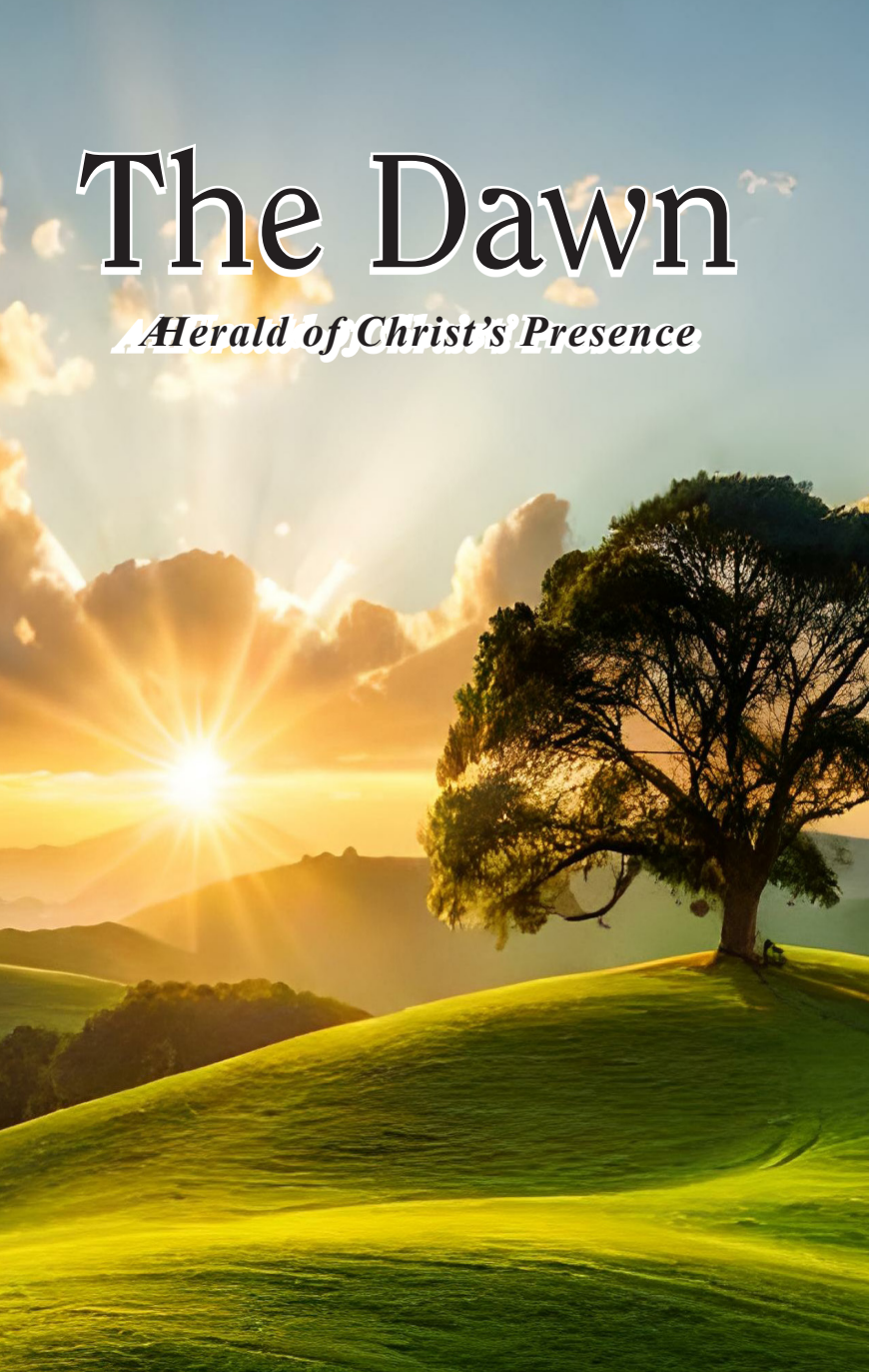


The Dawn

Herald of Christ's Presence



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How God Answers Prayer

“I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.”

*—I Timothy 2:8,
New King James
Version*

HOW CAN WE BE SURE

that God will answer our prayers? It is not enough that we affirm our belief in prayer. Thousands of parents, for example, have believed in prayer and have asked God to protect their children on the battlefield,

only to receive a message that they had been killed or severely injured. Nor does affirming our belief in prayer explain why, when a whole nation prays for peace, it often finds itself caught in a whirlpool of war.

On the other hand, there are thousands who are eager to testify that God has answered their prayers for the safety of their children. Others will testify of the wonderful manner in which God has given them special blessings they asked for in prayer. On the basis of experience alone, therefore, it may seem that God answers the prayers of some, yet does not answer the prayers of others.

This is not, however, in keeping with what the Scriptures tell us about God. The Bible says that he “shows no partiality.” (Acts 10:34, *NKJV*) Thus there must be some good reason why God answers some prayers, and not others. If we can find that reason, it should help restore the faith of some whose prayers have seemingly gone unanswered.

Prayer is a very important phase of Christian experience. It is also practiced widely by the adherents of many other religions. The desire to pray is an acknowledgment of our dependency upon a higher power and the expression of a realization that we need help from some source outside of and wiser than ourselves. Doubtless God is pleased with the sincere desire of all who try to contact him in prayer, because to this extent at least, it is a recognition of a higher sovereign power.

The almost universal urge to pray is due to the fact that the original man, Adam, was created in the image of God. (Gen. 1:27) As a result of man’s fall into sin and death, the divine image in his character has been much blurred, and in many cases almost erased. Yet remnants of it still remain, and one of its manifestations is the urge to pray. There may also be millions who never pray, yet often feel that they should, and have a sense of guilt because they do not.

God is pleased with the spirit of prayer on the part of his creatures. Why, however, does he hear the prayers of some, while apparently other prayers go unheeded? Jesus hints at the answer to this question in his observations about the prayers of many in his day. They prayed to be seen and heard of men, Jesus explained, and thought God would

hear them for their “much speaking.” (Matt. 6:5-7) By this we are reminded that there are proper and improper attitudes of prayer, as well as correct and incorrect methods. Many who enter into prayer may be sincere, but their method is inappropriate.

The Scriptures indicate that there are proper and improper things for which to pray. The Apostle James wrote: “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss.” (James 4:3) It is vitally important to ascertain what we have the privilege of asking God to give us in the way of favors. We cannot expect to ask God for things which merely our fancy dictates, and have our prayers answered.

THE PURPOSE OF PRAYER

There is a divine purpose in prayer, and it is highly important that we keep this in mind if we are to understand why some prayers go unanswered. God did not design prayer as a means of finding out how he should manage his affairs here on the earth. He is not looking to us to tell him what he should do. He has his own fixed plans and purposes, and if we are to receive the riches of his blessing, it is essential that our prayers be in harmony with these. To use the language of James, we ask “amiss” if we petition God in such a way that we are making known to him our own desires in the absence of seeking his will to be done in our life.

In the Scriptures various types of prayer are brought to our attention. Foremost among these are prayers of thanksgiving. (Ps. 92:1) God is undoubtedly pleased when his creatures recognize him as the source of their blessings, and because of this lift up their hearts and voices to him in thanksgiving.

There are prayers of adoration, which give recognition to the glorious attributes of the Creator's character—his wisdom, his justice, his love, and his power. The desire to glorify God and show our adoration for his character should be the motive for much of our praying.—Ps. 29:1,2

Prayers for God's mercy are also appropriate. The Scriptures urge all Christians to seek divine forgiveness of their sins through the medium of prayer. (I John 1:7-9) Paul speaks of this as going "boldly unto the throne of grace," there to obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need.—Heb. 4:16

Then, of course, there are the prayers which are requests for certain blessings or favors from the Lord. It is with these that we are particularly concerned at the moment. Some pray for health, either for themselves or for others. Some pray for wealth. Some pray for protection while on a journey. Millions pray for peace. It has often happened that citizens of countries which are opposing each other in war pray that their respective armies will be victorious. We will assume that all who go to God in prayer are sincere, and of course they ask him for the things which to them seem the most important at the time. However, does the Bible justify us in the belief that all these prayers should be answered in accordance with the requests uttered?

It might be that God would answer a parent's prayer for the safety of their child on the field of battle. It might be, too, that prayers for the peace of a nation are answered. If and when such prayers are answered, it simply means that it was in keeping with the divine will to do so. God has a fixed

plan, in keeping with which he is mindful of the human race. That plan was not made to satisfy the whims and wishes of his human creatures, nor will any amount of praying change his plans.

“Prayer changes things,” it is said, but it does not change God’s plans. God is not looking to us, nor to the nations, to learn what changes he should make in order to bring about better conditions for us or for the world in general. How little confidence we would have in a god whose opinions could be swayed or plans changed simply by the eloquence or persuasion of people’s prayers!

“THY WILL BE DONE”

In their prayers, God’s people should have uppermost in mind and heart the desire that his will be done in all their experiences. We have an outstanding example of this in the case of Jesus. In the Garden of Gethsemane, when the Master was facing arrest and death, “Anguish and dismay came over him, and he said to them [his disciples], My heart is ready to break with grief. ... He went on a little, fell on his face in prayer, and said, My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me by. Yet, not as I will, but as thou wilt.”—Matt. 26:38,39, *New English Bible*

It was God’s will that Jesus suffered humiliation and death as the Redeemer and Savior of men. This important feature of the divine arrangement had been foretold by the holy prophets of the Old Testament. Jesus wanted above everything else to have his Father’s will accomplished, regardless of what it meant to him. He affirmed this later, when he was about to be arrested. Peter drew his sword to protect his Master, who said to him, “Put up thy

sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”—John 18:10,11

The followers of Jesus have the privilege of suffering and dying with him. Paul spoke of being “crucified with Christ,” and he also wrote, “Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.” (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:29) We are called upon to follow in Jesus’ footsteps, so we know that it is not God’s will to spare us from all hardship. Thus, as with Jesus, our chief concern should be that the Lord’s will might be done in our mortal bodies. The Lord’s will might be that for a time we enjoy certain earthly blessings. However, the burden of our prayers should not be for these, but for his will to be done in every experience of life.

Jesus enlarged upon this point when he said to his disciples that as long as they were abiding in him and his words were abiding in them, they could ask in prayer for whatever they desired, and it would be granted unto them. (John 15:7) This might seem like an assurance that we are privileged to ask God for anything which we may happen to think of and want, but not so.

Note the condition attached to this statement by the Master: “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you.” To abide in Christ means to be a member of his body, he being our Head. (Col. 1:18) This means that his thoughts become our thoughts, and his plans our plans. If our wills have thus been wholly surrendered to God, through Christ, we will have no will of our own, hence our prayers will not be requests for what we want, but only for those things which are in harmony with the will of our

Head. By thus praying in harmony with the Lord's will, we can be assured of favorable answers.

This is in harmony with another statement made by Jesus to his disciples in which he informs us that the Heavenly Father will be pleased to give the "Holy Spirit to them that ask him." (Luke 11:13) To be filled with the Spirit of God means to have his thoughts dominate our thinking, and for our lives to be conformed to those thoughts. Then we will not be asking God for blessings except those which he has promised to give, and so there will never be any question about our prayers being answered.

"THY KINGDOM COME"

Luke 11:1 records the disciples' request, "Lord, teach us to pray." In response to this, Jesus gave them what is now familiarly known as "The Lord's Prayer." In this model prayer we are given a guide to what we may pray for.

An important part of this brief outline of prayer is the proper method of approach to God: "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." (vs. 2) In the Scriptures, Adam is styled a "son of God." (Luke 3:23,38) When he sinned, however, he lost his sonship, being alienated from God and sentenced to death. Adam's children, the entire human race, are likewise separated from God, so they cannot properly address him as "our Father which art in heaven." This is a privilege which belongs exclusively to those who have repented of their sins, accepted Jesus as their personal Savior, and devoted their lives to God in full dedication, or consecration, to do his will. Such are represented as having received God's Spirit

of sonship, and thus have become his children.—
Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6

As the children of God, these will desire above all else to honor the name of their Father. Thus by word and by action their attitude will always be, “Hallowed be thy name.” To properly hallow our Heavenly Father’s name implies that when we approach him in prayer we will do so in the manner outlined for us in the Scriptures by Jesus. He explained that our prayers should be offered in his name.—John 15:16

There is a reason for this. As members of the justly condemned race, we have no standing at the divine throne except through Jesus, our Advocate. (I John 2:1) In his name, and through the merit of his shed blood, we are privileged to go “boldly” to the throne of grace to seek forgiveness and all the other blessings which our loving Heavenly Father has promised to give. (Heb. 4:16) If we properly hallow his name we will never presume to approach him except through Jesus.

When we follow the example of The Lord’s Prayer, our requests will not be so much on our own behalf as they will be for the blessing of others. This is indicated in the opening petition: “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” (Matt. 6:10; Luke 11:2) The answer to this request will be an answer to much for which people have prayed throughout the centuries. That answer will satisfy the legitimate desires of all people. It will mean peace, health, and everlasting life for all who conform themselves to the righteous laws of the Lord’s kingdom.

The blessings which the human race craves, and for which millions pray, were all anticipated by God

and provided for through the kingdom that he has promised by all his prophets. In these promises we find many details of the blessings that it will guarantee to the people, including the restoration to life of those who have died. God has not been unmindful of the suffering of the people, nor has he turned a deaf ear to their cries for help. His answer to their prayers, when in his due time it comes, will be far beyond anything that they have ever dared to hope.

Take the case of parents who pray for the safety of their child on the battlefield. The parents love their child, and nothing could mean more to them than their safe return to the family home. Yet if the child does not return, and their first thought might be that God does not care, that he has no pity. How differently the parents would feel if they could believe that God has provided a homecoming far more satisfactory than ever entered their mind when they prayed!

How little does a parent sometimes know of the hardship and suffering their child may be saved by falling asleep in death. After all, both the parent and child are members of a dying race, and the difference between dying on the battlefield and dying later of old age is only a momentary one when compared with the endless stretch of eternity. It is from this standpoint that we must learn to view the subject of prayer and the manner in which God answers our petitions.

The very fact that we pray to God is acknowledgment of our belief that his wisdom and power and love far exceed our own. Yet we often forget this, and feel that he has not honored our prayers because he has not answered them as we would have, through

the exercise of our own minimal abilities. The length of our condemned life is very short. We judge accomplishments by whether or not they reach maturity within this short time of which we have knowledge. However, we should not judge God's works from this standpoint.

The Scriptures speak of God as being "from everlasting to everlasting." (Ps. 41:13; 90:2) He is under no necessity to complete any particular phase of his plan within our short lifetime, not even if it has to do with our individual requests. If we prayed to God today for some special blessings which would be in keeping with his will, and the answer did not come until tomorrow, or even the day after tomorrow, we would not lose faith in him, but would rejoice when the answer did come. God has his "tomorrows" also. His days are not measured by hours, for they are ages, and in his "tomorrow" age, the thousand-year period of Christ's kingdom, all those blessings which the world has legitimately craved, and for which millions have voiced requests to God, will be abundantly showered upon humanity. In recognition of this, the people will then respond: "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, ... we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."—Isa. 25:9

"AS IT IS IN HEAVEN"

We have already learned that God will not answer any prayer that is not in harmony with his will. In The Lord's Prayer, this principle is clearly set forth. It asks God for blessings upon the people of earth—not any sort of supposedly good things which they may crave, but things in harmony with

the divine will: "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."—Matt. 6:10

What great latitude he has given us about things in harmony with his will. God's will is done in heaven, and it is his purpose it shall be done in earth to the same degree. We do not know, of course, all the ways God's will is done in heaven, but we can be reasonably sure that the evils which now exist on earth do not plague the lives of those in the spirit realm we call heaven.

War is one of the great evils that is not in harmony with the divine will. We, then, should pray for peace. (Ps. 122:6; Nah. 1:15) Indeed, we could not pray for God's will to be done in the earth as it is in heaven without praying for peace. Our prayers for peace should be in keeping with God's plan to establish peace, and that is his kingdom plan. (Ezek. 37:21-28) He has promised to set up a kingdom, to establish a government. Jesus will be the King in that government. "The government shall be upon his shoulder," wrote Isaiah, and "of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end."—Isa. 9:6,7

Doubtless God looks with sympathy upon the yearnings of mankind to abolish war. When international tension is at a high pitch and war seems inevitable, devout people on both sides feel compelled to pray for peace. The differences which threaten to precipitate war may be resolved or they may not be, but we know that ultimately there shall be universal and lasting peace. It will not be because the nations will at last find a workable formula for peace, but because "The Prince of Peace" will take over the rulership of earth.

(Isa. 9:6) Then the prayer “Thy kingdom come,” will be answered.

Christ’s government is symbolized in the Scriptures as the “mountain of the LORD.” In Micah 4:1-4 we read that the time will come when the people will say, “Let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the Law shall go forth of Zion, and the Word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it.”

What a wonderful program for disarmament! It is God’s program, and when we pray for peace, and for the nations to disarm, let us do so with the assurance that God will hear, and that he will answer our prayers in harmony with his will, which will be through his kingdom. “He maketh wars to cease,” prophesied David.—Ps. 46:9

Part 2 in our consideration of this important subject will appear in next month’s issue of *The Dawn* magazine. In it, we will examine other portions of The Lord’s Prayer in detail. We will also look into further aspects of God’s coming kingdom on earth which, according to the Scriptures, will bless all people and provide answers to millions of heart-felt prayers which have been uttered down through the centuries. ■

God's Building

Key Verse: “*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*”

—*I Corinthians 3:11*

Selected Scripture:
I Corinthians 3:9-17

IRRESPECTIVE OF HOW beautiful and structurally sound a building might be, if it is not set upon an adequate foundation, it will not last. Cracks will soon appear, floors and walls will warp, the roof will sag, pieces will begin to fall, and the once stately monument of man's craftsmanship becomes unusable, an abandoned eyesore, fit only for destruction. How important is a solid, unmovable foundation, one that is level and square, adequate to sustain that which is built upon it through many passing generations. Just such a sure and everlasting foundation has been laid for us upon which to build our structure of faith in God and his promises. As the Apostle Paul tells us in our Key Verse, that foundation is Jesus Christ.

Enlarging upon this picture, the apostle wrote, “Ye are God's building,” emphasizing that each of the Lord's consecrated children is constructing upon this solid foundation of Christ a structure of character acceptable to God.—*I Cor. 3:9*

The meaning of this illustration is stated in other words by the Apostle Paul when he wrote, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” (*II Cor. 5:17*) How do we come into Christ? First, we must know about him and of his fundamental part in God's plan of salvation. We must recognize that as an expression of the love of

his Heavenly Father, and of his own love, Jesus laid down his life as a ransom, a substitute for the forfeited life of Adam and the race that was condemned through him. (Rom. 5:18,19; I Tim. 2:5,6) This means the recognition of Jesus as our Redeemer, the foundation laid for our salvation.

To truly understand what Christ has done for us, and to believe it with our whole heart, results in a tremendous change in the direction of our lives. The apostle explains: “The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”—II Cor. 5:14,15

In the setting of our lesson, Paul likens this work to that of building upon the foundation of Christ with “gold, silver, precious stones,” representing the valuable truths and precious promises of his Word. (I Cor. 3:12) “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus into good works, ... that we should walk in them.”—Eph. 2:10

One of the essentials for Christian growth is faith in the invisible things of God. The church at Corinth, to whom Paul was writing, was having trouble along this line. He said they were carnal—that is, earthly, or human in their viewpoints. As a result, they were giving too much prominence to visible human leaders.—I Cor. 3:1-4

Here is pointed out the importance of how we build on the foundation provided. The apostle intimates that some were building with “wood, hay, stubble”—along human lines, expressing the spirit of the flesh—which would not stand the test of God’s judgment. (vss. 12-15) Paul knew that the Christian’s building work required it to be founded upon recognition of the invisible leadership of Christ and God. “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, ... I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.”—vss. 5,6

The Temple of the Holy Spirit

Key Verse: *“Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?”*
—*I Corinthians 6:19*

Selected Scripture:
I Corinthians 6:12-20

THE VERSES CITED FOR today’s lesson relate to immorality which the Apostle Paul learned existed in the Corinthian church. “Your glorying is not good,” he wrote. (I Cor. 5:6) They evidently took pride in their false sense of brotherly love, which was causing them to tolerate such a condition.

In the case of one offender whom Paul called to their attention, he directed that the church should put that person out from their fellowship. Paul spoke of this action as the purging out of “leaven” from their midst. (vss. 2-7) Leaven in the Scriptures is used as a symbol of sin in one form or another.

That immorality would exist in a congregation of the Lord’s people perhaps seems strange, but not so when we take into account the former habits of some in Corinth who had accepted Christ and attached themselves to his people. The general population in Corinth venerated heathen gods. Among these, the Greek and Roman goddesses of love, Aphrodite and Venus, were greatly worshipped. Because immorality had likely been a part of their former worship, it would not at first have

been viewed by some in the church at Corinth with the same degree of disdain as it should have been. However, such tolerance was fully contrary to the will of God, and Paul took drastic steps to correct the disorder.

Nevertheless, this stand against wrong was taken by Paul in love. He reveals this in his second letter to the church at Corinth. (II Cor. 2:1-11) Paul was planning to visit these brethren, and he wanted nothing to mar the joy of the occasion. He commended the church for taking the action against the wrongdoer which he urged. He also considered the fact that this individual had learned his lesson. To avoid overburdening him with sorrow, Paul now suggested to the church that he be forgiven and restored to their fellowship. If the church took this action, Paul explained, he would rejoice with them in it. Thus we see not only that Paul wanted the wrongdoing corrected, but also that the wrongdoer be forgiven and recovered.

Our Key Verse states that the body is the “temple of the Holy Spirit” which is within us. Temples were well-known to the ancients, both Jews and Gentiles. In Israel, their Temple was, symbolically speaking, the meeting place between God and his people. It was looked upon by the devout of Israel as a sacred, holy place, and the faithful among them endeavored to keep it that way. However, under the rulership of wicked kings, the Temple became defiled by idol worship set up within its walls.

The temple symbolism is used in the New Testament in two ways. The first is found in today’s lesson, in which Paul refers to the fleshly body of each believer as a “temple,” the dwelling place of God through his Holy Spirit, which we must keep pure and undefiled. The second temple picture is presented by the Apostle Peter. He wrote, “Ye also, as lively [living] stones, are built up a spiritual house.” (I Pet. 2:5) Here each consecrated believer is spoken of, not as a temple, but as a stone being prepared to be a part of a spiritual “house” or “temple” in God’s kingdom.—Heb. 3:6; Eph. 2:19-22; Matt. 6:10 ■

No Longer Strangers

Key Verse: “*Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.*”
—*Ephesians 2:19*

Selected Scripture:
Ephesians 2:11-19

God, but are considered as his sons. (Rom. 8:14-16; I John 3:1,2) In harmony with this, Paul says elsewhere: “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”—II Cor. 5:17

In Ephesians 2:8-10, the apostle says that it is only through faith and by the grace of God that this new status of sonship is obtained. There are no works we can do to achieve it. He says, “we are his workmanship.” Yet, once we attain this condition we have the ability, through Christ Jesus, to render acceptable works to God. This is a seeming paradox. On the one hand we could do no works to attain this new relationship, but once having entered into a covenant of sonship with God we can, indeed we must, render acceptable works to him. The Apostle James says, “Faith, if it hath not works, is dead.”—James 2:17

ONE OF THE BEAUTIFUL results accruing to those who heartily accept the redemption supplied by the blood of Jesus’ ransom sacrifice is that such, upon giving themselves in unreserved consecration, enter a special covenant relationship with God. This arrangement means a new status for those thus entered, one in which they are no longer alienated from

Our works as a child of God are, most importantly, the development and outward manifestation of the character fruitage founded in Christ our Head. (John 15:8; Gal. 5:22,23) Acceptable works also include sacrifice and service on behalf of the Lord, his Truth, and our fellow brethren in Christ.—Rom. 12:1; Eph. 4:14,15; Gal. 5:13

In our lesson, Paul says that Gentile believers had been “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God.” (Eph. 2:12) However, the time had now come for the blood of Christ to be efficacious to all who had a hearing ear and a heart of faith, whether Jew or Gentile. Each had the opportunity to claim their new status through the means provided, Christ Jesus.

For believing Jews, who had been under the “law of commandments” for many centuries, this meant coming out from that arrangement and into Christ. (vs. 15) It had been thoroughly proven that only a perfect man could keep these former ordinances and hence reap the earthly promises attached thereto. Only Jesus, who was sinless, was able to do this. He sacrificed these earthly privileges, however, to provide a way of escape for mankind, both Jew and Gentile, out of the bondage of sin and death. Thus, through Jesus, “we both [Jew and Gentile] have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”—vs. 18

In our Key Verse, Paul states that all such who have come into this new relationship, regardless of their former status, are now part of one group, “the household of God.” This symbolic “house” has as its foundation the “apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.” (vs. 20) Once the building work is finished, with every member—every stone—formed and fitted into place, it will be not just a building, but a “holy temple,” a “habitation of God.” (vss. 21,22) It will be from this temple, located in the symbolic New Jerusalem, that blessings will flow to all the families of the earth in the Messianic kingdom.—Rev. 21:1-7,22-24 ■

Sacrifices of Praise

Key Verse: “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”
—Hebrews 13:15

Selected Scripture:
Hebrews 13:12-21

eat which serve the tabernacle. The bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.”—Heb. 13:10-13

Paul continues, as recorded in our Key Verse, by encouraging the followers of Jesus to continually offer “the sacrifice of praise” to God. He further describes this sacrifice as “the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name,” then adding, “To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”—vss. 15,16

These words of the apostle remind us of the incense which was sprinkled upon the coals of the Golden Incense Altar of the Tabernacle, yielding a sweet odor

IN TODAY’S LESSON, THE

Apostle Paul speaks of both the sacrifice and service of Jesus, and also that of his footstep followers, the church. In doing so, the apostle hearkens back to the service and offerings of Israel’s Tabernacle arrangement, detailed in the Books of Exodus and Leviticus. Paul states: “We have an altar, whereof they have no right to

which penetrated into the Most Holy, representing the presence of God. (Exod. 30:1-8) Surely, the sacrifices of praise, our lips giving thanks to God, doing good, and communicating one with another, are as incense, a sweet odor unto our Heavenly Father. In another place, Paul speaks of such offerings as “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.”—Phil. 4:18

Speaking of another aspect of our subject, the apostle wrote, “For in that he [Jesus] died, he died unto sin once. ... Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin.” (Rom. 6:10,11) We are glad Paul reminds us that our dying unto sin is a reckoned matter due to the fact that we are still imperfect in the flesh. Yet, because of the imputation of the blood of Jesus on our behalf, we have divine authority for reckoning our sacrifice and service as “holy, acceptable unto God.”—Rom. 12:1

It is a wonderful privilege and a high honor to which we have been invited, and only as we have faith to believe that the blood of Christ makes our sacrifice acceptable are we able to appreciate the reality of this blessed part we have in the divine program of reconciliation. We can believe as Paul did, that even though we are not “sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.” (II Cor. 3:5) We can accept the assurance that our Adamic imperfections are covered by the robe of Christ’s righteousness, and we are thus acceptable to God as prospective members in the one body of Christ.—Isa. 61:10; Phil. 3:9; I Cor. 12:12,27

Let us, therefore, be daily engaged in service and sacrifice toward God, his cause of truth and righteousness, and our fellow brethren in Christ. Let us also be engaged in proclaiming the “gospel of the kingdom” to this world’s poor groaning creation. (Matt. 24:14) “For with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” Thus our “sacrifice of praise” will bring honor and glory to our loving Heavenly Father and to his Son, Christ Jesus our Lord. ■

Living Stones

Key Verse: “Ye also, as [living] stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”
—I Peter 2:5

Selected Scripture:
I Peter 2:1-12

human race will be given the opportunity to become the people of God.—Rev. 21:3-7

In today’s lesson the Apostle Peter addresses God’s people during the present age, since Pentecost—those who are sacrificing their earthly ambitions for the hope of a heavenly reward in the “first resurrection.” (Rev. 20:6) Peter explains that these are being built as a “spiritual house.” They are “elect [chosen] according to the foreknowledge of God.”—I Pet. 2:5; 1:2

God’s people during this present time have the responsibility further noted by Peter, saying “that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” (I Pet. 2:9) We were once in darkness, separated from God, but were called to be his people. As a result, one of our great privileges is to “shew forth” God’s praises by proclaiming the glad

BEING CONSIDERED AS “God’s people” has had different meanings and bore different results throughout mankind’s history. In the Old Testament writings, for example, we learn about the nation of Israel, who constituted God’s people for many centuries, with their alternating periods of faithfulness and unfaithfulness. (Exod. 6:7) In God’s coming kingdom here on earth the entire redeemed

tidings of the Gospel, and as Jesus instructed, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”—Matt. 24:14; 5:16

As a “holy priesthood,” God’s people are separated from the world for the purpose of service. Being part of this priesthood is the result of our coming to the Lord Jesus Christ, laying aside the fallen tendencies of our flesh, and then engaging in sacrifice. (I Pet. 2:1,5) We are in the world, yet are “not of the world,” Jesus said. (John 17:14) Those who continue faithful unto death will become part of the “royal priesthood” in the kingdom, when the glorified church, with Jesus as its Head, will become instructors in righteousness to the world of mankind.—I Pet. 2:9

As noted in our Key Verse, by coming to Jesus, we are being prepared as living stones, which are being “built up a spiritual house.” Peter does not say we will build this spiritual house, but that we will be “built up” into it. Each stone will be shaped, chiseled, and polished to fit perfectly in place according to God’s design. As part of this spiritual house which is being built upon the solid foundation of Jesus as a ransom for all, we become precious in God’s sight.

In addition, God’s people at the present time are called “a peculiar people.” (I Pet. 2:9; Tit. 2:14) The thought denoted by the word “peculiar” is that of a “people for God’s possession,” or a “people for a purpose,” implying that God has a special mission in life for them.

These have been redeemed with “the precious blood of Christ.” (I Pet. 1:18,19) They have consecrated, or dedicated, themselves fully to the Lord, and have offered their life to him in sacrifice, having been made acceptable through Christ. (Rom. 12:1) Their lives are completely dedicated to God. They are “now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy,” so that God considers them his special treasure.—I Pet. 2:10■

Gold Tried in the Fire

*“I counsel thee to
buy of me gold
tried in the fire,
that thou mayest
be rich.”*

—*Revelation 3:18*

THROUGHOUT THE NEARLY two thousand years since the death and resurrection of Jesus, our Heavenly Father has extended an invitation to a special class of Christians

who would share in blessing the sin-sick and dying human family under the future administration of Christ’s glorious kingdom. In this lesson’s opening scripture, our resurrected Lord speaks of this distinct class of his faithful followers in a very special way—those who develop a character valued as “gold tried in the fire.”

Through the writings of John the Revelator, the fact is made clear that after these followers of our Lord Jesus have been called from the world, they must also be cleansed, purified, and conformed to his own character image. To assist them in this endeavor, he will provide them with some very important spiritual gifts they will need to be faithful. Our opening verse continues by saying to these that they are to wear “white raiment, that thou

mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.”

HIGHLY VALUED

Today gold is one of the top three valued metals in existence, and in Bible times it was the most valuable. It is usually found in small quantities, thus making it very rare. Gold is the first metal mentioned in the Bible, and is associated with the name Pison—meaning “increase”—one of the four divisions of the river which went out from the Garden of Eden. The river well symbolizes the human family, out of which a special class would be selected, represented by Pison, the first division of the Edenic river mentioned. From the scriptural record, we read, “A river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone.”—Gen. 2:10-12

Gold is highly valued not only for its rarity, but also because it has long lasting durability and beauty. It was recognized as a measure of wealth and prominence in ancient times, even before Abraham’s name had been changed. “Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.” (Gen. 13:2) Throughout the ages, even until today, gold has been highly sought after and even stockpiled, as it were. The Scriptures foretell a time, however, when this hoarded wealth will become useless, and the present world and its evil institutions will fall

away. James wrote, “Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.”—James 5:1-3

Because of its color, luster, and resistance to oxidation and tarnishing, gold is especially useful for making jewelry and ornamentation of many kinds. “Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold.” (Song of Sol. 1:10) Because gold is more stable and unchanging than other metals, it has been used as a standard medium of exchange and commerce among nations and people.

THE DIVINE NATURE

Due to its scarcity and great value, gold is used in the Scriptures to illustrate the spiritual inheritance of the bride of Christ on the highest of all planes of life—the divine nature. (II Pet. 1:4) Our featured scripture is taken from the Lord’s message to the last of the seven churches of Revelation. This inspiring promise was, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” (Rev. 3:21) Faithful Christians will share the divine nature as members of “the Christ,” and are shown seated on the Messianic throne in the future heavenly kingdom. Jesus promised, “I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.”—Luke 22:29

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

In the Old Testament foreshadowing of future events, Rebekah, the bride of Isaac, symbolizes Christ's bride, made up of his faithful followers. (See Genesis chapter 24.) To illustrate this, she was given gifts of gold that pictured the wonderful promises of the Heavenly Father who is seeking a bride for his beloved Son, our Lord Jesus. Rebekah willingly left her father's house to set out on an arduous journey that marked her commitment to meet her future husband, Isaac, who in turn represented our Lord Jesus. "It came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man [Isaac's servant] took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands [Rebekah's] of ten shekels weight of gold."—Gen. 24:22

In the Book of Psalms, there is an illustration of the future marriage ceremony where the bride of Christ is dressed in gold. Gold serves to illustrate her spiritual reward to the divine plane of life. Concerning this most wonderful inheritance, the psalmist wrote, "Kings' daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir." (Ps. 45:9) The queen stood distinct from her companions, the other honorable women, because of her loyalty to the Lord who she was about to marry, and because her character had been endowed with the principles of truth and righteousness. From the same psalm, we read, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."—vss. 6,7

The reference to Ophir identifies a place renowned as a source of much gold of the very highest quality. Thus, as the psalmist continues, “The king’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework.”—Ps. 45:13,14

THE HEAVENLY CITY

When speaking of the future bride of Christ, our Lord Jesus proclaimed, “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.” (Matt. 5:14) In his last message to the faithful members of the bride of Christ, we are given a glimpse of the heavenly city. “I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” (Rev. 21:2) In symbolic language, John described later in the same chapter the adorned Christ in glory. “He carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.”—vss. 10,11

Even as gold was associated with the heavenly bride of Christ, so also was the heavenly city seen as a divine institution. “The building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. ... And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.” (vss. 18-21) Thus does the city

of God represent the glorified Christ that has been in preparation to share in the rule over the nations. The heavenly city will be the center of blessing for all the families of the earth under the administration of Christ's glorious future kingdom.—Gen. 22:18; Acts 3:25

OLD ORDER PASSING AWAY

We are now living during the closing years of this “present evil world,” and the appointed time of our Lord's promised return. (Gal. 1:4) It was to be a special time of trial and testing for those who responded to the heavenly calling in Christ Jesus. From the prophetic words of Malachi, we read, “Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.”—Mal. 3:2,3

We see that the world's old social order, which has been established on the basis of selfishness and pride, is passing away in preparation for Christ's coming kingdom. As evidence for this upheaval among the nations, Luke recorded Jesus' words, “There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”—Luke 21:25-27

All around us today we see the prophesied “distress of nations, with perplexity,” and with no apparent solution or way of escape. Selfishness, hatred, pride, and the spirit of aggression have led to the creation of cruel and powerful tyrannies. Sin, corruption, and injustice have surely brought their awful consequences. Man now has the weapons to destroy himself several times over. However, we are assured by the wonderful promises of God that the human family will not be permitted to destroy itself. The Scriptures teach that human selfishness would ultimately lead to self-destruction if not restrained by divine power and intervention. Jesus spoke of this awful time and the great distress toward which the world is now moving. He said, “If those days were not shortened, no flesh would have been saved; but because of the chosen, shall those days be shortened.” (Matt. 24:22, *Young’s Literal Translation*) Christ and his church, in kingdom power and glory, will intervene at the proper time and then begin the work of blessing and restoring mankind back to God.

THE GROANING CREATION

The poor groaning human creation will be rescued from its own selfish and proud madness. All national and international problems will be solved under the administration of Christ’s kingdom. We are promised that all unrighteousness will then be removed from the earth, “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make

all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.”—Rev. 21:4,5

The time in which we are now living is the culmination of nearly two thousand years during which the faithful followers of Jesus have accepted the invitation of the heavenly calling. Thus we are near to the time of the “marriage of the lamb.” We read, “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, ... These are the true sayings of God.”—Rev. 19:7-9

A TEST OF FAITH

The ending period of this age is a time of special testing for the Lord’s people, and the faith of each member of the Christ is being refined, purified, and proven. John recorded these prophetic words concerning this time: “The great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” (Rev. 6:17) We are now witnesses of the rapidly approaching breakdown of all present institutions in the earth.

Jesus said, “So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the

face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”—Luke 21:31-36

FAITH AND WORKS

It has always been true that those who have accepted the heavenly calling to joint heirship with Christ will be thoroughly tested. Each must stand fast in the faith of God’s Holy Word. “Watch ye, stand in the faith; be men, be strong.” (I Cor. 16:13, *YLT*) If the proper degree of faith is developed in us, it will surely manifest itself by bearing fruit. Those who may have only a measure of faith have not yet progressed by making it a living faith. Thus does the Apostle James ask, “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? ... Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.”—James 2:14,17,18

Our faith, and our whole being as individuals, is especially on trial now, and we are thus exhorted by our Lord, “Be thou faithful unto death.” (Rev. 2:10) Faithfulness unto death of each member of the prospective bride of Christ means an inheritance with him in glory, and the wonderful promise to share with him in blessing all families of the earth. This is the grandest gift we could ever expect to receive and is worth striving to attain and to prepare ourselves for. Our Lord asks for our faithfulness. He desires to purge out of us everything in the nature of dross, including self-will and all

the works of the flesh.—Gal. 5:19-21; I Cor. 5:7,8; II Tim. 2:21

Although works are essential, they should always be a reflection of the Christian's proper foundation of faith. One whose life is not in full harmony with faith dishonors that faith, and that kind of faith is dead. James wrote, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."—James 2:21-26

If Abraham and other faith heroes had merely discussed their faith with one another they would never have been faith heroes, nor have obtained a good report through faith. The Scriptures reveal that they walked in faith, and their works were in harmony with their faith. Thus was their faith made complete by their works. Our faith must also be alive, active, and working in us by love.—Gal. 5:6; Eph. 6:23

THE MARK OF LOVE

Development of the attribute of love must also be stressed, although it does not take the place of other important factors in the life of those who

have accepted the heavenly calling. For example, love cannot take the place of doctrine, but it does guide us in the proper use of doctrine. Love cannot take the place of faith or activity in the Lord's name, but it is the only motive for faith and for service that is acceptable to God.

While we stand fast in one spirit, with one mind and cooperate with others of like precious faith, we are to love each other "with a pure heart fervently." (I Pet. 1:22) We are to encourage one another to "love and to good works," and to avoid every word and act that might incite misunderstanding or strife. (Heb. 10:24) Faith and love must go hand in hand. If we stand fast in the faith and are made alive by love, we are "kept by the power of God."—I Pet. 1:5

The love of many may "wax cold," but our love toward others, as we stand fast in the faith, must remain fervent even though it may be spurned by some. (Matt. 24:12) If we are abused or reviled we must see that we revile not in return. When we are persecuted let us never join the ranks of the persecutors. (I Pet. 2:21-23) We need a strong faith, and an increasing measure of the loving spirit of holiness. This should be our sincere desire and earnest prayer. God's precious Word is the firm foundation for our faith, and ours must be a faith which works by love.—Gal. 5:6

ENDURING FAITH

We must bear up under the trials and stand fast while our beloved Lord continues to refine, purify, and cleanse us, that we may offer unto him our acceptable sacrifice. This will mean taking up our cross daily and following him. (Luke 9:23) Furthermore,

it will necessitate “looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” (Tit. 2:13,14) The beloved refiner is graciously working upon us, and we are to submit willingly to this work. We all need refining and cleansing because of the dross that is inherent in our earthen, fleshly vessel in which our spiritual treasure resides—even as gold tried in the fire.—II Cor. 4:7

The psalmist has expressed, “Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.”—Ps. 130:2-5

Throughout our pilgrim journey, we could not possibly have any standing before our Heavenly Father without the covering robe of Christ’s righteousness. “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.”—Isa. 61:10

In his letter to the brethren at Rome, the Apostle Paul said he was writing to those “who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality.” (Rom. 2:7) To the church at Galatia, he said, “Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” (Gal. 6:9) Our Lord will never leave us nor forsake

us, and he lovingly desires that we be conformed to his likeness and that we reflect his image. (Heb. 13:5) It is for us to bear up courageously under his refining and cleansing.

As noted in the foregoing verses, we must not become “weary in well doing,” and we must remember that our test is not one simply of well doing, but “patient continuance in well doing.” Then, too, we are to keep on the “whole armour of God” that we may be able to stand in this “evil day.”—Eph. 6:13

MORE PRECIOUS THAN GOLD

The Apostle Peter draws our attention to the “elect” class, symbolized by gold that is being especially refined at this present time. Concerning the Christ class, he explains their special calling, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.”—I Pet. 1:2

The apostle continues, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations [Greek: putting to the proof].” Peter then concludes by saying that the trials of our faith are as gold tried in the fire: “The trial of your faith, being much more precious

than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”—vss. 3-7

Let this be our testimony: “He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”—Job 23:10 ■

The Call Divine

*Today, tomorrow, evermore,
Through cheerless nights without a star,
Not asking whither or how far,
Rejoicing though the way be sore,
Take up thy cross
And follow Me.*

*I cannot promise wealth or ease,
Fame, pleasure, length of days, esteem
These things are vainer than they seem
If thou canst turn from all of these,
Take up thy cross
And follow Me!*

*I promise only perfect peace,
Sweet peace that lives through years of strife.
Eternal love, immortal life.
And rest when all these wanderings cease.
Take up thy cross
And follow Me!*

*My yoke is easy—put it on;
My burden very light to bear.
Who shareth this, my crown shall share
The present cross insures the crown.
Take up thy cross
And follow Me!*

—*Poems and Hymns of Dawn, 1890*

To Jerusalem and Rome

*“Now, behold,
bound by the
Spirit, I am on my
way to Jerusalem,
not knowing what
will happen to me
there, except that
the Holy Spirit
solemnly testifies to
me in every city,
saying that bonds
and afflictions
await me.”*
—Acts 20:22,23,
New American
Standard Bible

THESE SOBERING WORDS

were spoken by the Apostle Paul and were recorded by Luke, who was a physician, historian, and companion to the apostle on his many journeys. Paul spoke these words to the elders of the church at Ephesus who had gathered together to bid him farewell as his third missionary journey was drawing to a close.

The apostle realized that troublous times were awaiting him when he would leave his dearly beloved brethren at Ephesus and make his way to Jerusalem. Yet he willingly put his life and ministry in the hands of his loving Heavenly Father, and said, “None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the

Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.”—Acts 20:24,25

RECOLLECTIONS

Paul then reflected on his ministry and labor of love, and reminded the elders gathered with him, “I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” (vs. 27) He brought their attention to the fact that they had been given responsibility of being overseers in the church at Ephesus, and he also admonished them to be on guard against false brethren who would seek to draw them away from the Truth as they had been taught. (vss. 28-31) Paul counseled them concerning the responsibility and privilege of giving their time and effort in further establishing their fellow members in Christ Jesus. “I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.”—vs. 35

THE PARTING SCENE

Luke recorded the apostle’s departure, saying, “When he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul’s neck, and kissed him, Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.”—Acts 20:36-38

These parting words of Paul must have been very sobering to the elders of the church at Ephesus. They realized that the responsibility for this congregation of the Lord’s people would now be on their

shoulders, and they could no longer look forward to future visits by Paul to help resolve any problems. They knew also that the only strength they could derive from the apostle any longer would be through his wonderful example of faithfulness under trial, and the depth of his teachings of the Truth.

VALUABLE EXPERIENCES

Preaching the Gospel message provided Paul and his companions with valuable experiences which helped them all to become more faithful in their consecrated walk in “newness of life” with our Lord Jesus. (Rom. 6:4) We also see his wonderful Christian spirit that is so often reflected in the letters he wrote to the various churches that he had helped to establish. Many of these were written after he had gone through much suffering for the cause of Truth. We believe that all of these experiences were especially directed by the Heavenly Father. They were not only for Paul’s benefit, but also for the benefit of his traveling companions, and those in every church which he had helped establish by the Lord’s grace.

This same spirit of love and care for the spiritual interests of his brethren is also shown when he wrote to the brethren at Thessalonica. He encouraged them by saying, “Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification: ... That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.”—I Thess. 4:1-4

SEEKING GOD'S WILL

As Paul's ministry was drawing to a close, we believe that the Heavenly Father had already begun to prepare him for his final witness for the Truth. It was one which would be accomplished under very different circumstances than any he had previously encountered. The events that were to occur, and the way in which he would respond to them would severely test his spiritual maturity as a faithful follower of Christ Jesus. He no doubt sensed that his life going forward would be especially in danger as he served the Heavenly Father. We catch a small glimpse from the scriptural record noted earlier in his third journey. Luke wrote, "After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome."—Acts 19:21

The apostle knew through the Holy Spirit that his presence in Jerusalem would ultimately lead to his arrest, many fiery trials, and finally the end of his earthly life. The brethren, by and large, would never see his face again. He knew perhaps more deeply than any of the other apostles that when the especially appointed leaders of the Early Church had all finished their courses in death, the Adversary would create many problems among them, and ambitious leaders would arise to draw them away with new and false teachings.

JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

From the scriptural record, we learn some of the interesting details of Paul's journey to Jerusalem. "It came to pass, that after we were gotten from

them [the elders of Ephesus], and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara: And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth. Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden.”— Acts 21:1-3

While the ship was docked for a seven-day lay-over at Tyre to unload its freight, Paul and his companions took advantage of the opportunity to meet with the disciples who lived in that city. When they learned that the apostle was traveling to Jerusalem, they tried to dissuade him from going there because they feared what would happen to him. The church in Tyre was composed mainly of Jews, many of whom had fled from Judea because of persecution, and they were keenly aware of the hazards that might await Paul there.—vs. 4

At the end of the seven-day stopover at Tyre, the entire congregation gathered to bid the apostle farewell. “When we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.” The whole group knelt down on the shore before the ship, praying, and embracing the travelers before returning to their homes. (vss. 5,6) It was truly a scene of loving concern, tender care, and the deep faith in our Lord. They had developed much in the fruits of the Holy Spirit and in the Truth.

VISITS AT PTOLEMAIS AND CAESAREA

Paul and his traveling companions traveled on to Ptolemais and stayed one day with the brethren there. The next day the apostle and his companions left for Caesarea where the group stayed with Philip. (Acts 21:7,8) Many years earlier Philip had been selected by the church at Jerusalem to be one of seven deacons. (Acts 6:5) From the scriptural record, we learn that he was now married and the father of four daughters, all of whom were consecrated to the Lord and in active service for the Gospel.—Acts 21:9

The congregation at Caesarea was originally composed of Jews only, but after God's exclusive favor to Israel ended, Cornelius and his family, as well as other Gentiles, were brought into the family of God. The account tells us that Cornelius lived in Caesarea, but no mention is made of him during this final visit of Paul. It is believed that Philip also made Caesarea his home.—Acts 10:24; 8:39,40

AGABUS' MESSAGE

Paul and his companions stayed in Caesarea for several days: "As we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus." (Acts 21:10) God used a prophet, who delivered a clear message to Paul and the others as to what they might expect at Jerusalem. "And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle [Greek: belt], and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Spirit, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. And when we heard these things, both

we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.”—Acts 21:11,12

The reaction to Agabus’ proclamation was very emotional. The brethren of Caesarea, and those traveling with Paul, pleaded with him that he should not go to Jerusalem. They wept because of the difficult trials that lay ahead for the apostle. However, Paul knew that the Lord was arranging circumstances for his faithful servant. Those who were traveling with him now understood that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things.

“Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” (vs. 13) His companions realized they could not change Paul’s plans. “And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done. And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem. There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.”—vss. 14-16

ARRIVAL AT JERUSALEM

Paul and his traveling companions were warmly greeted by the brethren when they came to Jerusalem. Soon after their arrival Paul went to see James and the other apostles and elders in the local ecclesia. He presented his firsthand report in connection with the Lord’s blessing upon his ministry and extending the message of the heavenly call. The brethren glorified God when they heard this report. However, some Christians living

in Jerusalem had heard rumors about the apostle and that he was teaching that Jews should completely “forsake Moses,” and not observe any features of the Law whatsoever. Although the rumor was not true, it had to be settled.—Acts 21:17-21

Since the time of Pentecost, the church at Jerusalem had grown very much in size. The great majority were Jews who had been raised to observe the Law and to give it great respect. The apostles were concerned that the faith of many of these might be affected if they believed these false rumors about Paul’s view concerning the Law. They suggested that Paul demonstrate his regard for the Law of Moses by joining with four brethren who had taken a Nazarite vow. “Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.”—vss. 23,24; Num. 6:1-21

The ceremony took seven days and was concluded by shaving the head and offering appropriate sacrifices. Near the end of the days of purification, some Jews from Asia came to the Temple to worship. “When the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.”—Acts 21:27,28

RESCUED BY ROMAN SOLDIERS

They incited still other Jews to seize Paul and charged that he was preaching against the Law. They said that he had defiled the Temple by bringing Gentiles into it, a false charge based on the erroneous conclusion that Paul had brought Trophimus, a Gentile, into the Temple. (Acts 21:29) As the mob increased they began to beat him. Except for the intervention of the Roman commander and his soldiers, Paul might have been killed.

The scriptural account describes the scene: "All the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut. And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul. Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done."—Acts 21:30-33

After Paul was put in chains, the commander tried to learn who he was and what he had done. As the crowd cried "away with him" the apostle was taken to a safe place in the custody of the soldiers for his protection. As he was about to be taken, he spoke to the commander in Greek. Paul assured him he was not to be confused with a notorious rebel leader, but that he was a law-abiding citizen of Tarsus. He requested and was granted permission to speak to the people.—vss. 34-39

A MARVELOUS TESTIMONY

Paul appealed to the people as he stood on the stairs. The mob grew quiet as he began to speak to them in Hebrew. He gave them a brief account of his background, emphasizing his zeal for the Law and his persecution of the first Christians. Then he proceeded to give a detailed description of his encounter with the glorified Jesus and how this had completely changed his direction. He told how he had gone to Jerusalem, desiring to tell everyone of the great change that had taken place in his life.—Acts 21:40; 22:1-17

In spite of his chains, the apostle had accomplished what he had never been able to do when he was free. He had been given the opportunity of witnessing to a multitude of Jews in Jerusalem. Whether any that heard him changed their course of life as he had done we are not told, but it is possible that a few may have been drawn to the Gospel who heard Paul speak on that day. Most, evidently, did not, and called for him to be killed.

The account states that they “lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live. And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air, The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him. And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?” (Acts 22:22-25) When the chief captain heard this he asked Paul how he had acquired his

citizenship, and Paul answered him that he was “free born.” (Acts 22:28) The commander became fearful when he learned this. His earlier order to bind Paul in chains was not lawful if he were a Roman, so he was set free.

However, Paul was kept in custody for his own protection by the Roman governor for two years. (Acts 24:27) As a Roman citizen, the apostle had made an appeal for an audience before Caesar in Rome, and it was necessary that he remain in custody until his case had been presented to Caesar and arrangements could be made for his departure from Jerusalem.

During his two years in protective custody, Paul was variously questioned by Ananias, the Jewish high priest; Felix, the Roman governor; Festus; and finally King Herod Agrippa. (Acts chapters 23-26) It is interesting that the apostle had earlier spoken of his intention to go to Rome after his visit at Jerusalem, as noted in Acts 19:21. It is doubtful he could have ever foreseen the circumstances and series of events over a period of more than two years that would eventually bring this journey to pass.

JOURNEY TO ROME

Luke recorded the occasion: “When it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus’ band. And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us. And the next day we touched at Sidon.” (Acts 27:1-3)

God's wonderful providence was surely manifest to Paul and his companions when they arrived at Sidon. The centurion who was in charge of Paul and the other prisoners graciously allowed the apostle and his fellow travelers to visit a group of brethren who resided there. "Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself." (vs. 3) The apostle had been held in custody for two years, and it surely must have been a source of much joy to share fellowship again with the brethren at Sidon.

When it came time to continue on their way toward Rome it was getting too late in the season for safe travel on the Mediterranean Sea. After a windy journey they arrived at the port city of Myra, in Lycia, where they boarded a ship that was headed for Italy. When they had made their way to Crete they took refuge at "the fair havens," where they waited for better weather. Paul warned the ship's owner that it was too dangerous to continue, but they set sail again. Strong winds blew them off course, and it became necessary to toss cargo overboard to help lighten the vessel.—vss. 4-20

GOD'S ANGEL ASSURED PAUL

As the situation grew more desperate, the apostle spoke to those who were on board the ship. "After long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship."—Acts 27:21,22

The Heavenly Father had sent his angel to reassure the apostle that he would be delivered safely to Caesar, and that there would be no loss of life on the vessel. “There stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.”—Acts 27:23-26

The situation grew increasingly worrisome, and the ship ran aground, crashed into the rocks, and broke up. However, all who were on board the stricken vessel made their way safely to shore even as the angel of God had said. (vss. 27-44) They found themselves on the island of Melita, and they were treated very kindly by the local inhabitants. Paul and his companions wintered on the island, during which time the apostle healed many who were sick and had a variety of diseases.—Acts 28:1-9

ARRIVAL IN ITALY

We learn about the final portion of the voyage from Melita to Italy from the scriptural record. We read: “After three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux. And landing at Syracuse, we tarried there three days. And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli.”—Acts 28:11-13

Having arrived at Puteoli they were greeted by a group of brethren with whom they stayed for seven days of fellowship. They later traveled on to Rome

where other brethren also came to meet him. The centurion then delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard. (vss. 14-16) Soon after his imprisonment, Paul got in touch with Jewish religious leaders in the city and explained why he had been brought to Rome. He also told them that he had been falsely accused by the Jews at Jerusalem.—vss. 17-29

PAUL'S FINAL RECORDED MESSAGE

The Scriptures do not record the events as they unfolded in the final years of Paul's life. It is believed that he was eventually brought before Nero and condemned to death. From his second letter to Timothy, believed to be his last recorded epistle, Paul wrote, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."—II Tim. 4:6-9

We do know that Paul used his declining physical strength in proclaiming the wonderful message of the Gospel to those who had an ear to hear the Heavenly Father's invitation and heavenly calling in Christ Jesus. The apostle was one of the most powerful voices ever heard during the Early Church era. His tireless achievements during the many years of his extensive ministry were centered on his activity in establishing new groups of consecrated followers of Christ Jesus in many widespread places. He served a critical role in sending forth the message

of Truth to a small but select class of believers in Christ Jesus, often under very difficult circumstances. As we contemplate his zeal and faithfulness to this great cause, an often overlooked but equally important work was also being accomplished in the spiritual growth and development of his own consecrated walk in newness of life, and as a faithful member in the body of Christ.—Rom. 6:3-11

Luke's record of Paul's life concludes with this testimony of the apostle's faithfulness even unto the end: "Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him."—Acts 28:30,31■



WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

AUGUST 7—"If a man contend in the games, he is not crowned unless he strive lawfully."—II Timothy 2:5 (*The Emphatic Diaglott*) (Z. '02-265 Hymn 13)

AUGUST 14—"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?"—Matthew 10:25 (Z. '03-13 Hymn 261)

AUGUST 21—"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."—Matthew 6:33 (Z. '02-350 Hymn 4)

AUGUST 28—"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season."—II Timothy 4:2 (Z. '03-189 Hymn 131)

Called, Chosen, and Faithful

“These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.”

—*Revelation 17:14,*
New American
Standard Bible

THE SYMBOLIC BEASTS

mentioned in various parts of the Bible represent the powers of evil which through the ages have been aligned against God’s plan centered in Christ Jesus, the “Lamb,” and those associated with him. Prior to the 17th chapter of Revelation these unholy beasts, each representing some aspect of Satan’s effort to destroy the promised seed, are usually shown to be

victorious over the people of God. In the Book of Daniel, for example, it is said that one of these evil forms of government shall “wear out the saints of the most High.” (Dan. 7:25) See also Revelation 6:9,10; 11:7; 13:1-7.

However, beginning in the 17th chapter of Revelation the scene changes. Here, while certain of these evil forces “wage war against the Lamb,” as

noted in our opening text, the Lamb overcomes them, because he is “Lord of lords and King of kings.” The verse concludes by saying that those with the Lamb are “the called and chosen and faithful.” In other words, in this prophecy both the Lamb and his true followers who are with him are victorious over these beastly forces of evil.

It is significant to note that when the time comes for the saints to be able to fully overcome the forces of evil that endeavor to destroy them, and to be completely successful in this effort, they are with the Lamb. The Lamb overcomes those who wage war against him, and those who are with him share in that triumph over Satan’s evil forces. They are with the Lamb because they had been called of God, chosen of God, and faithful to the terms of their calling and choosing.

A similar sequence of statements is presented to us by the Apostle Peter. He urges Christians to be faithful and zealous in adding to their faith moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. (II Pet. 1:5-7, *NASB*) To this the apostle adds, “For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”—vs. 8, *NASB*

Peter then reveals the ultimate goal of this effort toward righteousness in a Christian’s life when he says, “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.” (vs. 10) The “calling” referred to here is the same as the calling spoken of in our theme Scripture. Likewise, Peter’s use of the word “election” is taken from the same root Greek word as the word

“chosen” recorded by John the Revelator. Our text concludes with the word “faithful”—thus the three requirements of Christians, to be called, chosen, and faithful. Peter suggests the same thought when he urges the brethren to “give diligence.” If we are giving full diligence, it means we are being faithful, and the great objective is to make our calling and election [choosing] sure, and to be among the called and chosen and faithful.

THE CALLING

What is this calling to which the Scriptures give such great emphasis? Paul states in Philippians 3:14, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” In Hebrews 3:1 the apostle speaks of the footstep followers of Christ as “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling.”

From the above verses, we see that this calling referred to by Paul is “high” because it is a “heavenly” one. It is a calling which, if faithfully carried out, involves a transformation from earthly aims and ambitions, and an earthly home, to heavenly hopes and goals, and a promised heavenly home. It is a high calling also because those who attain to it will enjoy not only a heavenly home but also “glory and honor and immortality.” (Rom. 2:7) They will be “joint-heirs” with Christ in his kingdom, which will be God’s instrument for blessing all the families of the earth.—Rom. 8:17; Gen. 12:3; 22:18

HOW CALLED

How does this high calling reach those for whom it is designed by God? How can they be sure that they are indeed called? Certainly, it is not a trumpet sounding in the sky, but rather, it reaches those for

whom it is intended through the Word of Truth—the Bible. The Bible, of course, is circulated throughout the earth. Yet, millions who read it do not understand this high calling. The reason is that their hearts are not attuned to the message of Truth which the Scriptures contain. On the other hand, those who are looking for God's leading in their lives, and are studying the Scriptures to ascertain what place the Heavenly Father has for them in his great design, are prepared to respond to the invitation involved in this high calling.

The hearts of these are willing to accept the conditions attached to the calling, of which Paul wrote, "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." (Rom. 12:1) Another condition of our high calling is that we are to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. The Master said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Matt. 16:24) The way of the cross leads to death. It is a "narrow" way, a difficult way, one that tests the determination of all who undertake to walk in it. (Matt. 7:14) Its present reward includes suffering and trials. It is only at the end, upon being "faithful unto death," that this calling leads to the fruition of the Christian's hope of heavenly glory and joint heirship with Christ.—Rev. 2:10

CHOSEN

It is only after demonstrating to the Lord that we are willing to adhere to the terms of the high calling that we can be "chosen" for a position in this

lofty aspect of his great plan. The Apostle Peter wrote that such followers of Jesus are “elect [Greek: selected or chosen] according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience.” (I Pet. 1:2) Peter is not here supporting the theory of the arbitrary selection of some to be saved and all others of mankind to be eternally lost. He is, rather, writing from the same standpoint as Paul’s explanation found in Romans 8:28,29. We quote: “We know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them who are called according to his purpose. For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”—*American Standard Version*

Thus we see that when Peter speaks of being “elect according to the foreknowledge of God,” he is referring to the fact that God foreordained that all who would be chosen for exaltation in the kingdom of Christ must be conformed to the character image of his Son. That is why Peter emphasizes that if we are giving diligence to make our calling sure, we will be adding to our faith moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. As noted, it is only if we are diligent in this that we can truly make our election, or choosing, sure and become a part of the “little flock” to whom the Lord will give the kingdom.—Luke 12:32

FAITHFUL—THEN TO BLESS OTHERS

The Lord’s called, chosen, and faithful people not only participate with him in certain aspects of his

work in this life, but they are also to be with him in the kingdom work of blessing all the families of the earth. These are the ones referred to in Revelation 20:6, in which we see them living and reigning with Christ as priests and as kings. “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: ... they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.” This is the same resurrection as referred to by the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 15:42-53. The purpose of that thousand-year reign is to uplift mankind from sin and death. (Isa. 35:5-10; Mic. 4:1-4; Rev. 21:1-5) What a glorious privilege this is to which all who are following the Lamb can look forward! We read concerning this rich blessing from our Father, “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; ... be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”—Rev. 2:10

One of the basic promises concerning the work of blessing to be accomplished through the reign of Christ and his faithful church is the one made to Abraham that through his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. Paul said that Christ is the promised seed. (Gal. 3:16) To this the apostle adds, concerning faithful Christians, “If ye be Christ’s [that is, belong to him], then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (vs. 29) What a wonderful heirship this is! Those called, chosen, and faithful will be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ in the outworking of the divine purpose to uplift humanity from sin and death, and to pour out blessings of peace, health, and life upon all who will receive them!

This great joy was set before Jesus, and it enabled him to endure the cross and despise the shame, and he is now “set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb. 12:2) It is a joy which will also enable us to endure the hardships and trials of the narrow way, that we too, called and chosen and faithful, may be exalted to glory, honor, and immortality, and live and reign with him for the blessing of all mankind. ■

Resurrection

*May the joy of his resurrection
Fill your heart as you journey along.
May the peace he bequeathed be your portion,
May his love in your heart be a song.
May the hope thus begun become brighter,
May your faith in him firmer be,
Until soon in that first resurrection
His glorious face you shall see.*

—Songs of the Nightingale

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.

**Brother Allen Coffman, Allentown, PA—June 27.
Age, 77**

ENCOURAGING LETTERS

FRANK & ERNEST LISTENER

Dear Dawn: Thank you for your blessed information I receive every Sunday [*Frank & Ernest radio program*] at 11:00 am in Phoenix. So enlightening and easy to understand and brings me closer to Jesus.—AZ

GROWING SPIRITUALLY

Dear Dawn: I am writing to thank you for bringing us your wonderful program on Radio Africa to help us grow spiritually. God bless you, and keep up the good work.—GHANA

STUDY HELPS

Dear Dawn: I have enjoyed the articles in *The Dawn* magazine this year. I often return to them several times, thanking our Lord Jesus for his teaching.—NM

GOD'S WORD

DawnBible: Thank you for your continued ministry, and sharing God's Word to all! God bless you.—ME

GROWING IN THE SPIRIT

Dear Dawn: Thank you so much for the wonderful work you do for the Lord. I am so grateful to have the opportunity to grow in the Spirit and learn about how truly awesome and majestic our great Lord is.

Thank you for sending to me the books that give me the word of enlightenment, helping me to stay in touch with the Lord's promise.—NY

ISRAEL BOOKLET

Dear Dawn: Thank you for sending *The Future of Israel and the World* booklet so promptly. Your fine work is in my prayers.—TX

A VALUABLE BLESSING

Dear Dawn: Please know how very valuable a blessing *The Dawn* is to me.

Thanks for this wonderful magazine and study guide, and to each contributor for the articles and information. God's blessings.—OH

COMING KINGDOM

Dear Dawn: Sending this note to thank you so very much for the booklet, *Israel in History and Prophecy*. Also thank you for each month of *The Dawn*. Always inspirational with beautiful words of life.

Having so much hope for the coming kingdom and its blessings. Looking forward to when all mankind will be blessed with God's love and all will be at peace.—FL

GOOD NEWS

Dear Dawn: Thank you for your persistent work disseminating God's good news near and far. Lord bless and encourage you.—WI

RADIO EAST AFRICA

Dear Dawn: I have heard and listened to your radio program on Radio East Africa, and I have enjoyed and loved your messages very much. They are well presented and come with power and authority as you minister to my spiritual life. I have experienced the deep touch of direction upon my life and I am no longer the same.—ZAMBIA

PROPHETIC TIMES

DawnBible: I have carefully studied the lessons that speak of the time we live in. These are truly prophetic times, the time of the parousia of the Lord.—ROMANIA

FAITH AND LOVE

DawnBible: Thank you for these beautiful messages of faith and love. May God bless you.—CANADA

THANKFUL

DawnBible: Thank you for your beautiful publication and wonderful website.—GA

INACTIVE JEHOVAH'S WITNESS

DawnBible: Good evening, I really liked this site. It was a great pleasure to visit you. I am an inactive Jehovah's Witness and I would like to get to know you, Bible students, better. A big hug. May Jehovah's blessings be upon you. Thank you very much.—BRAZIL

GOD'S KINGDOM

Dear Dawn: We await God's kingdom, how wonderful it will be!—NH