

The Dawn

A Herald of Christ's Presence



The DAWN

VOLUME No. XCIV, Number 4
(USPS 149-380), April 2026

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Published monthly by The Dawn Bible Students Association, PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752-1167. \$12.00 a year.

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Life from the Dead

“I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”
—*I Corinthians 15:3,4*

The Bible from beginning to end holds out a doctrine that is found nowhere else: that a future life for the dead will come through a resurrection. All the divinely inspired writers expressed their confidence in a Redeemer. They further declared that “in the morning,” when God calls mankind from the tomb, they will come forth, and the wicked shall no longer hold

rulership over the earth. The psalmist tells us, “Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning.” (Ps. 49:14) The “morning” will bring dominion to the righteous but will also release all from the power of the grave. The prophets also taught the resurrection of the dead, and the writers of the New Testament based all their hopes of a future life and blessing upon it.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “If the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.”—I Cor. 15:16-18

Our Lord’s Resurrection

Paul spoke of the power of God in regard to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead: “What is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.” (Eph. 1:19,20) Jesus himself foretold his own death and subsequent resurrection to his disciples, saying that he “must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.”—Matt. 16:21

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was more than an awakening from the sleep of death. It was his exaltation to the highest plane of life in the entire universe—the divine. Jesus’s resurrected position has been described as: “Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And [God] hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”—Eph. 1:21-23; Col. 1:18

While we cannot comprehend the power involved in such a mighty act as this, we can and should rejoice in the many assurances in the Bible that this same power that raised Jesus from the dead stands pledged to help us in our every time of need. This power of God is provided to us in proportion to our faithfulness in laying down our lives as joint sacrificers with Jesus. It is to this important thought that Paul refers, when he says, “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.” (Phil. 3:8) He then adds, “That I may know him [Jesus], and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”—vss. 10,11

The mighty power of God gives us the necessary strength to lay down our lives if we yield ourselves up daily as living sacrifices to him. (Rom. 12:1) The Lord does not use his power to force his people in the doing of his will. If they show a willingness to sacrifice, he provides the opportunity and the necessary strength to endure the trials that the refining work of his acceptance may entail. The Apostle Peter expressed the proper sequence of thought concerning this matter. He wrote, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”—I Pet. 5:6,7

Paul’s Discourse

Paul gives us a complete discourse on the subject of the resurrection in his letter to the brethren at

Corinth in I Corinthians 15:12-28. First, he proves that faith in a resurrection is part of Christian doctrine, without which the entire fabric of Christian belief would be worthless. (vss. 12-19) Secondly, having proved the doctrine, he shows that our Lord's resurrection is God's guarantee of a resurrection to the entire human race, for which Christ died. (vs. 20) He goes on to prove this fact and its reasonableness by saying, "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." (I Cor. 15:21) By the man Adam came death to the whole human family, so by the man Christ Jesus the resurrection blessing is made available to all.

It is important to note that although a full resurrection to perfection is made available to all the human creation, it does not follow that all will obtain the blessing of everlasting life that will be offered under the administration of Christ's kingdom of truth and righteousness. Everlasting life is only for those who successfully pass a testing and trial period to prove their worthiness under the kingdom's righteous conditions. All who put their faith and trust in Christ, and who develop a heart character like his, will be "made alive." They will receive everlasting human life. This is what is meant by the apostle's words: "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (vs. 22) All who successfully pass the tests of character and obedience to divine law following their awakening from death will receive the fullness of this promise.

That Which Excelleth

As quoted earlier, Paul wrote that he counted "all things but loss" that he might know the power

of Jesus's resurrection. He undoubtedly had in mind the power of the Heavenly Father which is available to his people as they are laying down their lives in sacrifice with Jesus, and also God's further use of that power on behalf of the church in the "first resurrection."—Rev. 20:6

All of the present advantages of health, comfort, prestige, or worldly joy will be nothing when compared to spiritual glory. We should, as Paul did, consider all else of little value as we think about what has been promised to all who have been called to such a high honor. However, such honor can be ours only if we have fellowship in the sufferings of Christ now. As the apostle said: "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." (Phil. 3:7) If faithful, we will experience the mighty power of God to raise us from the dead in the first resurrection and exalt us to his own right hand with Christ. (Rev. 3:21) Thus, the faithful church's future inheritance will be one of glory, "the glory that excelleth."—II Cor. 3:10

Light Affliction

Writing on this subject, Paul tells us, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." (II Cor. 4:17,18) Here the apostle is showing us that only those who have fully given themselves to God will understand and appreciate this heavenly calling in Christ Jesus. Speaking of what Jesus provides for us, Paul further

stated: “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”—Rom. 3:25,26

The Apostle Paul shows us that there will be an order to be followed with regard to the resurrection. After saying that “all” will be given the opportunity to be “made alive,” he states this: “But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits.” (I Cor. 15:23) The firstfruits class, the faithful members of Christ’s symbolic body, will be first in order and in rank. (I Cor. 12:12,27) If faithful in being associated with Christ by sacrificing during this present life, they will be part of the “firstfruits” class. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.”—Rom. 6:3-5

The call to be of the firstfruits class began centuries ago when our Lord Jesus—the head of the church—arose from death. Indeed, he was the “first,” and highest in rank of the firstfruits. Since, then, a “little flock” of believers has shared, by faith, in the Redeemer’s sacrifice. These have consecrated, or dedicated, themselves to the Lord and become joint-heirs with Christ. Of these, Paul wrote, “If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs

with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”—Rom. 8:17; Gal. 3:29

Comforted by God

Those striving to be of the firstfruits class have been motivated to this course of action by the many precious promises of God. “Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.” (Rom. 6:8,9) This is a further example of the mighty power of the Heavenly Father. This power concerning the resurrection of our Lord Jesus fortifies us against every assault of the Adversary. It replaces fear with courage, and it gives renewed strength to the weary. At the same time, however, God’s power does not isolate us from our necessary trials and experiences, nor spare us from suffering for righteousness’ sake. (I Pet. 4:12-16) Rather, it helps us to wait on the Lord and to patiently endure unto the end.—Matt. 24:13

This is indeed the blessed hope and inheritance of all of the people of God who desire to continue to walk in the footsteps of our dear Lord Jesus. These were sealed by the “holy Spirit of promise,” which by God’s Word and providence bears witness that they are “accepted in the beloved.” (Eph. 1:13,6) Let us treasure these promises: “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness

with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”—Rom. 8:14-16; I John 3:2

The raising from the dead of the firstfruits, the Christ class head and body, is but the first phase of fulfilling the promise of a future life for mankind by means of the resurrection of the dead. The divine promise is that “there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.” (Acts 24:15) Christ shall “put down all rule and authority and power” to teach righteousness, truth, and love to all people. “For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”—I Cor. 15:24-26

A Standing Up Again—Recovery

In the Bible, the word “resurrection” is found only in the New Testament. It is a translation of the Greek word *anastasis*, which means a “standing up again,” “recovery,” a “raising up.” Other Greek words are used when referring to the temporary awakening of those who had been miraculously awakened from death, but who afterward died again. This was the case with the raising of Lazarus and others where neither the Greek word *anastasis*, nor its English equivalent “resurrection,” is used. See John 12:1.

The “ransom for all” given by our Lord secured the opportunity of a full resurrection [*anastasis*] for all. (I Tim. 2:5,6) To define resurrection as only signifying a reawakening to a brief life only to die again would be to limit God’s power as well as his

plan for the human race. The true meaning of the word contains the thought of full restoration of all that was lost. Mankind lost human perfection and has been on a downward spiral which has led to moral decay, sickness, sorrow, and ultimately death. Our Lord Jesus died to recover all that was lost, and the promise of a resurrection is therefore the promise of the restoration of what was lost and then redeemed.—Luke 19:10

To appreciate the full force of the word *anastasis*, which points to restoration or rising up, we must remember how far man has fallen. Full restoration, which has been secured for mankind by their Redeemer, will be a full and complete recovery of all that was lost. Certainly, life was lost, but along with that was all the accompanying degradation—mental, moral, and physical—culminating in utter dissolution, that is, death. Through the willing sacrifice and subsequent resurrection of the world's Savior, our Lord Jesus, a full raising up to the grand heights of perfection and to the image and likeness of God will be enjoyed by all the willing and obedient of the human family under the righteous administration of the Christ class, head and body, during the Messianic kingdom.

Return to Perfection

The thousand-year kingdom of Christ is to be the resurrection day for the world of mankind. (Rev. 20:4,6) However, mankind will not be forced to attain the grand mental and moral perfection made available to all in Christ. When the dead rise from the grave, they will have to cooperate and participate in matters pertaining to their own

resurrection to perfection. In the grave, there has been no opportunity to do this. As the Scriptures tell us, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.” “For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?”—Eccles. 9:10; Ps. 6:5

We read in John 5:28,29, “An hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his [Jesus’] voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.” (*English Standard Version*) What a blessed confirmation, that all in their graves shall be awakened in the resurrection of the dead. There will be two classes who will be awakened, and under different conditions. As we have already pointed out, those fully consecrated ones who are faithful unto death, will come forth from death to a perfect, heavenly life. They will receive the divine nature over which death will no longer have any power or control.—Rev. 2:10; II Pet. 1:4

The remainder of mankind will be awakened to a judgment, or trial period, during which they will have an opportunity for a full raising up and recovery from sin and death. They must conform to the instructions of that thousand-year judgment day. They will have the best conditions in which to learn of the Heavenly Father through the guidance of the Christ, head and body. The prophet has written, “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. ... Then the eyes of the blind shall be

opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. ... And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; ... And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”—Isa. 35:1,5,8,10

This wonderful passage of scripture reveals how the earth is to be brought to the perfection that God had designed for it. The earth will once again become a cheerful home and a beautiful paradise for mankind. Messiah’s kingdom will not only uplift humanity but will also bring blessings of perfection to the earth. God has foreseen all the necessities of his plan and will make ample provision for all the needs of his human creation. He has promised to deliver mankind from Satan’s power and his blinding influence.—Rev. 20:1-3

The blessings of Christ’s kingdom will ultimately open the eyes of the blind, both physically and symbolically. All ignorance, prejudice, and superstitions will be removed. All shall come to an accurate knowledge of the Truth concerning the divine character and attributes, and especially God’s love. As a consequence, the true knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth “as the waters cover the sea.” (Isa. 11:9) Not only will the people’s bodies be made whole, but also their minds and hearts will be similarly freed from the bondage of sin. This is the ultimate goal and great work of the Messianic kingdom. With the kingdom established, blessings of peace, joy, and life will begin to flow to all people. We rejoice that God has a plan for the entire world, which includes an end to all of the things which have

separated mankind from his love. “They shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.”—Heb. 8:11

John the Revelator viewed these conditions in vision and said: “I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall 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. 21:1-5

Mankind will once again have dominion over the earth and will be able to live in peace and joy forever. All will have fully learned the lessons based on the words of Jesus, who said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. ... Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”—Mark 12:30,31

Love is the principal grace that mankind will have to learn and put into practice. “Love is the fulfilling” of God’s law. (Rom. 13:10) All who desire to live on a perfect earth forever will have to attain to this love. This mark of character, which the law

of God places as the condition for life, is that of perfect love. Ultimately this law must govern all of God's intelligent creatures who will obtain everlasting life. When man is completely restored to the image of God, every person will love him, his beloved Son, and the entire brotherhood of mankind.

At the time of Lazarus' death, Jesus sought to comfort his grieving sister Martha. "Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." (John 11:23-26) With anticipation, we look forward to that time when these heartfelt words will have their complete fulfillment in every person throughout the entire earth. ■

Victory

*My tired eyes look up to Thee
And then the vision which I see,
Sustains, upholds and comforts me
Along this narrow way.*

*Lord, I would always see Thy face
Wilt grant me then sufficient grace—
As onward thru this barren waste
I tread my weary way—*

*I would not lay my armor down
'Til I receive the victor's crown,
Then with the noise of battle o'er
I'll view my Savior evermore.*

—Poems of the Way

“... We ask God to give you complete knowledge of His will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding. Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better. We also pray that you will be strengthened with all His glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy, always thanking the Father....”
—Colossians 1:9-12

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

APRIL 2—“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”—Galatians 6:10 (Z. '03-121 Hymn 277)

APRIL 9—“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.”—I Corinthians 9:24 (Z. '95-93 Hymn 183)

APRIL 16—“They shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”—Malachi 3:17 (Z. '03-223 Hymn 322)

APRIL 23—“That on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.”—Luke 8:15 (Z. '03-408 Hymn 166)

APRIL 30—“Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”—I Peter 2:9 (Z. '03-165 Hymn 236)

The Resurrection Hope

Key Verse: “*Now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*”
—*I Corinthians 15:20, New King James Version*

Selected Scripture:
I Corinthians 15:12-28

If there is first fruit, there must be “after fruit.” The logic is evident. Apostle Paul’s reasoning on the resurrection is powerful and constitutes the firm theological basis of our Christian faith.

Christ was raised from the dead—not in an allegorical sense. He was literally raised from the dead. He himself testified, “I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore.” (Rev. 1:18, *NKJV*)
Because he lives, our hope for

life after death is not ephemeral but real. As surely as our race all die in Adam, so assuredly will all be made alive in Christ. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.”—*I Cor. 15:22, NKJV*

Paul’s message to the Corinthians was consistent with his previous teaching on the subject. At the Areopagus in Athens, he gave one of the most memorable sermons recorded in Scripture. On the subject of the resurrection, Paul declared that God “has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead. And

when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, We will hear you again on this matter.” (Acts 17:31,32, *NKJV*) Jesus’s resurrection gives assurance that all will be given the opportunity to have life eternal. God “raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.”—Rom. 4:24,25, *NKJV*

Curiously, some brethren in the church at Corinth were making an outrageous claim. “Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (I Cor. 15:12, *NKJV*) How could it be that Christians denied the doctrine of the resurrection? Were they ignorant? We believe not. The Corinthian resurrection-deniers were likely highly educated Sadducees who had converted to Christianity. Their sect had a peculiar notion that there is no resurrection!

Paul used that fact to his advantage when defending himself against persecution from the Jews. “When Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged! And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.”—Acts 23:6-8, *NKJV*

The record in the Book of Acts is that “the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests [the majority being Sadducees—see Acts 5:17] were obedient to the faith.” (Acts 6:7, *NKJV*) Paul’s forceful arguments were essential in countering the Sadducees’ misconception. We thank God for clearer views of Christ’s atoning work and the hope of the resurrection. ■

Render to Caesar and to God

Key Verse: “*And Jesus answered and said to them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s. And they marveled at Him.*”
—*Mark 12:17, New King James Version*

Selected Scripture:
Mark 12:13-17

We too marvel at Jesus’ wisdom and teachings. Our Key Verse has become part of the vernacular in various Christian countries. Two millennia after Jesus spoke these words they still resonate as a great truth.

In the context of the Key Verse, we find the Pharisees and Herodians, who disliked each other, uniting to entrap our Lord. Their words were disingenuous. “And they sent to

him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to trap him in his talk. And they came and said to him, Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone’s opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?” (Mark 12:13,14, *English Standard Version*) Their words oozed hypocrisy, being deeply rooted in their hearts. They did not for one moment believe that Jesus did “truly teach the way of God.” Perceiving their wicked motives, Jesus responded, “Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the tax money. So

they brought Him a denarius.” (Matt. 22:18,19, *NKJV*) The fact that the Pharisees and Herodians brought him a denarius was further evidence of their deceit.

The Jewish shekel was the coin of tribute for the temple service. The denarius was a Roman coin. The Roman tax was paid in denarii. Jesus’s detractors, having that coin in their purse, and offering it instead of the shekel, showed that they themselves believed it was lawful to pay Caesar tribute. Their pretensions, therefore, were false.

Taking the coin in His hands, Jesus held it out for all to see. He asked, “Whose image and inscription is this? They said to Him, Caesar’s. And Jesus answered and said to them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s. And they marveled at Him.” (Mark 12:16,17, *NKJV*) Matthew’s Gospel adds that they then “left Him and went their way.” (Matt. 22:22, *NKJV*) They had fallen into their own trap; their plot failed and is recorded as an object lesson for the ages.

As Christians in today’s mixed up world, we face polarizing questions regarding the practice of our faith. Opposing philosophies attempt to use Scripture to bolster their position. When pulled in many different directions, Christ and his teachings remain our anchor. Let us first serve God our Creator. Let us follow Jesus’s simple teachings of love for God and love for neighbors. Let us even love our enemies! Jesus said, “I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either.”—Luke 6:27-29, *NKJV*

The Golden Rule shines its brilliant light upon the path of our daily walk. “Just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.” (vs. 31, *NKJV*) Let us render to “Caesar” the things due by law, and render to God our all. ■

Be as a Child

Key Verse:
“Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.”

—Mark 10:15, New King James Version

Selected Scripture:
Mark 10:13-16

It seems remarkably out of character that Jesus’ disciples would be rebuking those who sought the Master’s blessing upon the little children. Perhaps it was the long day of teaching, conflict with the Pharisees, or the sensitive discussion of divorce that prompted their reaction. They may have tried to protect little ones from exposure to such a mature theme. Perhaps they

were caught up in their prospective roles in the kingdom. Who would sit on the right hand of Jesus and who on his left? This was no time for distractions from little children. To the contrary, Jesus was displeased with the direction his disciples were going. They were missing a key point about the kingdom and its hierarchy.

In his displeasure Jesus commanded, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it. And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.” (Mark 10:14-16, *NKJV*) What did Jesus mean—“of such is the kingdom of God”—that is embodied in the nature of little children?

These were small enough to be taken up in Jesus's arms. Jesus had a similar experience when he was quite young. "Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel."—Luke 2:25-32, *NKJV*

Such little ones as were blessed by Jesus had innocence of heart and thought. Devoid of cynicism, prejudice, racism, nationalism, greed, hatred, and other shortcomings of fallen man, these epitomized the heart purity, love, and trust that will prevail in the kingdom of God.

Isaiah's vision of the peaceable kingdom shows the active role of "child-like" hearts. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea." (Isa. 11:6-9, *NKJV*) Be "as a little child," for of such is the kingdom of God. ■

Teach the Family

Key Verses: “*And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.*”
—**Deuteronomy 6:6,7, New King James Version**

Selected Scripture:
Deuteronomy 6:3-9

which heighten vulnerability to anxiety and depression.

Clinicians emphasize that algorithms designed to maximize engagement can overwhelm adolescents’ still-developing self-regulation systems, increasing risk for compulsive use, comparison anxiety, and cyberbullying.

Nearly everywhere we go we see adults buried in their phones, even while driving an automobile. Children from the earliest days sit in shopping carts or

Our Key Verses presaged the fast-paced modern world. Ours is a world filled with constant and unprecedented distraction. Cell phones hold us as captives under their influence. Hours of page-flipping, messaging, and looking up “vital” information all contribute to spiritual disruptions. A 2024 World Health Organization report found:

11% of adolescents show signs of problematic social media behavior, up from 7% in 2018. Girls are especially affected—13% vs. 9% for boys.

Problematic use is associated with lower mental and social well-being, higher substance use, and sleep disruption, all of

restaurant highchairs with their digital media entertainment. We believe a break from the digital world can foster well-being and inner peace.

We do not disparage the use of today's technological marvels. We do, however, advocate for a soothing balm to counter it. It is identified in Scripture as "the secret place" that we may enter and enjoy the peace, quiet, and wisdom God's Word affords. "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. ... He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust." (Ps. 91:1,2, *NKJV*) How do we get to that refuge? More importantly, for today's lesson, is how may we guide our children to it?

Our Key Verses wisely advise a home atmosphere of godliness. Family reading of the Bible has a profoundly wholesome influence on life. It starts with the heads of the household, who must cherish God's word in their heart. Then, from the heart, daily speak of the virtues of God's law. Consider the psalmist's words, "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold.—Ps. 19:7-11, *NKJV*

Realizing the power of this Psalm's message, how could we advocate for anything less than a home filled with the knowledge of our Great Creator? Apostle Paul was a wonderful spiritual father. He lovingly noted, "Though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." (I Cor 4:15, *NKJV*) "Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged." (Col. 3:21, *NKJV*) May we have the grace and wisdom to guide our children to and through God's Word at every opportunity. ■

The Liberty of God's Children

*“The creature itself
also shall be
delivered from the
bondage of
corruption into the
glorious liberty of
the children
of God.”*

—*Romans 8:21*

One of the outstanding characteristics of the last several centuries has been the almost universal clamor for “liberty” throughout the world. This urge to be free traces its early roots to the dissemination of knowledge made possible by the inven-

tion of the printing press nearly six centuries ago. As the masses of the people gradually became enlightened, they were unwilling to remain in bondage to overlords, whether economic, hereditary, or ecclesiastical. This march toward liberty accelerated when the early reformers started to protest against the state-church system and break away from the restraining cords of its edicts.

This was only the beginning. The rise of America and the coming to it of men and women in whose hearts the flame of liberty had begun to glow, gave hope and courage. It added zeal to the promoters of liberty everywhere. America was looked upon as

the “land of the free.” However, not all, even here, were free. As the United States grew in population and land area, millions of indigenous peoples were forced out of their productive, native lands and moved to designated “reservations,” most of which were in undesirable locations. In addition, there were millions of enslaved persons in the United States prior to the Civil War. Abraham Lincoln realized that so long as this “trading” in human souls continued, the United States had no right to be called a haven of refuge for the lovers of liberty.

Proper Liberty Only Relative

All right-thinking people rejoice in the measure of progress the world has made in getting free from the shackles which throughout the ages held all but a favored few in bondage to state, church, kings, and potentates. At the same time, the mere idea of being “free” is not in itself a goal which, when reached, results in human happiness and the stability of a world order. It is all right to be inspired by the slogan, “Give me liberty, or give me death.” However, those who insist that they must be free to think and act just as they prefer, with no restraints whatsoever, are sadly mistaken in reaching such a conclusion.

Freedom, then, can be only relative. People may be free to drive their automobiles. The highways are there for their use. People are free to drive at certain speeds because the law has designated a maximum safe speed allowed on the highway. This and other laws governing the use of motor vehicles are made for the protection of all the people who utilize this form of transportation. If drivers insist

on being free to speed excessively, to drive on the wrong side of the road, or to ignore other traffic laws, they put in jeopardy their own safety and lives as well as those of others.

Turn in any direction, and we find ourselves hedged about by restrictions. We cannot be free to do as we please even in our own homes. There are certain unwritten laws governing home life. To disobey these would mean the breaking up of the home, which sadly happens all too often. When we analyze the situation, we find that the whole creation of God is subject to laws. Even the inanimate works of creation are not "free." The countless billions of heavenly bodies which comprise the universe are governed by physical laws. If it were not so, there would be cataclysmic destruction. Even such a small life form as a flower develops into something of beauty only because the plant which bears it conforms to the laws by which it lives and functions.

The foregoing examples, together with many others, serve as a reminder to us that the blessings of true liberty only exist when based upon the limitations and supervision of divine law. Thus, it is essential to recognize that there must of necessity be certain curbs on liberty if we are to find our own proper place in the plans and purposes of God. The great clamor for liberty which has been heralded throughout the world is in many respects bearing bitter fruit. It has resulted in a spirit of individualism which is wrecking homes and destroying society. It is leading in the direction of chaos and lawlessness.

The Bible tells us that we are living in the prophetic "time of the end," in which, according to God's plan, there has come a great increase of knowledge.

This knowledge, as we have seen, has awakened the people to a realization of the bondage in which they had been held, and has created the desire in them to be free. However, such a desire has led many to believe they should be free from all restraints entirely. This is resulting in a “time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.” (Dan. 12:1-4) It was essential that the world’s reverence for unjust, manmade cords of bondage should be broken in preparation for the acceptance and obedience to the laws of Christ’s coming kingdom. At the same time, it is being demonstrated that no human being can be absolutely “free” to do as he or she pleases and continue to live in peace and happiness.

Subject to Divine Law

The human race has experienced six thousand years of suffering and death because of the disobedience of our first parents to the law of God. Just as the orderly functioning of all the inanimate things of creation is dependent upon obedience to divine law, so is the well-being of God’s human creatures. The stars can express no choice in the matter. They must obey. It is not so with man. Our first parents were created with free will, and set before them was the choice of obeying or of disobeying divine law. They were told that disobedience would result in death, but despite this they chose to disobey. Consequently, the penalty of death fell upon them and all their progeny. They exercised their freedom, but it brought death.—Gen. 2:15-17; 3:9-19

In Romans 1:21-25 the Apostle Paul gives us a comprehensive picture of the terrible conditions

into which uncurbed freedom from the restraints of God's laws had led the people even in his day. The sinful condition of the world today is merely a further extension of this picture. Much of the human race does as it pleases, or tries to, but the cup nearly all overflows with bitterness. If we merely glance at the experiences of a race that has tried to exist without the restraining influences of God's laws, it should be sufficient to convince us that such a course will not work. There is no true way of happiness except God's way, which is the recognition of his right, as Creator and Life-giver, to be the sovereign Ruler of our lives.

In our text Paul speaks of the "bondage of corruption," which is a reference to the captivity of sin and death. Those who are under a prison sentence are certainly not free, and the Scriptures depict death as a prison house into which all mankind is being herded because of sin. (Ps. 102:19,20; Isa. 42:22) The race is corrupted and dying, thus entering the prison of death. The way that leads thereto is likened to a "broad" road which ends in destruction. (Matt. 7:13) It is a downhill path, slippery with the devastating results of sin. On it the people have no real freedom except to slide ever onward toward their destination of death.

Only God can set free those who are thus in bondage to sin. His plan, through Christ, calls for the great emancipation of the race from the prison house of sin and death. (Isa. 42:6,7; 49:8-10; Heb. 2:14,15) This will take place upon the establishment of Christ's kingdom. Then, through the process of "restitution," all people will be restored to perfect human life, provided they accept the gift of God

through Christ and obey divine law. (Acts 3:20,21) We can even now rejoice in this glorious hope, that mankind will be set free from its own false sense of liberty and given life on the basis of obedience to the Creator.

In advance of these marvelous blessings which are to come to the entire world of mankind, God is even now offering the opportunity of repentance and obedience to those who hear the Gospel. Paul speaks of these as being “justified by faith,” and says that upon the basis of this faith relationship they enjoy “peace with God.” (Rom. 5:1) Paul explains further that the objective of this present restoration to harmony with God is that we may “have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”—vs. 2

This glorious “hope,” the Scriptures reveal, is that of joint heirship with Christ in his kingdom, which is to bring freedom from sin and death to all mankind. This is the glorious hope of the sons of God during the present age. Paul writes, “If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”—Rom. 8:17

What this means is that if our eyes are enlightened to see the plan of God, we are invited upon the basis of faith in Christ to surrender ourselves fully to do his will. (Ps. 143:10,11) It is God’s will that we follow in the footsteps of Jesus, inspired by the hope that if we are faithful in this walk, we will have the privilege in the first resurrection of living and reigning with him in his kingdom. (Rev. 20:6) It is a return to the status of favor with God through the full surrender of our individual wills to do his will.

When one sees the privilege of renouncing his own will to do God's will, the question may arise, "What is God's will?" It is important that we find the proper answer to this question. Millions have thought they were doing God's will, when in reality they have been blindly following the dictates of some earthly leader, whether of politics, religion, or society. Rather, the only way to life and true happiness is that we surrender our wills to do the will of God. When the ways of mankind conflict with the laws of God, we should heed the words of the Apostle Peter and the other apostles when they stated, "We ought to obey God rather than men."—Acts 5:29

Taking Christ's Yoke

Jesus, the Prince of Life, did this. He bound himself to do the will of his Heavenly Father and invited his followers to do the same themselves. He said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." (Matt. 11:29) From this we see that Jesus was not absolutely free to do as he might wish. He wore a "yoke," and he invited his followers to wear the same yoke.

What was the "yoke" that the Master wore? It was his covenant to do the will of his Father in heaven. It was prophetically written of Jesus, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God." (Ps. 40:7,8; Heb. 10:7-9) This prophecy reveals that the will of God for Jesus had been written in the "book," that is, in the Old Testament. Jesus voluntarily bound himself to do whatever had been recorded concerning his part in God's plan. It had been written, for

example, that he was to be “brought as a lamb to the slaughter,” also that “as a sheep before her shearers is dumb,” so he would not protest against being put to death.—Isa. 53:7

Jesus surrendered his will to his Heavenly Father so completely he could say that the words he spoke and the work he did were not his, but the Father’s. (John 3:34; 5:30; 6:38; 14:10) On one occasion, Jesus said, “I and my Father are one.” (John 10:30) This oneness was because Jesus’s life had been given over wholly to doing his Father’s will. Thus, we see that Jesus was free to do what the Father wanted him to do. The will of God was his yoke and that which he invited his followers to share with him.

There is not true happiness, and no hope of everlasting life for anyone, apart from this full surrender to God’s will. The doing of this is a matter of obedience to the directives of the Word of God. It was in the Word of God that Jesus found the divine will for him expressed. It is in that Word that we also will learn what God wants us to do and to be. When we give ourselves fully to do God’s will, the spirit of that consecration will impel us to “search the scriptures,” to study them, in order that we might show ourselves “approved unto God.”—John 5:39; II Tim. 2:15

An Easy Yoke

Jesus said of the yoke which he invited us to share with him, “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matt. 11:30) By contrast, the pathway of absolute liberty is in reality a most difficult one to follow. It means that one’s own desires alone will guide them. Each is responsible for the course taken

and for the outcome of decisions made. Such a course involves the assuming of tremendous responsibility, a burden which not many are willing to assume.

With few exceptions, therefore, people are guided more or less by the opinions and preferences of others. To this extent they are doing the will of others and can blame them when things go wrong. In the field of religion, for example, most people would rather help to pay their share of the minister's salary. They would rather let him do their thinking than to be especially concerned themselves as to what is right and wrong in matters of faith and practice. This is a surrender, not to God, but to one who, it is supposed, represents divine authority. This is not true devotion to the Heavenly Father. It is devotion to those who claim to be servants of God.

Such a course does not follow the example of Jesus. He did not devote himself to the scribes and Pharisees of his day. His consecration was to God. He not only did not choose his own way in life, but, renouncing his own will entirely, also covenanted to do God's will. (John 4:34) His only responsibilities were to carry out what he agreed to do and to restrain his own liberty when necessary to do so. The yoke Jesus thus assumed was easy, for the whole responsibility of his eternal destiny was placed in the hands of his Heavenly Father. Jesus needed only to be concerned over faithfulness in doing that which the Word outlined for him to do. The responsibility for the outcome was not his.

This thought is illuminated by Jesus's prayer on the cross. With almost his last breath he cried to his Father, saying, "Into thy hands I commend my

spirit,” my life. (Luke 23:46) Jesus had been doing this for the entire period of his earthly ministry. Throughout that period of faithful, sacrificial service, his spirit, his life, was committed to God. Now, when the flame of his earthly existence was about to be snuffed out, he was still glad for his Father to direct the issue.

It was this complete abandonment to the will of God, and to the outcome of doing that will, that made Jesus’s yoke easy. This same spirit of full dedication, full surrender to the divine will, is likewise an easy yoke for us, if we are properly motivated as Jesus was. The entire world is weary with the endless struggle of existence. Life is a challenge and is becoming more complex every day as the problems of today’s world lead to increasing chaos and instability. Under present conditions, only a full surrender to the doing of God’s will provides an escape.

Peace and Glory

From the standpoint of rewards, there are two important considerations which Paul presents to those whose wills are surrendered in consecration to God. One pertains to the present, and the other to the future. The present reward is peace. The Apostle Paul wrote, “The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 4:7

Having God’s peace does not mean the end of all life’s challenges and difficulties. It does mean, however, that we endeavor to meet these experiences in God’s way and according to his will. At the same time, we should remain conscious of the fact that

we are in tune with the Creator, no longer being alienated from him through wicked and rebellious works. (Col. 1:21) We thus are able to enjoy God's peace, that peace which is his because there is no question concerning the ultimate outcome of all his purposes. Jesus enjoyed this wonderful peace of heart and mind, and said to his consecrated followers, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." (John 14:27) This peace of God and of Christ is a part of the present inheritance of those who are fully devoted to the doing of the divine will.

There is a future prospect also, the hope that Paul states of "glory and honour and immortality." (Rom. 2:7) Peter similarly wrote, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature." (II Peter 1:4) To the same class of faithful disciples Jesus said, "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

These are wonderful hopes and prospects. The fully consecrated and accepted of God are begotten by his Holy Spirit to be his children. They enjoy freedom from the bondage of sin and death. (Rom. 8:2) They are free to do God's will, free to lay down their lives in his service. They have cast all their burdens upon God who cares for them. (I Pet. 5:7) While they labor and suffer in the divine service, they rejoice in the hope of sharing in the larger service of the next age, when in the kingdom of Christ, they will reign with him for the blessing of all the families of the earth.—Gen. 22:18; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8

It is for this glorious future work of blessing that the entire world is unknowingly waiting. “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together,” waiting for the “manifestation of the sons of God.” (Rom. 8:22,19) These sons of God are Jesus and his faithful footstep followers of the present age. They are the promised “seed of Abraham” through whom all mankind is to be blessed with peace and health and lasting life.—Heb. 2:16; Gal. 3:16,29

The reward of these “sons of God” will be heavenly and spiritual. Through God’s kingdom arrangement they will manifest divine power and glory for the healing and blessing of the world. The life to be given to the remainder of mankind will be earthly, the restoration of “that which was lost” because of Adam’s rebellion against divine law. (Matt. 18:11) The kingdom period is described by Peter as “times of restitution.” (Acts 3:20,21) As the hope of life now for the consecrated is dependent upon full surrender to God’s sovereign will, the same will be true then for resurrected mankind. All who thus serve God with “one consent” will “inherit the kingdom prepared for [them] from the foundation of the world,” the earthly dominion given to Adam, once lost, but now restored.—Zeph. 3:9; Matt. 25:34 ■

OBITUARIES

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

Sister Christiane Nowak, France—March 1. Age, 88

Manifestations of Discipleship

*“Remembering
without ceasing
your work of faith,
and labour of love,
and patience of
hope in our Lord
Jesus Christ, in the
sight of God and
our Father.”*

*—I Thessalonians
1:3*

Disciples of Christ are those who have accepted Jesus as their Redeemer. Additionally, they have dedicated their lives to the divine cause represented in him by accepting his invitation to take up their cross and follow in his footsteps, even unto death. (Matt. 16:24) The word “disciple” means “a learner or pupil,” and the disciples of Christ receive their teaching from Jesus, whom they accept as their Master and whose instructions reflect the will of their Heavenly Father.

Jesus said of Nathanael, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” (John 1:47) This implies that there were those in Jesus’ day who were looked upon as Israelites, but who in reality were not, in that their lives were not sufficiently in tune with the will of the God of Israel. Because of this, they did not accept Jesus as their promised Messiah. The same is true with respect to spiritual

Israel at the present time, made up of the disciples of Christ. There are disciples “indeed.” However, there are also those professing to be followers of Jesus, but who are disciples in name only, inasmuch as they do not comply with the teachings of the Master.

Sincerity of heart is one of the basic qualifications for true discipleship. Those who are sincere will endeavor to manifest their professions not by mere words, but also by deeds. The Apostle John wrote, “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.”—I John 3:18,19

The brethren at Thessalonica, to whom our opening text is addressed, were evidently very faithful “in deed and in truth” demonstrating the genuineness of their professions as disciples. Paul commended them for their work of faith, labor of love, and their patience of hope. Every true disciple of Christ must possess a mountain-moving faith, be filled with love, and be patient and longsuffering in service to the Lord, the Truth, and the brethren.

Work of Faith

Paul commended the brethren at Thessalonica for their “work of faith.” This is a very fitting expression, for where true faith exists there will inevitably be works associated with it. James summed this up very nicely, when he wrote, “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 2:17,18) The illustration

which James used was the case of a poor brother or sister coming into our fellowship. (James 2:15,16) If the individual is ignored, it reveals a lack of the works that should proceed out of a true faith.

There are many ways in which faith works. In his letter to the Hebrew brethren, Paul mentions many of these. Quoting portions of this account, we read: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain; ... By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; ... By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; ... Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age; ... By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; ... By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; ... By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones; ... By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."—Heb. 11:4-25

These are but some of the manifestations of faith Paul gleaned from the lives of many Old Testament characters. Then he adds, "What shall I more say? for time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again.”—vss. 32-35

Here Paul mentions the works of faith in cases where the Lord rewarded the faithful in ways that demonstrated his pleasure with them. Then he continues: “Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”—vss. 36-38

As shown here, many had experiences of trial and persecution because, through their faith, they stood for the Lord’s cause and would not compromise with the powers of evil by which they were surrounded. A good illustration in point is the case of Daniel’s three friends, who refused to bow down to the image which had been set up at the order of Nebuchadnezzar. Those who refused to worship this image were to be cast into a fiery furnace and destroyed. (Dan. 3:1-12) When given a second chance, and after a warning from Nebuchadnezzar, these faithful stalwarts said, “If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”—vss. 17,18

Here the work of faith was the refusal to worship the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up. These three Hebrews had faith to believe that their God was able to deliver them from a cruel death in a fiery furnace. On the other hand, they did not know whether or not this would be his will for them. However, faith worked to give them victory over temptation regardless of what the outcome might be. They had faith to believe that, if they died, it was because their God saw that this would be best. Their real hope was deliverance in “a better resurrection.”—Heb. 11:35

Love Labors

There are many ways in which love labors. To the Hebrew brethren, Paul wrote, “God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” (Heb. 6:10) Here the “labour of love” referred to is on behalf of the brethren. This is in keeping with the Master’s instruction that we should love one another as he loved us. His love for us induced him to lay down his life on our behalf. Thus, in his admonition, John wrote that we should be filled with love: “We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”—I John 3:16

The labor of love is voluntary. One may be constrained by love but not compelled. Love is based on unselfishness and is of God. In God, we have the superlative example of love. All of his creative works are from one standpoint evidences of his love. He did not need the things he created. They were for the benefit of his creation. The most outstanding

demonstration of God's love is in the gift of his only begotten Son to be the Redeemer and Savior of the world. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—John 3:16

In a number of instances in the New Testament, the Greek word *agape*—meaning love—is translated "charity." While most students of the Bible prefer the word "love" rather than "charity," yet pure charity comes closer in meaning to what the Scriptures indicate divine love to be. Charity is the act of giving to those from whom there can be no hope of a return. This was true in God's gift of his Son. In accepting this gift, it is with the understanding that there is nothing we can do to repay. All we can do is to express our appreciation by accepting the gift and devoting our lives wholeheartedly to the one who gave it.

Love labors, love gives, and thus love manifests itself in the service of the Lord, the Truth, and the brethren—all with "no strings attached." Where love fills the heart there will be labors of love. There will be daily sacrifices on behalf of others, especially the brethren. There will be a burning zeal to serve the Lord and to show forth his praises. When there are no such manifestations, it simply means that love is lacking. As John asked, "How dwelleth the love of God" in such a one?—I John 3:17

Paul mentions other labors of love which are to be in the hearts and lives of the Lord's disciples. "Charity [love] suffereth long, and is kind; ... envieth not; ... vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is

not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity [love] never faileth.” (I Cor. 13:4-8) It is not to be expected that in our fallen flesh we can be so filled with love as to measure up perfectly to these various qualities. However, if we have the heart desire to do so, they will be manifest to a large extent in our association with one another and also toward those with whom we come into contact in the world.

Patiently Hoping

Paul also commends the Thessalonian brethren’s “patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” In another place he wrote, “We are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” (Rom. 8:24) As disciples of Christ, we hope for the things which the Lord has promised, the things which we do not yet see. Chief among these in the Early Church was the setting up of Christ’s kingdom in which they hoped to live and reign with him. (Rev. 20:6) We rejoice to realize that we are living ever closer to that time, but we are still waiting for the fulfillment of the hope of living and reigning with Christ. We, like the disciples in the Early Church, continue to need the “patience of hope.”

This waiting requires patience and endurance, because while we are waiting there are trials to endure. Paul again wrote, “We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of

God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.”—Rom. 5:3-5

In the Book of Hebrews, we read concerning the promised return of Christ that is directly associated with the disciples’ need of patience. “Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” (Heb. 10:36-38) From the Apostle James, we read, “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming [Greek: presence] of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming [presence] of the Lord draweth nigh.”—James 5:7,8

In the Lord’s providence, he has often permitted his people to suppose that developments in the outworking of his plan were closer at hand than they have often turned out to be. This is particularly true with respect to the return of Christ and the establishment of his kingdom. Many of the disciples in the Early Church believed that Christ’s return was very near. Yet Peter, and others, were able to see before they finished their course that it would not take place in their day. It is doubtful, however, if any realized that so many centuries would elapse before this outstanding development in God’s plan would take place.

Even so, this glorious hope was so precious that every day they waited for its realization by the exercise of patience and endurance. It was thus so

with the brethren at Thessalonica and, judging from Paul's observation in our featured text, they patiently waited for the fulfillment of their hope in the proper way by continuing to be active in the Lord's service. They actively waited.

Proclaiming the Message

In our featured scripture, when the Apostle Paul commended the Thessalonian brethren for their work of faith, he was referring in particular to their activity in proclaiming the Gospel of Christ. This comes to light in the context of the apostle's words. In the ensuing verses we read, "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit: So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing."—I Thess. 1:5-8

Here Paul speaks of the manner in which he witnessed the Gospel to those who had become disciples in Thessalonica. His zeal and faithfulness had been manifested to them. He mentions that they had become followers of him even as he was of Christ, emulating his missionary zeal in proclaiming the good tidings. Because of this, they in turn had become ensamples "to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia." Then he explains why: "For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in

Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad.” These are remarkable statements!

Jesus, our Master and Teacher, whose disciples we profess to be, left instructions that we should be his witnesses throughout the earth. (Matt. 28:19; Acts 1:8) If we have faith in him and in his leadership, we will obey his instructions. A failure to wholeheartedly obey would be evidence of a lack of faith, for this particular work of faith would be absent from our daily lives. Let us be rather like the Thessalonian brethren, who sounded forth the Word of the Lord far and wide. Thus, they gave evidence of their faithfulness in following the example set for them by Paul. They followed him as he followed Jesus, who himself also was faithful in proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom.—Matt. 4:17; Luke 4:43

The Same Test Today

We, at the present time, are in a much more knowledgeable position with respect to the outworking of God’s plan than were those in the Early Church. Nevertheless, the test of patiently enduring is upon us also. We would all like to see a speedy realization of our kingdom hopes, but we have no assurance as to just when this will be. Like the brethren in Paul’s day, we are also instructed to continue laying down our lives in the service of the Lord without knowing how much longer we will be called upon thus to serve, sacrifice, and suffer.

This is why we need the patient endurance of hope. It is this patience that will enable us to maintain our hope regardless of how long the waiting

time might be, and no matter how severe our experiences in the Lord's service may be while we are actively waiting. This is indeed a test of endurance. Let us not lose our initial enthusiasm for the Truth and its service simply because there is a seeming delay in the fruition of our hopes. God is a perfect timekeeper, and every detail of his plan is working out exactly when he has decreed that it should. If to us the vision seems to tarry, let us realize that this is not actually the case. (Hab. 2:3; Heb. 10:37) Rather, the Lord is testing our patience of hope and watching to see how zealous in his service we will continue to be regardless of how long the wait may seem.

When Paul assured the Hebrew brethren that God was not unrighteous to forget their labor of love, he added, "We desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." (Heb. 6:10,11) It is not enough that our work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope continue either for a brief time or for many years. The test of true discipleship is faithfulness to the very end of the narrow way, even unto death. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."—Rev. 2:10

In explaining the parable of the sower, Jesus said, "The parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns

are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.”—Luke 8:11-15

The seed which fell among thorns holds a special warning to all of the Lord’s disciples. We need to be on the alert lest the cares of this life unduly interfere with our work of faith and labor of love. “Patient continuance in well doing” is the best safeguard against this danger, together with prayer for unfailing strength to continue laboring until our course is finished.—Rom. 2:7

Finally, concerning the servant who used the Lord’s goods faithfully, we read in the parable of the talents: “His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.” (Matt. 25:21) May we each faithfully continue our work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope, “in the sight of God and our Father,” until the end of our earthly sojourn. ■



Entering into Rest

*“Let us therefore
fear, lest, a promise
being left us of
entering into his
rest, any of you
should seem to
come short of it.”
—Hebrews 4:1*

Our subject, “Entering into Rest,” is of special interest to the people of God. Its importance is outlined in both the Old and New Testaments. The Apostle Paul devotes most of the fourth chapter of the Book of Hebrews to this subject,

which is the basis of our present consideration.

The closing verses of Hebrews chapter 3 present the example of Israel’s failure to enter into the rest which could have been enjoyed by them. Failure to do so, Paul says, was “because of unbelief.” (vss. 18,19) It is this example that the apostle builds on when he writes in our opening text, “Let us therefore fear.” The fear referred to is not that of terror or dread. The apostle writes that God has not given us the “spirit of fear.”—II Tim. 1:7

The “fear” we should have, lest we come short of any promise which the Lord has given to us of entering into his rest, is that of reverential obedience, to make sure that we are not unfaithful to

the Lord's requirements. When the apostle in our text speaks of coming short of a promise, the thought is failure to meet its conditions, which requires obedience. All God's promises to those who are partakers of the heavenly calling are conditional upon faithfulness in doing God's will.

Lack of faith, or unbelief, is one of the greatest contributing factors to disobedience. As Christians, we should be alert to avoid this pitfall. Likewise, failure to be watchful results in the weakening of faith. The blinding, paralyzing influence of unbelief caused the Israelites to fail. Noting this, we should endeavor to maintain a sober appreciation of the dangers involved in our own case. Let us not become overcharged with the cares of this life, or of permitting some earthborn cloud to dim our spiritual vision so that we fail to enter into God's rest.

The promise of a heavenly inheritance is so precious that we should allow nothing to prevent us from attaining it. We should prepare for it by feeding on the heavenly manna provided by our Heavenly Father, and by drinking an abundance of the water of Truth from that "spiritual Rock," Christ Jesus. (I Cor. 10:4) This promise is for all the footstep followers of Jesus. However, only those who are strong in faith will attain, and who preserve their confidence through watchfulness and prayer.

Rest in the Gospel

Verse 2 of Hebrews chapter 4 reads: "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." The word "gospel" means good news. We are accustomed to

think of it as applying primarily to the “gospel of Christ: ... the power of God unto salvation.” (Rom. 1:16) Paul tells us that God “preached before the gospel unto Abraham.” In this case it was the good news that through the patriarch’s seed all the families of the earth would be blessed in due time.—Gen. 22:18; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8

In this second verse of the chapter, Paul uses the word “gospel” to describe the good news that the Israelites would enter into their inheritance in the Promised Land. To them this meant rest from the hardships of the wilderness—the desert heat, living in tents, and other difficulties. In the land of promise they would enjoy a land of beautiful hills and valleys, where there were abundant springs of living water, cool and refreshing, and an ample amount of food. This was the highest rest the Israelites, with their natural minds, could imagine.—Deut. 8:7-9; 11:10-12

This good news to Israel, as the apostle indicates, foreshadowed the “gospel of [our] salvation,” which has been preached to us—spiritual Israel. (Eph. 1:13) Our ultimate rest will be enjoyed in a heavenly Canaan. The Israelites as a nation were not profited by the message preached to them, but this should not be so with us. We should be “doers of the word” as well as hearers.—James 1:22-25

Our Present Rest

“For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his

works.” (Heb. 4:3,4) There is a rest which the people of God who are strong in faith may enjoy even before they enter into the heavenly rest. This present rest is in proportion to our measure of faith.

What is this rest? The apostle explains that it is like the rest which God entered into when the original work of Creation was finished. (Gen. 2:1-3) We are not to suppose that God was then physically tired and that he ceased all activity until he became rested. On this point the Prophet Isaiah wrote, “Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?”—Isa. 40:28

God pronounced his creative work “very good.” (Gen. 1:31) He knew, however, that man had to be tested, and that if he failed this test he would come under the sentence of death. God permitted this to happen in order that the human race might experience evil and learn the terrible results of disobedience to his laws. The benefit of this experience, however, could only be gained by restoring man to life. This could not be done unless a Redeemer was provided to give his life in place of the forfeited life of Adam. This entire work of dealing with and blessing the fallen race through redemption and restoration provided through Christ Jesus will result in mankind learning the great lesson of “the knowledge of good and evil.”—Gen. 2:9,17; 3:22

Present Responsibilities

Our lesson continues in Hebrews 4:5-8: “And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter

therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying ... To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if [Joshua] had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day."

In these verses it is clearly shown that in God's plan a fixed number had been determined who would prove their fidelity to God by their complete faith and confidence in him. These were to have faith so strong that they would be able to devote their entire being to him. They would rest completely in the belief that he would cause all things to work together for their good.—Rom. 8:28

The Israelites who came out of Egypt failed in this test. David refers to this in Psalm 95:7,8. Paul quotes this scripture and indicates that when the psalmist used the expression "To day," he was speaking prophetically of the present call to follow in Christ's footsteps. As Christians, our faith is now being tested, and it behooves us to be on the alert, to fear lest our hearts become hardened, due to a lack of faith. The opportunities of this present time are limited, says the apostle, so let us be diligent, for the "time is short."—I Cor. 7:29

Speaking from the standpoint of Israel's Sabbath of rest, and prophetically of the rest of faith enjoyed by spiritual Israel, the Prophet Isaiah writes of how we may delight ourselves in the Lord, and that he will feed us "with the heritage of Jacob." (Isa. 58:13,14) Jacob, because of his faith, gained sweet communion with the Lord and a reaffirmation of the covenant made with Abraham and Isaac.—Gen. 28:14

At the present time we experience a foretaste of the rest that “remaineth,” that perfect rest beyond the veil. We should learn to cast all our care upon the Lord, knowing that he doeth all things well. (I Pet. 5:7) Thus the burden is lifted from our own hearts, and we are free to meditate and to enjoy sweet fellowship with our Heavenly Father and with our Lord Jesus. By faith we are able to eat of the luscious fruit of the spiritual land of promise, and to drink the new wine of the coming kingdom. What wonderful peace and rest results from such a full confidence in, and fellowship with, the Lord.

The Rest that Remaineth

Continuing, we read: “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.”—Heb. 4:9-11

These two statements—“There remaineth ... a rest” and “let us labour ... to enter into that rest”—refer to our heavenly rest if we are “faithful unto death.” (Rev. 2:10) In the tenth verse, somewhat as a parenthesis, Paul speaks of our present rest of faith. Having entered, we have even now ceased from our own works as God did from his. Thus, entering into the future rest that “remaineth” is dependent upon our having entered into the present rest of faith.

The Word of God

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the

joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Heb. 4:12) God spoke to Israel through Moses, Joshua, and others. Their faith was tested by the measure of their obedience to the Word of the Lord imparted to them. He speaks to us also through his Word. Our faith is likewise tested upon the basis of our zeal in doing those things taught in his Word of Truth.—II Tim. 2:15; 3:16,17

The Word of God is a most penetrating searchlight. It searches out even the motives behind our thoughts, as illustrated by the “dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow.” Nothing can be hidden from such a searching influence. Let us endeavor to keep our hearts pure, that thus our spiritual vision may be clear and our faith strong.

Paul states further: “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.” (Heb. 4:13) God’s Word penetrates our innermost consciences and reveals what we are to ourselves, enabling us to compare it with what we should be. Meanwhile, the Lord is also looking into our minds and appraising the progress we are making in bringing “into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”—II Cor. 10:5

Our Great High Priest

Verses 14 and 15 of Hebrews 4 read: “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities;

but was in all points tempted [Greek: tested] like as we are, yet without sin.”

At those times when we realize that the thoughts and intents of our hearts are not right before God, we can be assured that a loving provision has been made to extend mercy to us through Christ Jesus, our great high priest. Because he is able, as the result of his own experiences, to deal with us sympathetically, we can with confidence continue to “hold fast our profession.” We have professed to accept Christ as our Redeemer and Savior, and to have covenanted to walk in his steps of self-sacrifice. We have professed to believe the promises of God relating to our “heavenly calling.” (Heb. 3:1) We have undertaken to conform ourselves to all the conditions attached to those promises. When we think of self with all its weaknesses, we would perhaps lose courage and begin to let these things slip, were it not for the knowledge that we have a sympathetic high priest who understands when we fail. (Heb. 2:1) Thus we can with confidence “hold fast our profession” in the firm belief that we will ultimately attain our goal, which is Christ.

Our High Priest was tested “in all points,” says the apostle; that is, he was tested in the way we are tested. He is our great burden bearer. He understands how great are our struggles, and what an effort it is to keep God’s will continually uppermost in our hearts and minds. He understands why we fail so often and lack so much in those qualities of righteousness with which the Lord is pleased to see us adorned. His merit is ready for our asking, and it makes up for our defects so long as the intentions of our hearts are right.

The Throne of Grace

Hebrews chapter 4 concludes with these words: “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” (vs. 16) God wants us to enter into his presence with confidence, not timidly as though we were fearful he would not recognize the merit of our high priest, in whose name we approach the Heavenly Father. Our present rest of faith depends upon our exercising full confidence in this loving provision. God wants us to enjoy full rest, peace, and joy.

The “throne of grace” is a beautiful and meaningful description of the divine provision of mercy for those members of the sinful and dying race, whom God has taken into his family as sons. It is illustrated by the Mercy Seat in the Most Holy of Israel’s Tabernacle, on which the blood of the Atonement Day sacrifices was sprinkled. (Lev. 16:14,15) The Mercy Seat represents divine justice, while the two cherubim arising out of it and looking down upon it with outstretched wings, illustrate God’s love and power ready to bear the message of redemption and restoration, through Christ, to the world.—Heb. 9:11,12; Acts 3:20,21

It is the merit, or value, of Christ’s ransom sacrifice that satisfies justice and makes available the “throne of grace” for all those whom Jesus is “not ashamed to call [his] brethren.” (Heb. 2:11) Surely this should cause us to exult with joy and gladness as thus we realize the heights and depths of our Father’s love. We will gain strength to hold fast the Lord’s hand as he leads us in the way of righteousness toward our eternal rest in the heavenly courts.—Ps. 65:4 ■

Admonition and Guidance from Paul

*“Let love be
without
dissimulation.
Abhor that which
is evil; cleave to
that which is good.
Be kindly
affectioned one to
another with
brotherly love; in
honour preferring
one another.”*
—Romans 12:9,10

Apostle Paul, in his writings, provides a life’s worth of admonition and guidance desirable for our attention. In our present lesson, we will look at just two of many examples from his Epistle to the Romans—one from chapter 12 and another from chapter 14. At the very beginning of chapter 12, the apostle identifies the great privilege

it is for Christians to give their heart unto God. “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

The apostle says here that for one to present themselves to God is only a “reasonable service”—

reasonable when compared to the great love and mercy extended to us by God in the giving of his only begotten Son as our Redeemer. Indeed, it is only “by the mercies of God” given to us through the merit of his faithful Son’s redemptive sacrifice, that we have anything worthy to present to God, “holy, acceptable,” as Paul describes.

In the very next verse of this chapter, Paul embarks upon a discussion of how we are to live our life, having fulfilled the requirements of presenting ourselves to God in sacrifice. He says, “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” (Rom. 12:2) We are not to be conformed to the general thinking of this present evil world, with its pride, selfishness, and underlying greed, which stimulates and molds its general spirit. Rather, we are to be “transformed” by a renewing of our mental faculties along God-like precepts, in order that we can “prove,” and then do, the “good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

A Renewed Mind

In verses nine through twenty-one of Romans chapter 12, Paul does not leave us in doubt as to what constitutes the proper “renewed” mind and the type of characteristics it should show forth. He provides us with a myriad of short, concise, admonitions that, if taken together and applied properly, will make Christians who follow them successful in their endeavors to be faithful overcomers.

The apostle writes: “Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one

another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: It is mine to avenge; I will repay, says the Lord. On the contrary: If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."—Rom. 12:9-21, *New International Version*

Warnings from Paul

Turning our attention now to Romans chapter 14, Apostle Paul recalled that there were some disputes among the Lord's people about such things as what they should eat, what days should be considered holy, and the ensuing judgments which were being rendered one to another as a result of such disputes and disagreements. He warns the brethren that such arguments and the improper judgments that came from them were out of harmony with the Christian liberty in which they all now should be sharing.

Concerning the matter of eating, Paul said, "For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him." (Rom. 14:2,3) Regarding the recognition of holy days, Paul further writes, "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it."—vss. 5,6

In the foregoing verses, the apostle states that it is not what Christians eat or do not eat that determines faithfulness to their covenant; neither is the fact that some might think one day to be holier than another day of vital importance. How a person reasons on these things concerning "himself" implies, according to Paul, that one in such a condition is in fact spending too much time thinking about himself and his own will, rather than God and his will. "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."—vss. 7,8

The lesson is quite clear. We do not belong to ourselves, and so our preferences along the lines of relatively unimportant questions such as what to eat and what days to observe in a special way are best kept to ourselves. Certainly, these matters should never be used as a test of faith, of fellowship among brethren, or even of criticism of one another.

Apostle Paul furthermore says that judgment of our brethren concerning matters as previously mentioned should be put far away from our thinking. “Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. ... Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way.” (vss. 10,13) Far more serious than any indiscretion as to what we eat, drink, or what days we may particularly celebrate, would be that we say or do anything to stumble another brother or sister in Christ by insisting on our preferences in such matters.

Proper Attitude

In the next chapter of Romans, Paul points out the proper attitude that we should have toward our brethren and the loving, unified relationship we should enjoy one with another through Christ. “Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”—Rom. 15:5,6

The apostle says we should be “likeminded,” desiring the mind, or disposition, of Christ in ourselves, just as our brethren are striving for this same mind also. Having this mind we then can truly do as Paul says, “with one mind and one mouth [together] glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” ■

Mankind Awaits the Kingdom

All men would like right now to have the blessings
Which God's promised Kingdom will bring;
And many hearts which have by sin been broken
Will rejoice when Christ is King.

We see the signs of that glad day approaching
And we love to share this good news.
With heart and voice, we publish these glad tidings,
Though but few this work would choose.

And now while we are cheerfully enduring,
Though reproached by friends and by foes,
Our thanks will rise to God in praise unceasing
For the blessings He bestows.

Some day mankind will have this blessed knowledge,
And their hearts will then understand
Why we forsook the passing earthly pleasures
To proclaim this message grand.

—*Life Lifter Lines*, Laura Kelsey