Christ, and those of His Body members that are brought about directly by their zeal for the Lord’s cause in “filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ.”

Of the second class of sickness and afflictions are poverty constitutional weaknesses, etc., which, like Paul’s sore , the Heavenly Father sees will be really advantageous to us. For He doubtless often sees better than we how weak we are, and how a little adversity is necessary. These weaknesses God sees best to leave us under, but assures us, through Paul, of “grace sufficient” to counterbalance such weaknesses. A realisation of such care for our real interests, while humiliating, in that it forces conviction of our weakness, is refreshing and inspiring, in that it proves our Father’s love and care.

The third class includes chiefly such afflictions as God visits upon His children as special chastisements for special transgressions. These are mentioned in Heb. 12:5-11. “Son, despise not thou the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when thou art reproveth by Him ; for whom the Lord loveth He disciplineth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure discipline, God dealeth with You as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father disciplineth not? But if ye be without discipline whereof all are partakers, then are ye spurious and not (real) sons Now, no discipline for the present seemeth joyous, hut grievous ; nevertheless, it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are (properly) exercised (or trained) thereby.” This description, it will be observed, covers not merely the reproofs or rebukes of the Lord (verse 5), of the unfaithful and wanderers and transgressors, but also the disciplinary trials which come to us in well doing, and are permitted for the developing and strengthening of character ;— hence both second and third class sufferings.

It is only the rebukes and reproofs of the Lord for sin and unfaithfulness that we are examining in this third class of afflictions. We remark, too, that probably every son, except the one perfect one, our Lord Jesus, has at times needed and received rebukes by afflictions for unfaithfulness. And it is well that we should learn to recognise these rebukes and to wisely apply their lessons. Rightly dividing, We shall neither err with some in crediting every affliction to the devil—receiving none as rebukes from our Father, nor will we err on the other hand and suppose every calamity and accident which occurs to the world in general and to the nominal church to be a divine rebuke. We should see clearly that only the consecrated “sons” are under God’s special supervision, which includes rebukes by the Lord for sins and shortcomings, as well as afflictions in well-doing, permitted to test and perfect us. If therefore the saints experience serious afflictions, they should at once examine themselves conscientiously before God, to see whether their afflictions arise in any sense from: faithfulness to the Lord and the truth. If they find that they do, they should rejoice in them, and wait patiently for recovery, which without our asking sometimes comes speedily; praying meantime with thanksgiving for blessings enjoyed and with supplications for further usefulness in the Lord’s due time.

The Apostle Peter mentions some who suffered, not for righteousness’ sake, but as evildoers and as busybodies in other men’s matters. Such, as he shows, have no right to rejoice in such sufferings, but contrariwise to be ashamed,— to lay the lesson to heart and by God’s grace reform their methods.

While some, humble minded, do not readily recognise any sufferings as endured for the Lord's sake, and need to be encouraged along this line, others who do little and suffer little from any cause, imagine themselves martyrs for the truth. Let us avoid both extremes and think of ourselves soberly, underestimating rather than overestimating our little services and sacrifices.

But if we see no evidence that our afflictions have resulted either directly or indirectly from our zeal in the Lord's service, we should at once seek for a cause of the afflictions as a rebuke from the Lord, remembering that nothing could happen to us aside from our Father's permission, and that He never permits them except for a wise purpose.

:Of the rebuking afflictions, Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth (1 Cor. 11:21, 22, 27, 29, 30-34). After recounting how careless and unappreciative of their covenant many of them were, failing to recognise their proper participation with Christ, to be broken with Him and share His cup of suffering for the truth's sake, he says : "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." This may refer to spiritual lethargy and sickness only but not improbably also to the physical.

The general object of many such afflictions is our discipline and reformation ; and happy is the son who shall speedily note a rebuke of the Father, and repent and come back quickly into full harmony; and who, exercised thereby, shall seldom need the rebuking rod of affliction. The Apostle refers to this also (1 Cor. 11:31-34), saying, "If we would judge ourselves we should not be judged (by the Lord)." If we would critically watch ourselves and correct our own faults, disciplining ourselves, we should not need to be taken in hand and disciplined :by afflictions. "But when we are judged by the Lord we are corrected, (in order) that we should not be condemned with the world." The consecrated are tried now, in order that they may not need any further trial in the future, during the Millennial Age, when the world shall be on trial.

"Is any among you suffering (afflicted), let him pray," says the Apostle (James 5:13). This counsel will apply to all the trials and afflictions of God's people, mental and physical, especially such as are of the first class or the second class. Such :sufferers may take all their troubles of every kind to the Lord direct, and be assured of His sympathy and grace to help and sustain. Such need no elders to pray for the forgiveness of their sins, and in the following verses (14, 15), where, evidently, the third class afflictions are referred to,—sicknesses, the result of rebukes from God for sins, and not sicknesses of the class first described, in which we may rejoice. James says: "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and though he have committed sins they shall be forgiven him. Therefore confess your sins one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." The prayer, as we understand it, should be for the forgiveness of the sins of which the sickness is a punishment or rebuke, rather than for release from the deserved punishment. But if the sickness was a judgment or discipline for sin, we should expect that when the sin had been confessed and truly repented of, the Lord would remove the chastisement and raise up the penitent son from the affliction, either partially or wholly.—Compare Matt. 9:2-6; John 5:14; 1 John 5:16. -

But let us remember that this statement does not refer to the various small aches and annoyances to which we, in common with the world in general, are subject; and Which serve us a good purpose in the development of patience and sympathy for others. We know this, first of all, by the calling in of the elders of the Church (the senior, or chief, or official members) to pray over and anoint the sick with oil : because such extreme measures would be quite improper for a slight ailment. We know it, secondly, by the Greek word used for "sick," in verse 14, which has the significance of helpless or impotent.

OUR PRESENT STANDPOINT.

We see, then, that promiscuous praying for healing during the Gospel Age would have been improper, and that only by means of the gift of healing were the early cures of the age performed : that it ceased with the death of the apostles after accomplishing its object : and that the proper prayers relating to sickness, on the part of the saints, have been those offered for the forgiveness of sins—as a result of which healing followed.

The saints cannot properly pray for their own health now, any more than could their Master. They cannot properly ask the restitution privileges which they have consecrated, nor can they ask that their sacrifices be nullified by having all the cost of weariness, exhaustion, stripes or sickness miraculously removed. But when they realise their afflictions to be punishments for sins, they can still feel at liberty to confess their sins one to another, and pray to God for forgiveness, and thus they may, as a result, be healed.

The saints who abide in Christ, and in whom His Word abides, may pray for others than themselves; namely, in cases where they are sure their object is not self-exaltation; where their desires for the recovery of the sick are not selfish; where they have reason to believe that the restored health would be consecrated to good works and to the glory of God. In such cases we may upon request pray for the recovery of the afflicted or imbecile, not of the consecrated little flock—the sacrificers, the Royal Priesthood. Yet even in such cases, though our faith must necessarily be strong, because confident of asking from right motives, and at a time when the Lord is pleased to grant a beginning of restitution blessings, we should always say, as the Master did in His prayers, “Nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done.”

However, it is not time yet to expect general healing or restitution work, as that evidently will not be due until the entire Priesthood shall have finished sacrificing and entered with their Head and Chief Priest, Jesus, into the glories and perfections of the heavenly state or condition, typified by the Most Holy of the Tabernacle and Temple.

In view of the Scripture teaching, all the consecrated will surely desire to walk in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus and those who followed trim most closely ; ignoring in this as in other things their own preferences as to how they would like to think about it, and how they would like to do and have God do in such matters. Let us fully submit our wills and methods to God’s plan and arrangement as expressed and illustrated in His Word. As “new creatures” we may ask freely and persistently for all spiritual blessings and graces and unselfishly for all our necessities promised. Then, sure that such will come, we should seek for them, and acknowledge them with thankfulness, by whatever agency or channel sent.

But in earthly matters we must be very careful : let us ask for nothing beyond our actual needs, as God (not we) sees the necessity and expediency—thankful always for the “bread and water” promised, as well as for every additional comfort. Realising always God’s superior wisdom and boundless love for us, we should fear to take our interests in any degree out of His hand. Thus we may always live rejoicing, realising that, whatever may befall us, all is working out for our good.

“Take Thine own way with me, dear Lord,
Thou canst not otherwise than bless;
I launch me forth upon a sea
Of boundless love and tenderness.

“I could not choose a larger bliss
Than to be wholly Thine; and mine
A will whose highest joy in this
To ceaselessly unclasp in Thine.

“I will not fear Thee, O my God !
The clays to come can only bring
Their perfect sequences of love,
Thy larger, deeper comforting.”
(Concluded.)

Sons and Daughters of Comfort.

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”—Rom. 15:4.

COMFORT! Consolation! What rest and refreshment, peace and joy these words imply! All the true people of God are represented as His children—sons and daughters ! Some of these are sons of comfort and daughters of comfort, while others are sons and daughters of pain, continually causing more or less of distress and discomfort to others and to themselves. We want to see this subject in its true light, in order that we may each act accordingly ;—that a larger and an increasing number of the children of Zion shall be sons and daughters of comfort to all with whom they come in contact, and thus in a general way comforters to the Church as a whole. Some may be inclined to query : Does the true Church need comfort? Are not the majority too comfortable already? Do they not rather need to be stirred up, to be reminded of their sins, to be chided and made generally as uncomfortable as possible, to the intent that they may thus be helped onward and upward?

We would not ignore the fact that there are occasions when reproofs and corrections in righteousness are proper, as the Apostle advised. But we have no sympathy at all with the thought so common with some good people, viz., that they should always be feeling miserable, by continually nagging and fault-finding, upbraiding and terrorising.

We believe that such well-meant but mistaken efforts have done much harm, have driven many away from the family circle of Zion.

Those needing reproof, rebuke, etc., are such as are walking after the flesh and not after the Spirit—in violation of their covenant. Those who should be warned to flee from the wrath to come are such as have never yet fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the Gospel, —such as are without God, and have no hope in the world, no relationship to Christ,—through faith and obedience. But the true “wheat,” the true members of the Body of Christ, the consecrated, are, however imperfectly, continually seeking to walk after the spirit; though they are well aware that because of imperfections of the flesh they do not and cannot walk up to the spirit. These, instead of needing reproofs and rebukes and smitings and upbraidings for their shortcomings, which they admit and deplore and strive against, need sympathy, assistance, comfort.

Few probably have noticed to what extent the Scriptures administer this very “balm of Gilead” to the true children of Zion; but the Scriptures are full of comfort, and there is great need that all who are truly the Lord’s people should see to it that they are more and more sons and daughters of comfort in the Church, administering to one another the helpfulness and encouragement and refreshment which the Lord intended. Our Lord spoke of the Holy Spirit as the Comforter, saying, “I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter.” (John 14:16.) ‘To what extent our Lord Jesus was a Comforter we may judge as we look back to the three and a half years of His ministry, and at its close hear Him say to His faithful ones, “I will not leave you comfortless”—orphans, bereaved of a caretaker. And as respects His care over the apostles while with them, we have a suggestion from His prayer to the Father, “Of those

whom Thou hast given Me, I have lost none, save the son of perdition,” as the Scriptures foretold.—John 17:12.

It had been foretold of our Lord in advance, through the prophets, that He would be a Comforter, as we read, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek ; He hath

sent me to bind up the broken-hearted; . . . to comfort all that mourn ; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.”—Isa.- 61:1-3.

All this means that our Lord Jesus was a Comforter in Zion above and beyond all other comforters. He entered into sympathy with the meek and lowly and right-intentioned in all of their weaknesses and trials and difficulties ; and this is the hold that the character and words of Jesus have to-day upon our hearts, and also upon the hearts of many who are not His people in the full consecrated sense. It was not by continually chiding the apostles, and accusing them, but because, instead, our Lord sympathised with them, assisted them, and interpreted their heart-intentions liberally, generously, that they became more and more His faithful followers, even unto death. Notice His dealing with the Apostle Peter, after he had denied Him, cursing and swearing. Many of the Lord’s followers, if in His stead, would have felt it their bounden duty to rebuke Peter publicly before all the apostles, and to have required public confession and some sort of penance ; and on every possible occasion afterward to have thrown in his face his weakness and disloyalty.

Such have not rightly interpreted and copied the Lord’s spirit, and hence are not sons and daughters of consolation in the

Church. They are, on the contrary, strife-breeders, vexatious hinderers of the work they desire to forward. They should hear the Master’s voice, “Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me.” In proportion as we learn of the Lord we become, not mouthpieces for the Law merely, but mouthpieces specially for mercy and love and helpfulness and comfort.

So lay as the record shows, our Lord did not once mention to Peter either his profanity or his disloyalty. Peter knew about these without being told ; he had wept over them; a mere word from the Lord in chiding, reproof, might have discouraged him,—perhaps hopelessly. The nearest thing to a reproof in our Lord’s conduct and language was the inquiry, “Lovest thou Me?” Let all who would be true sons and daughters of consolation in Zion learn this lesson from the great Teacher—not to strive to punish and correct and reprove and rebuke, but to avoid these so far as possible, and to inquire, not so much about the past as about the present. What is the offender’s present attitude toward the Lord and toward His flock?

COMFORT AND COMFORTING NEEDFUL

It was with the full appreciation of the fact that the Church would need comfort rather than chiding and reproof that our Lord said, “If I go not away the Comforter (the Holy Spirit) cannot come.” The ransom must be paid, must be presented in the “Most Holy,” to the Heavenly Father, before His blessing could be bestowed. That blessing would yield the comfort of the begetting of the Spirit and comfort of the exceeding great and precious promises to those who had accepted Jesus,—and to those who would believe on Him through their word. True, our Lord spoke of the Holy Spirit as reproving, but not as reproving the Church. He said, “He shall reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of a coming judgment.” The nearest suggestion to reproof in respect of the Holy Spirit’s dealing with the Church is that given by the Apostle when he says, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” And again he says, “Quench not the Spirit.”—Eph. 4:30 ; I Thess. 5:19.

The grand provision made for the comfort of the Lord's people clearly indicates a necessity for such comfort ; nor is this necessity difficult to find. The Lord's people are beset on every hand with adverse condition';, —the world, the flesh and the adversary—seeking to intimidate or discourage or entrap the new creature, so as to hinder its development in grace, knowledge and love, and ultimately to hinder it from the attainment of the perfection and glory to follow, which God has promised to the faithful only. What we need, in order to make us sons and daughters of consolation in the Church, is a larger measure of love and sympathy in our hearts. In proportion as sympathy and love come in, they will crowd out the spirit of strife and contention and judging and fault-finding ; even as they crowded out at first the spirit of the flesh,—anger, malice, hatred, strife and vainglory.

As a rule (there probably are exceptions to all rules) those who have the spirit of helpfulness, of comfort, of consolation, and who are able to pour this balm into the wounded hearts of others most liberally, are those who themselves have passed through severe trials, difficulties, disciplines, and who have thus been touched with a feeling of the infirmities of our race, and, more than this, have been touched with a feeling of sympathy for the weaknesses and oppositions which assail the “brethren” in their endeavour to walk after the Spirit—not after the flesh.

Those who have not “bowels of compassion,” who have little of sympathy, little of desire to lend a helping hand to the weak or the stumbling or those who are out of the way, have much yet to learn respecting the real meaning of the word love, in its higher senses—perfect love, love for the brethren, yea, love that extends to all mankind, even to enemies, as it has opportunity, but “especially to the household of faith.”

O teach me, Lord, that I may teach
The precious things Thou dost impart;
And wing my words that they may reach
The hidden depths of many a heart.

O give Thine own sweet rest to me,
That I may speak with soothing power
A word in season, as from Thee,
To weary ones in needful hour.

O fill me with Thy fullness, Lord,
Until my very heart o'erflow,
In kindling thought and glowing word,
Thy love to tell, Thy praise to show.
(To be continued.)

Faith Encouraged.

“Thy faith hath made thee whole : go in peace.” (Luke 8:48.)

NO essential element of Christian character is given greater prominence in the Scriptures than faith. “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” In this requirement we see the condescending grace of our Heavenly Father, who, though so far above us, yet, like a tender parent, desires the reciprocal love and implicit confidence of His intelligent creatures. Since Christ is the appointed Agent of God in His dealings with men, whom God bids all men to honor, even as they honor the Father, and since He is the appointed way of access to God, faith in Christ is necessarily a part of our faith in God. Those who believe in Christ believe the testimony which God gave of His son through the prophets and through Christ’s own teachings, and the mighty works which God wrought by Him, to the end that men might believe, have a sure and abundant ground for confidence, so that faith might not be mere credulity, but a reasonable thing.

To believe in Jesus in those days, when His mighty works astonished the people, and the beauty of His holiness impressed every beholder, was most reasonable to those of simple hearts, who desired only to know the truth of God and to obey it, and who, therefore, had no crossgrained will or prejudice of their own to oppose it. Nor are the evidences, the foundation of faith in Christ, any less reliable to-day than they were then. On the contrary, they are still more abundant and strong—a firm foundation that can never be moved. In simple faith, reliance upon the testimony of Christ, the sick woman came to Jesus, so fully assured of His power that she did not wait even to call His attention to herself when the multitudes thronged about Him; “for she said, If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole” ; and she was instantly healed. And Jesus, perceiving her faith, said unto her. “Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.”

This miracle was immediately followed by another, still more wonderful—the raising of the dead to life. Faith had brought an anxious father to Jesus to request the healing of his daughter. But while he was making the request, a messenger came to him saying, “Thy daughter is dead, trouble not the Master.” The messenger evidently knew nothing of Jesus’ power to raise the dead, and the anxious father would probably have abandoned all hope except for the Lord’s reassurance of his faith, “Fear not : believe only, and she shall be made whole.”

In the former instance the faith was exercised by the patient; but in this case it was exercised by another on behalf of the patient, who, being dead, had no ability to exercise faith. Yet the faith in the power of Jesus of those who had requested the healing was a very weak faith, and when they saw the child was dead all hope departed. They had considerable faith in Christ, but they did not believe that His power extended to the raising of the dead and were quite incredulous at the suggestion of the Lord’s words— “Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth”—knowing that she was dead. As in the case of Lazarus, our Lord here referred to death as a sleep, in view of the fact of the resurrection. The term is similarly applicable to the whole human family in the death that came upon all through Adam ; because there shall be an awakening, a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. The second death, from which there shall be no resurrection, is never called “sleep” in the Bible.

It is worthy of note, that while our Lord took with Him the parents and three of His disciples into the chamber of death, that they might witness the awakening, when they manifested their lack of faith, He put them all out, and then recalled the dead to life, and permitted them afterward to come in and minister to her. Thus, while He rewarded their faith, weak though it was, He reproved them also, and gave them overwhelming evidence of His mighty power. The statement of verse 55, when relieved of the mists of a false theology, is very clear. “And her spirit came again,” simply signifies, “and her breath returned,” and is so rendered in the Emphatic Diaglott, the Greek word “pneuma,” translated “spirit” in the common

version, signifying breath, wind, or the spirit or breath of life. With the reinstating of the breathing process and the healing of the physical organism came reanimation, restored intelligence, and the dead lived again. Thus the Lord rewarded even the weak faith, and gave them additional and overwhelming evidence to strengthen and establish their faith. The Lord did not expect or desire the people to have faith without good substantial evidence upon which to base it, but He did desire and reward the faith that was exercised to the extent of the evidence. A faith without substantial evidence upon which to base it, is mere credulity, and generally degenerates into gross superstition, unworthy of the intelligence which God has given us.

REST.

“Upon Thy Word I rest,

So strong, so sweet, so sure;

So full of comfort blest,

So wonderful, so pure

The Word that changeth not, that faileth never!

My King, I rest upon Thy Word forever!”

Published by Berean Biblical Institute. National Bank Chambers, Hawthorn Printed by Hickling & Powell, Brunswick, Victoria.